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An Open Letter to Members of
Beth Israel-The West Temple

Rabbi Brown

Dear Members of Beth Israel-The West Temple,

As I write this, it is a day after my son Gabe's bar mitzvah celebration. I want to thank you for your outpouring of warmth, love, and good wishes during this time in my family's life. I also want to share a little about my experience.

As a rabbi, I have facilitated many many students' travels through the bar- and bat-mitzvah process. Before becoming a rabbi, as a Jewish tutor, I worked with many more students. I can help *any* student – no matter their Jewish background or facility with Hebrew and Jewish prayer, no matter their learning differences – through the process, from learning prayers to writing their speeches to chanting from the Torah.

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As a parent, my husband and I were unable to facilitate this for our own child and so we hired a tutor. He did for us what I like to think I do for students and their families – he reassured us. He took the burden of “making” my son practice off our shoulders. He validated all of our feelings when things got tough. He even told us that he was unable to facilitate preparation for his own child and had to hire a tutor when his child was going through the process.

As a parent planning the rest of the celebration – from housing for out-of-town guests, to sending invitations, to all the logistics of a party – we learned that these do not come instinctively to us. The party, though incredibly fun, was not what we would have planned had we been better at planning events.

I have a new respect for parents and families going through this process. Though I have years of experience, I was completely unprepared for the intensity of our emotions or the urgency of the logistics. I also was somewhat unprepared for how much three meals for our guests (Friday night, Saturday lunch, and Saturday night) would cost.

At the same time, I don't regret even one minute of it. My son's bar mitzvah celebration did what we needed it to do:

1. It taught my son that he can do hard things, that he can learn our Shabbat morning service well enough to lead at least parts of it, that he can write and deliver a *d'var Torah* speech, and that he can overcome all his demons and fears in order to do what he needs to do.
2. It showed me how important it is to spend time with family and to allow people – some who I don't even know very well – to shower you with love.
3. It showed me how important it is to accept help from others for tasks that are beyond me.

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In our world, I feel that we are running, running, running so much of the time. I feel that we are pressured to be so independent, to do everything possible on our own. This bar mitzvah process taught me/reminded me of how important it is to appreciate the blessings in our lives and to allow “our people” – friends, congregants, even acquaintances – to hold us up and to support us.

When I was in Rabbinical School, one of my teachers used to say that 99.9% of Judaism is just showing up – showing up to help make the minyan, showing up to answer a question, showing up so that someone else doesn't have to be alone. I've known this and I try to show up for others. This time, people showed up for my family and me, and I learned how meaningful it is to have others just show up.

Thank you for supporting us during this chapter in our lives. Thank you for your emails, for showing up to services, for your kind wishes and blessings, for the blessings of your presence. As we move into the new year 2025, may these blessings return to you a thousand-fold!

With love,

Rabbi Rachel Brown

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President's Desk



Shalom chaverim and Happy Chanukah (or is it Hanukkah?). I hope you're all well and enjoying some relaxation as we move into 2025.

I continue to be amazed by the Beth Israel community. 30 of us made the trek across town to Shaarey Tikvah to celebrate as Gabe Ross-Brown, Rabbi Brown's son, became a Bar Mitzvah on December 21. Mazal Tov to Gabe and his parents – we look forward to hearing all about his Jewish journey.

And for our annual Chanukah celebration and menorah lighting, we far exceeded expectations with attendance this year. Given the timing, we just weren't sure who would attend. But RSVPs numbered almost 100! It is always heart-warming to see all of the menorot lit in the sanctuary.

I'll close with a few reminders of upcoming events:

- On January 19, we will have our Congregational Meeting from 12 to 1. Come for bagels, conversation, and Board updates.
- The weekend of May 2-4 will see us celebrate as Rabbi Brown is installed as our Rabbi. She'll be the first to note that this is not simply a celebration of her as our Rabbi; it is also a celebration of Beth Israel and all that we do. Be on the lookout for more information.
- On Friday May 30, we will be rededicating the Sanctuary. We hope you'll be able to join us for a festive meal, Shabbat services, and a celebration of our building.

