



# Temple House of Israel Bulletin

A Member Congregation of the Union for Reform Judaism  
15 North Market Street, Staunton, VA 24401 (540) 886-4091  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1412, Staunton, VA 24402  
[www.thoi.org](http://www.thoi.org)

***Our mission is to perpetuate Jewish life and identity through a welcoming community of spirituality, learning, service, joy and worship***

**SEPTEMBER-2019 / ELUL 5779 -TISHREI 5780**

**From Rabbi  
Randi Nagel**

## The Month of Elul: A Time to Seek

The High Holy Days are not just Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. They are a season of time that begin NOW in the month of Elul and continue through the end of Sukkot and Simchat Torah. Elul is the Hebrew month directly preceding Rosh Hashanah—the last 29 days of the Jewish year.

We blow the Shofar every day in the month of Elul to awaken us to the fact that Rosh Hashanah is coming and to remind us, not matter who we are, that WE ARE TOTALLY UNPREPARED.

Our tradition tells us again and again of this requirement: The 16th century rabbi called the Match Moshe proclaimed, “Every person must prepare themselves for thirty days beforehand for the day when he will appear in judgement before God on Rosh Hashanah. Therefore, let every person scrutinize their actions with a view to mending them. Let them exclude themselves for one hour every day and examine themselves,” and the Maharal of Prague said, “All the month of Elul, before eating and sleeping, a person should look into their soul and search their deeds, that they may make confession.”

The Shofar horn blows once every day in Elul so that we do not slip into mindlessness. Every day we are called back to the present; asked to examine ourselves.

The weekly Torah portion we read as the month of Elul begins is Parshat Re’eh, and it begins with the exclamation, “Look! I put before you this day a blessing and a curse.” Every moment in our lives is profoundly mixed. Every moment contains a blessing and a curse. Everything depends on our seeing our lives with clear eyes, seeing the potential blessing in each moment as well as the potential curse, choosing the former, and avoiding the latter. Thus we must set aside time each day of Elul to look at ourselves and engage in *cheshbon-hanefesh*, literally a spiritual accounting of our lives.

The primary mission of the High Holiday season is Teshuvah—which is repenting for what we have done wrong, turning inward toward mindfulness, and returning to the person we want and strive to be—all at the same time. It is not easy. Through this task we try to connect with God, to reconcile with others, and to anchor ourselves in the ground of our actions (continued on page 2)

**Rabbi Nagel's  
message  
(con't)**

and not just the habitual, unconscious momentum of our lives. This cannot be done in one day or even ten. That is why there is the Month of Elul.

We might begin by asking ourselves. "What are the loose ends in my life? How is my mind torn? Where are the places my mind keeps wanting to go instead of staying in the present? What is the unfinished business in my life? What have I left undone?" In some cases we might decide that it's just time to let go—to recognize that we are distracted by something that will never be completed—and in some cases, we might decide that the only cure is in fact completion; that there's nothing for it but to tie up that present-tense reality of our actual experience except to finish what remains unfinished. Life is impossibly complex. It is time to organize.

In the 29 days of Elul we have an opportunity to be mindful every day. As we prepare for the New Year, let us take time to list 15 positive qualities, attributes or actions that we want to embody and/or take on in the New Year. At the same time, let us list 14 areas of growth; things that we want to let go of, things we want to minimize or change. Those are 29 points of thought and introspection, one for each day of the month of Elul.

Looking inward and taking the time to reflect and begin our process of teshuva, repentance and change is what this month is all about. What small step can I take TODAY to make the 29 points of introspection a reality? Let us use this time to wake up; pay attention and prepare for the coming year because indeed we are all, as of yet, unprepared.

Looking forward to a year of meaning and renewal,  
Rabbi Randi Nagel

**Shabbat  
Services,  
Office Hours  
and Activities**

Sunday, August 25	Open House and ice cream social to meet Rabbi Nagel, 3:00—5:00 in the social hall
Friday, August 30	Lay-led Shabbat Service, 7:30 pm
Saturday, August 31	Know Your Neighbor Picnic: Foods from many traditions". Join our interfaith group for an annual summer picnic at 3:30-6:00 pm , Oakdale Park in Bridgewater. Guest speakers, discussion, childrens activities and games. Please bring a potluck dish to share.
Friday, September 6	Shabbat Evening Service, 7:30 pm
Wednesday, Sept 11	Rabbi's office hours 4:00—8:00 pm
Monday, Sept 16	Rabbi's office hours 10:00 am—2:00 pm
Wednesday, Sept 18	Temple Board meeting at 7:00 pm
Saturday, Sept 21	Shabbat Morning Service, 10:00 am
Wednesday, Sept 25	Rabbi's office hours 4:00—8:00 pm
Sunday, September 29	Erev Rosh Hashonah Potluck Dinner (meat), 6:30 pm
Sunday, September 29	Erev Rosh Hashonah Service, 8:00 pm
Monday, September 30	Rosh Hashonah Morning Service, 10:00 am Tashlich at Gypsy Hill Park duck pond, 1:00 pm

## Words from our Temple President

Dear members and friends,

The season of fall is my favorite; the cooler weather and the changing summer light is the best part. As my son and I disclosed this very topic the other day, he was adamant that the trees should stay green and no leaves should fall. While it is tempting to want the environment around us to stay the same for the sake of comfort, wouldn't it be boring and predictable at some point? My vote is that change can be refreshing, as rest, a time to start anew.

Compared to last year at this time, our congregation is changed, just as it should. Stasis is not a recipe for success. Let's take stock of where we started on our journey with an interim rabbi and revel, dream, and move forward into a future with Rabbi Nagel to nurture and guide us. I look forward to joining you all, Rabbi Nagel and Chazzan Turk for the High Holy Days and am energized for the new year rising before us.

