

# The Temple Beth Torah Times

February 2025

Shevat 5785

Volume LV No. 66



*We gathered together for the communal lighting of our outdoor menorah on the first night of Hanukkah, and then festivities continued with Hanukkah music with Rabbi Dermer and Cantor Sokol in the sanctuary.*



# Off the Bimah

## Tu BiShvat Higia! by Rabbi Jack Dermer



Tu Bishvat Higia – Tu BiShvat is arriving, as the popular song goes, and with it the first blossoming of fruit trees in the land of Israel. Tu BiShvat, one of four new year’s marked over the course of the Jewish year, was historically significant as the new year for considering the age of fruit bearing trees. “Why would

one need to know the age of a fruit tree?,” you may ask. In Torah law, Jews involved in agriculture in the land of Israel were required to practice the Mitzvah of Orlah, allowing a fruit tree to grow for a minimum of three years before harvesting its fruit. This biblical law was ecologically sensitive, and allowed the trees ample opportunity to grow and to strengthen before being utilized for food that they might provide for the community for decades to come. Over the course of Jewish history, the observance of Tu Bishvat has evolved in a variety of ways. Many contemporary Jews make a point on the day of the holiday to eat foods from the “seven species” listed in the Torah – foods which reflect the bounty and beauty of the land of Israel such as olives, dates, figs, and pomegranates. In so doing, those who do not have the joy and benefit of living in the Holy Land can still feel connected to its blessings by enjoying the delicious produce it provides. In many



communities, Tu Bishvat has become a sort of “Jewish Earth Day,” an important opportunity for us to reflect both on the fragile grandeur of the natural world, and on our responsibility to live as careful stewards by minimizing our damaging impact on animals, plant life, and the planet itself. At Temple Beth Torah, Tu Bishvat

Cantor (Continued on Page 4)

## The Amidah and Community by Cantor Scott Sokol



I decided to use this month’s column to write about an interesting part of the liturgy that I think has important implications for community. During the shabbat evening service (*ma’ariv*) on Friday night, we do something unique; we repeat the Amidah, well at least sort of. This is unusual because we

otherwise never repeat the Amidah during *ma’ariv*. The reason we repeat the Amidah at other times of the day (i.e., the morning and afternoon services as well as the additional musaf service) is because the Amidah is considered a substitute for the Temple sacrifices that took place at those times when the Temple still stood. Because many Jews were not able to recite the Amidah for themselves (either due to the lack of prayer books or inability to read Hebrew), the Rabbis instituted the practice of *Chazarat hatefilah* – the repetition of the prayer –, or alternatively *Chazarat ha-Shatz*, the repetition by the *sheliach tsibbur* or cantor. This way, a Jew would only have to say “amen” to the prayer leaders’ blessings, and it was as if they had fulfilled the obligation of Amidah for themselves. The reason, though, that we do not repeat the Amidah during *ma’ariv* is because at the time the Temple stood, there was no extra sacrifice in the evening – no new barbecue if you will, only the leftovers from *mincha*. Nevertheless the rabbis instituted an evening service, since it is a Toraitic commandment to recite Shema in the morning and evening, and they included an Amidah in the evening service to mimic the rest of our prayer services. However, we don’t repeat the prayer because the evening Amidah didn’t have the same mandatory place in the service.

Interestingly, though, on Shabbat the practice changes and we do in fact repeat the Amidah, at least in a shortened form. This repetition is known as *birkat me’eyn sheva*, the blessing that Approximates the Seven. What you may ask are the Seven? Well without going into a lot of detail, as you may know that the Amidah for the weekday service has 19 blessings, but on the Sabbath and Festivals the thirteen intermediate request blessings are replaced by one long bless-

Cantor (Continued on Page 3)

# Press from Our Leaders

## Press from the President by Ken Maltz, President



As February is the month in which we celebrate the births of two of our more famous presidents, it is fitting that we recall the lesser known but honorable acts of these men towards the Jewish people. Following his visit to the Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island in August 1790, President George

Washington wrote a letter to its congregation in which he included the following: "It is now no more that toleration is spoken of as if it were the indulgence of one class of people... for, happily, the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support." ... "May the children of the stock of Abraham who dwell in this land continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants – while everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree and there shall be none to make him afraid..."