That's it for me. Happy New Year and please be in touch if you have any questions or concerns.

Josh Levy
president@thewesttemple.org

Educator's Desk



I would like to wish all our families a happy and healthy new year. The weather may have turned cold and snowy, but BI-TWT continues to offer a wide range of engaging educational and social programs for learners of all ages.

Welcome Back to Religious School- Sunday, January 12. We will have a Mitzvah Day-project and the students in Grades PK-12 will be making bagged lunches which will be donated to the Lutheran Men's Shelter. We kindly ask for the following donations from each of our families.

- Grades K/1- Each family donates two loaves of bread.
- Grades 2/3- Each family donates one jar peanut butter and one jar of jelly.
- Grade 4/5- Each family donates two packages of cookies.
- Grades 6/7 Each family donates- one box of individual pretzels or chips.
- HS- Each family donates one bag of clementines.

This January we will have Mini Winter University held Sunday, January 19 from 10-12 pm. The workshops on January 19th will take the place of regularly scheduled religious school classes for our learners. There will be several workshops for learners of all ages. The workshops and activities will be open to students, parents, teachers, and all members of BI-TWT. There is no cost for any of the workshops.

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The workshops will be held Sunday, January 19 . The descriptions are as follows:

1. On **January 21**-Offered two sessions- 10-11:00 am-and 11-12 pm **Creating Art Using Everyday Objects**-all ages. Inspired by Israeli artist Hinoch Piven. Discover your inner artist as you use common household objects to create a work of art. Please register using the Sign Up Genius.
2. **January 21**-Offered two sessions- 10:00-11:00 am and 11-12 pm- **Israeli Dancing with Rabbi Brown**-All Ages- Learn both traditional and modern Israeli dances. Please Register on the Sign-Up Genius.
3. **January 21**- 10-11- **Diggin" Your Garden**- Plant your own glow in the dark terrariums for Tu B'Shevat. . For ages PS-3/4 and their families- Please register on the Sign-Up Genius to register.
4. **January 21**- 10-11 am-**The Art of Israeli Cooking**- All Ages- Learn about and make some traditional Israeli dishes. Please use the Sign Up Genius to Register.
5. **January 21**-11-12 pm- **The Joy of Jewish Cooking**- All ages- Create some of your bubbe's favorite desserts! Please use the Sign Up Genius to Register.

To assist with preparations, we ask that you register by January 15. Please use the following Sign-Up Genius Link to Register:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080F44A4A92EA5F94-53647647-winter>

We look forward to seeing you all as we learn and grow together.

Debbie Chessin

January Schedule

Sunday, January 12- Religious School Resumes- Mitzvah Day for students in Grades PK-12

Monday, January 13- Hebrew resumes-6:30 pm

Sunday, January 19 –10-12 pm- Winter University (refer to the schedule on the previous page)

- Congregational Meeting and Lunch- 12 pm

Monday, January 20- Hebrew-6:30 pm

Sunday, January 26– Religious School

Monday, January 27- Hebrew School- 6:30 pm

Highlights from December: This month our Grades K-7 enjoyed Chanukah music with Miss Jami. Our youngest students in Kinder Kraft and Music enjoyed a morning of celebrating Chanukah.

Debbie Chessin, Director of Education*

*This position is partially funded through the Fund for the Jewish Future of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland.



SAVE THE DATE!

Beth Israel- The West Temple
invites you to a

Joyful Retreat for Women & Girls

March 8-9, 2025

Bellwether Farm in Wakeman, Ohio

Cost Per Adult: \$100

Cost Per Child: \$50

Beth Israel- The West Temple gratefully acknowledges the Retreat Institute for financial and programmatic assistance. The Retreat Institute of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland is supported by the Fund for the Jewish Future of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland.