L'Shalom,  
Bonny Strassler

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### **In honor of Honors** from Heidi Yalowitz Lasser

## High Holidays Planning

When I glanced over the membership list back in June, excitement filled my heart at the prospect of seeing everyone again. The spiritual journey of Elul, into the Ten Days of Awe, culminates the moment we walk through the temple doors to greet each other. This is a shared experience and the intent of honors is to manifest this during services. The goal of the summer project in which we reached out to every member was to ensure your idea of a fulfilling High Holiday Day experience was honored. Thank you for all of you who responded. If you have not responded yet, please do so by September 9th. We look forward to a meaningful and participatory High Holy Day experience.

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## Outreach: Pilgrimage

The Pilgrimage for Racial Reconciliation held in August was a moving sharing of liturgy of lament and reconciliation, prayer and song. This event marks the first event of what we hope to be an on-going effort to recover, celebrate and explore the history of the African American community in downtown Staunton.

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## Outreach: Walk Out of Darkness

As probably everyone at THOI knows by now, Debbie Jacobs is very passionate about suicide prevention and has appreciated the support of temple members over the past years regarding the community WALK in Staunton. Huge thanks to the Women's Group for the generous \$150 donation to this year's WALK!

This year's WALK at Gypsy Hill Park will be on October 5. Debbie would love to have people join her as she walks in memory of Leah's beautiful granddaughter Sky. Help is needed to secure sponsorships to cover the cost of running the WALK and in approaching businesses for donations to the Walk's Silent Auction.

The goal is to raise \$50,000 to support research and advocacy at the national level AND support efforts to fight suicide in our area and around Virginia. We are one of over 20 community WALKS throughout the state. We can reach our goal with your help. Please mention this to your friends and neighbors.

## Torah Study

A **Torah Study group** formed over the summer and continues to meet at the Valley Pike Farm Market on Route 11 north in Weyers Cave. Participants are choosing their birth parasha as a basis for a monthly discussion. **September 19th at 10:00 am** will focus on Ki Tavo. In case you want to study up ahead, October 17 at 10:00 will focus on Bereshit. All are welcome to join in the conversation! Contact Heidi for more details at hyl0604@gmail.com.

## News from the Pews

- Congratulations to David Young who is newly engaged to his long-time girlfriend Natasha Hill. A June 2020 wedding is planned in Atlanta.
- Welcome back to all who traveled this summer as we settle into the school year.
- Mi Sheberach and Refua Sh'leimah to all those in our community who are in need of healing.

## Women's Group

- Our monthly meetings happen on the 2nd Sunday of each month. We welcome you to join us on **Sunday, September 8th at 2:00 pm in the social hall** as we plan events for the coming year, with social action focusing on helping foster children - among other activities.
- We had so much fun at our July luncheon at Byers Street Bistro that we decided to make this a regular event the 2nd Saturday of the month beginning in September. **Join us September 14 at noon at Byers Street Bistro for a Dutch-treat lunch.**
- The flamingoes are ON SALE - NOW ONLY \$15. That will bring a flock of decorated flamingoes to your yard—or the yard of a friend who needs cheering. They're sure to bring a smile to anyone who sees them! Contact Debbie Jacobs at deb1130@hotmail.com.



## HELP US!

### Support Temple House of Israel



- Consider a donation to the **Torah Maintenance and Repair fund**. Keeping our Torah scrolls in good repair requires an on going and regular effort. Your checks to THOI should be marked "Torah Restoration Fund".
- Why not slip a dollar into the **Tzedakah Box** as you walk into the sanctuary? All donations great and small are welcome!
- **Social media** plays an important part in attracting new friends and potential members. Like us and comment on Facebook. We'll take pictures!
- Remember that you can place any order on **Amazon**, [link your order to THOI](#) and the temple will benefit. Easy, no pain and the extra pennies count up!

## September Celebrations



Birthdays to be celebrated happily in September  
 Scott Goldenberg on the 17th  
 Zachary Pereles on the 18th  
 Catrina Janicker on the 28th

Happy Anniversary to:  
 Beth and Richard Young celebrating on September 20th

## September Yahrzeits

Flossie Cohen	Reuben Harris	Harry Harrison
Henrietta Harrison	Herman Levy	Miriam Loewner
Milton Mann	Julius Margolis	Minnie Patterson
Hermina Printz	Samuel Printz	Connie Rubin
Joseph Ruttenberg	Nathan Schilling	Dianne Mason
Anna Seltzer	Michael Seltzer	Stephen Shapiro
Samuel Shultz	Bennie Sragovitz	Sadie Witt

## Board Contacts

President	Bonny Strassler	885-8715	bonstrassler@gmail.com
VP Membership	Buffy Shapiro	703-517-6133	betbuff@gmail.com
VP Buildings	Larry Sutker	456-6647	ceolhs@gmail.com
Secretary	Ruth Chodrow	886-2252	rchodrow@gmail.com
Treasurer	Patty Sutker	456-6647	lpsutker@yahoo.com
Member-at-Large	Gail Davis	224-392-5812	gdavism@gmail.com
Member-at-Large	Leah Farmer	885-0206	
Trustee	Doug Degen	886-8651	dbd@ntelos.net
Trustee	Alan Goldenberg	885-6878	adgvlg@gmail.com
Trustee	Richard Young	885-1481	richardfyoung@gmail.com
Rabbi	Randi Nagel	443-465-9985	randinagel@gmail.com

**HAVE A  
 SWEET,  
 HEALTHY,  
 PROSPEROUS  
 HAPPY NEW  
 YEAR!**