To a people used to living at the grudging mercy of Gentile communities, these words of respect and comfort were certainly welcoming and reassuring.

When the Civil War began, the Union Army had thirty chaplains serving among its troops; none of them Jewish, since federal law stipulated that all chaplains must be Christian. Rabbi Arnold Fischel petitioned for a meeting with President Abraham Lincoln and was invited to the White House on December 11, 1861, where he was received by the President with "marked courtesy." After the meeting, Lincoln personally went to work lobbying Congress for the inclusion of Jewish chaplains in the Army. While there was strong opposition to this change in policy and the law, in 1862, President Lincoln prevailed and the first Jewish chaplain was appointed on September 18.

Not long after that, General Ulysses S. Grant issued a decree calling for the expulsion of all Jews from the areas controlled by his forces. A known anti-Semite, Grant considered Jews to be speculators and war profiteers even though thousands of Jews honorably served in his Union Army. When Lincoln was informed of Grant's decree, he was appalled and immediately directed the General in Chief of the US Army,

## Cantor (Continued from Page 2)

ing known as *Kedushat hayom*, the Holiness of the Day, which leaves only seven total blessings. I could say a lot about the numerology of all this, but I don't want to take the time in this column.

We still haven't answered two questions though, what specifically is the *birkat me'eyn sheva*, the abbreviated seven, and why do we say it at all? Briefly, *birkat me'eyn sheva* is like the Reader's Digest version of the Amidah. In the paragraph known as *Magen Avot*, each phrase references a whole blessing from the full shabbat Amidah. In this way, the cantor is sort of repeating the Amidah, without chanting the entire text. But this still begs the question as to why?

The answer has mainly to do with Jewish community. Shabbat is a special time in the week when people who might not otherwise come to synagogue do so for spiritual or communal reasons. In bygone times, before electric street lights, patrolling police officers, cellphones and the like, people who came late to synagogue might still be engaged in their own prayer and therefore delayed in leaving, and the concern was they might be met with harm if they were walking alone in the dark. So the Rabbis purposely extended the service by adding this section of *birkat me'eyn sheva* in order to ensure that latecomers could still leave with the crowd.

This is a bit of a simplistic explanation, but I think a powerful one. The practice of *me'eyn sheva* reminds us of the dangers afoot – feelings that we probably don't need reminding of these days –, but also underscores the importance of caring for one another in our Jewish community. Although we are all lucky and appreciative at Temple Beth Torah to have John and our security team, ultimately as the Jewish teaching goes, *kol Yisrael arevim zeh lazeh*, all of Israel is responsible for one another, and this responsibility is embedded in our prayer practices.

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Henry Halleck, to countermand Grant's order. When a delegation of Jewish leaders travelled to Washington, D.C. to express the Communities' gratitude to the President, Lincoln assured the delegation that he knew "of no distinction between Jews and Gentile," expressing his strong disapproval of Grant's order and his anti-Semitism. I would hope that in these troubling times, that have seen threats against our People here at home and abroad, that we derive strength from the knowledge that past leaders have come to our defense, often in opposition to prevailing opinion.

# Around the Congregation

Recipe from Our Sisterhood:  
A Delicious Chili

Submitted By: Randie Mishan

## Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 large onions, diced or 1 (10-ounce) bag frozen chopped onions
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled, minced or 4 frozen crushed garlic cubes
- 2 pounds ground beef
- 2 red bell peppers, seeded, veins removed, chopped
- 1 (20-ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained, reserve liquid
- 1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste
- 4 tablespoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons crushed cumin seeds
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 3/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper, or to taste
- 2 (15-ounce) cans kidney beans, drained and rinsed

1. Heat oil in a 6-quart stockpot over medium heat. Add onions and garlic and sauté for 2 minutes.
2. Add beef. Stir and cook until beef has lost all its pinkness. Pour off fat.
3. Add bell peppers and tomatoes. Stir to mix.
4. Add enough water to reserved tomato liquid to equal 2-1/2 cups. Stir into beef mixture.
5. Add tomato paste, chili powder, cumin, salt and cayenne pepper.
6. Bring to a boil, and then reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 3 hours.
7. Stir in beans just before serving. Heat through. Serve hot.