Grades K-7 enjoyed Chanukah music with Miss Jami. Our youngest students in Kinder Kraft and Music enjoyed a morning of celebrating Chanukah.





☆ Celebrations ☆

January Wedding Anniversaries

Dan & Debbie Chessin	January 16	32 nd
Drs. Abby & David Wald	January 28	7 th

January Birthdays – Young People

Anna Sweet	January 15	16 th
Estelle Sweteye-Hutner	January 25	10 th
Ava Melott	January 28	16 th

January Birthdays – Adults

Julia Lazar	January 3
Kathryn Soucek	January 6
Joseph Tate	January 9
Brian Greenfield	January 10
Diana Strongosky	January 10
Scott Grauel	January 19
Michael Kolesar	January 20
Michael Palnik	January 21
Dr. John Heimke	January 22
Dr. Neal Kaufman	January 23
Dr. Charles Levin	January 24
Morris Levin	January 24
Sonia Horvitz	January 26
Mitchell Gruber	January 28
Sarah Lazar	January 29
Dalia Alterovitz	January 31
Kimberly Griffith	January 31



PERPETUAL YAHRZEITS

January 2024

WEEK ENDING

January 4

Dorothy B. Copen
Willy Neufeld
Harvey Sherman
Ruth Friedman
Trudy Isaac
Irving Gilbert
Al Gluck
Estelle Loeb

WEEK ENDING

January 11

Bracha Alterovitz
Janet Slatkin
Samuel Romain
Abraham Bruckman
Anna Goldberg
Leah Krisch
Henry Caro
Suzanne Friedman
Eleanor Neumann
Anne Webster

WEEK ENDING

January 18

Irving Priesand
Philip Mason
Reva Clymer
Janet Goodworth
Barbara Margelefsky
Jack Palnik
Isidore Freundlich

WEEK ENDING

January 25

Abe Levy
Francis Diamond
Hedwig Eckstein
Leah Bloom
Mary Koschel
Samuel Lowy
Ilse Machol
Cecil Bruckman
Earl Priesand
Maria Ramos
Rabbi Herbert J. Wilner

WEEK ENDING

February 1

Marty Sacher
Edmund Button
Seth Lettofsky
Anatoly Favinsky
Leonard Heller
Arthur Dreshfield
Elizabeth Rimm



Service Schedule January

Friday Evenings

All Friday services on ZOOM,
unless otherwise noted.

January 3

7:30pm Kabbalat Shabbat
On ZOOM
Rabbi Lader

January 10

7:30pm Kabbalat Shabbat
On ZOOM
Luis Fernandez

January 17

7:30pm Kabbalat Shabbat
On ZOOM
Rabbi Brown

January 24

7:30pm Kabbalat Shabbat
ON ZOOM
Rabbi Brown

January 31

7:30pm Kabbalat Shabbat
ON ZOOM
Rabbi Brown

Saturday Mornings

All Saturday services in person,
unless otherwise noted.

January 4

9:30am Torah Study
11:00 am Shabbat Service
Luis Fernandez

January 11

9:30am Torah Study
11:00 am Shabbat Service
Luis Fernandez

January 18

9:30am Torah Study
11:00am Shabbat Service
Rabbi Brown

January 25

9:30am Torah Study
11:00 am Shabbat Service
Rabbi Brown

February 1

9:30am Torah Study
11:00am Shabbat Service
Luis Fernandez

CONTRIBUTIONS

General Fund

We gratefully acknowledge a donation from
Ashley Walsh.

In Memory of
Hal Steinhart

-Sheryl Steinhart

-Dr. Curt & Karen Steinhart

Rabbi Brown's Discretionary Fund

In Honor of

Gabe Brown-Ross's Bar Mitzvah

-Susan & Tom Wagner

In Memory of

Herbert L. Levy

-Joshua Levy



Thank you!