## Save the Date!

Sisterhood Shabbat  
returns on  
Saturday, May 3, 2025

If you would like to participate  
in our Sisterhood Shabbat  
service, please reach out to  
Rabbi Dermer and Cantor Sokol.

## Rabbi (Continued from Page 2)

is one of the most enjoyable gatherings of our winter season. Each year, Cantor Sokol and I arrange a Tu Bishvat Seder, a sort of relaxed version of the Passover seder, where we sing songs related to the environment and the land of Israel, taste delicious fruits and produce connected to the Holy Land, and discuss the many spiritual lessons that emerge from the themes of the holiday. This year, our annual Tu Bishvat Seder will take place on Wednesday, February 12 at 7pm in the social hall in place of my usual Wednesday night class. Mark your calendars and join us for an evening filled with delicious treats, singing, learning, and celebration!



With wishes for a Tu Bishvat Sameach,  
Rabbi Dermer

**Temple Beth Torah**

LET'S  
TALK

## JOIN US FOR TABLE TALK

**MEETINGS WILL BE HELD IN THE TBT LIBRARY  
ON THE FOLLOWING THURSDAYS AT 7PM:**

**FEBRUARY 20  
MARCH 27  
APRIL 17  
MAY 22  
JUNE 12**

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Contact Lauren @ TBT for more  
information: 516-334-7979 or  
admin@templebethtorahli.org

# Around the Congregation

TEMPLE BETH TORAH

## FEBRUARY EVENTS

Monday, 2/3 - Executive Board Meeting

Wednesday, 2/5 - Rabbi's Class

Saturday, 2/8 - Superbowl Shabbat

Sunday, 2/9 - World Wide Wrap

Wednesday, 2/12, Tu B'Shvat Seder

Thursday, 2/13 - Tu B'Shvat

Monday, 2/17 - President's Day - Office

Closed

Wednesday, 2/19 - Rabbi's Class

Thursday, 2/20 - Table Talk

Monday, 2/24 - Board of Trustees Meeting

Wednesday, 2/26 - Purim Lunch & Learn

with with Rabbi Kayley @ Noon

Wednesday, 2/26 - Rabbi's Class



Temple Beth Torah

## TU B'SHEVAT SEDER

Wednesday, February 12th @7pm

On Tu B'Shevat it is customary to eat at least 15 different fruits & vegetables in a specific order. Please join us as we celebrate the New Year of Trees and partake in this special custom.



Contact Lauren @ TBT to RSVP or for more information:  
516-334-7979 or admin@templebethtorahli.org

TEMPLE BETH TORAH

## SUPERBOWL SHABBAT & WORLD WIDE WRAP WEEKEND

**Superbowl Shabbat - Saturday, 2/8 @ 9:30am**

WEAR YOUR FAVORITE TEAM JERSEY OR COLORS!  
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SERMON! ★ JOIN THE SUPER BOWL BOXES! ★ FUN  
SURPRISES!

**World Wide Wrap - Sunday, 2/9 @ 10:00am**

JOIN US FOR A WORKSHOP ON ALL THINGS TEFILLIN  
FOLLOWED BY BREAKFAST. WORLD WIDE WRAP IS AN  
INTERNATIONAL, COORDINATED MINYAN ENCOURAGING  
JEWS TO PARTICIPATE IN ONE OF THE BASIC MITZVOT, OR  
COMMANDMENTS, IN THE TORAH: THE WRAPPING OF  
TEFILLIN. WE'LL HAVE PLENTY OF EXTRA SETS OF TEFILLIN  
FOR THOSE WHO NEED TO BORROW.



Contact Lauren to RSVP:

516-334-7979 or admin@templebethtorahli.org

TBT Sisterhood Presents

## Purim

LUNCH & LEARN WITH RABBI KAYLEY

Wednesday, February 26 @ 12:00 pm

Join us for a light bagel  
lunch and discussion  
about the Queens of  
Purim: Esther and Vashti!  
Learn about the choices  
they made and the  
consequences they faced.



RSVP to Lauren at 516-334-7979 or  
admin@templebethtorahli.org

# A Look Back at 2024



# A Look Back at 2024



# Upcoming Events for February 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
2	3	4	5
Morning Minyan, 9:00 a.m. Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.	Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.	Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.	Rabbi's Class, 7:30 p.m. Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.
9	10	11	12
World Wide Wrap, 10:00 a.m. Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.	Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.	Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.	Tu B'Shevat Seder, 7:00 p.m. Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.
16	17	18	19
Morning Minyan, 9:00 a.m. Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.	President's Day	Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.	Rabbi's Class, 7:30 p.m. Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.
23	24	25	26
Morning Minyan, 9:00 a.m. Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.	Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.	Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.	Lunch and Learn with Rabbi Kayley, 12:00 p.m. Rabbi's Class, 7:30 p.m. Minyan, 8:30 p.m.



# Upcoming Events for February 2025

Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1  Shabbat Services, 9:30 a.m. Minha Services, 4:55 p.m.
6  Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.	7  Candle Lighting, 5:03 p.m. Shabbat Services, 6:30 p.m.	8 Shabbat Shira  Shabbat Services, 9:30 a.m. Superbowl Shabbat Minha Services, 5:00 p.m.
Tu B'Shevat Jewish Arbor Day 13  Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.	14  Candle Lighting, 5:13 p.m. Shabbat Services, 6:30 p.m.	15  Shabbat Services, 9:30 a.m. Minha Services, 5:10 p.m.
20  Table Talk, 7:00 p.m. Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.	21  Candle Lighting, 5:20 p.m. Shabbat Services, 6:30 p.m.	22  Candle Lighting, 6:25 p.m. Shabbat Services, 5:20 p.m.
27  Evening Minyan, 8:30 p.m.	Rosh Chodesh Adar 28  Candle Lighting, 5:28 p.m. Shabbat Services, 6:30 p.m.	

## Upcoming Event Spotlight

Our leadership and clergy work tirelessly to craft experiences which will be inspirational, meaningful and safe for all involved.

Temple Beth Torah is still active and thriving. If you haven't come by lately, please do! There's always something going on here at Temple Beth Torah!

We value our members and your opinions.

If you have ideas for future programs or events, or if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to our office, our Executive Board and/or our clergy.

# A Guide to Temple Beth Torah

## CONTACT US

TEMPLE OFFICE: (516) 334-7979

[WWW.TEMPLEBETHTORAHLI.ORG](http://WWW.TEMPLEBETHTORAHLI.ORG)

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IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING OR KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU. ALL INFORMATION SHARED IS CONFIDENTIAL. CONTACT MICHELE LIPPMAN OR RABBI DERMER.



## SCHEDULE OF RELIGIOUS SERVICES

### DAILY SERVICES

EVENING MINYANS (SUN - THURS), 8:30 P.M.

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES, 9:00 A.M.

### SHABBAT SERVICES

FRIDAY EVENING, 6:30 P.M.

SATURDAY MORNING, 9:30 A.M.

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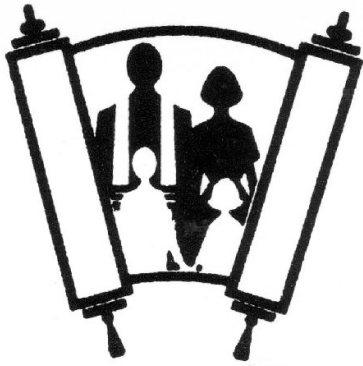
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