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

Rabbi Brown

In our Torah reading cycle, we are firmly in the book of Exodus.

In chapter six verse nine of Exodus, the Torah uses an interesting phrase. God sends Moses to tell the Israelites that God will free them from slavery. Moses does tell them, and then the Torah says: "But when Moses told this to the Israelites, they would not listen to Moses, because of *kotzer ruach* [caused] by cruel bondage."

In other words, because of *kotzer ru'ach* the Israelites cannot hear Moses share news about the glorious future that God is promising them.

*Kotzer ru'ach* can be translated in a number of ways:

"*Kotzer*" means "shortened." "*Ruach*" means "breath" or "spirit."

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“*Kotzer ru’ach*” can mean: impatience of spirit; crushed spirits; “short spirit,” that is: impatience, broken spirit; or shortness of breath.

So, because of “shortened breath” or “shortened spirit” or “impatience of spirit” or “crushed spirits” or “broken spirit” or “shortness of breath” the Israelites could not hear Moses telling them that God is going to free them from slavery.

What does that have to do with us?

Our Jewish commentators, from 2000 years ago until today, explain that when someone’s spirit is crushed, when someone can’t breathe because of the hardship of their life, they have a hard time being optimistic about a better time to come. They can’t see beyond their own suffering. In the moment.

In her commentary on this phrase, Rabbi Dr. Erin Leib Smokler, writing for the Institute for Jewish Spirituality says:

“ [In the writings of the Hasidic commentator the] Sefat Emet, he suggests that Moses could not speak because the people could not hear. That is, he could not communicate with a people so very shut down and unavailable to his messaging. With no a priori buy-in, no openness to taking in new things, Moses, the harbinger of hope, was effectively silenced.

“Exile is not a place. It is a condition of *being* in which we are closed down, shut off, unable to receive, unable to activate our faculties of imagination. It is the state of being stuck, folded into ourselves, unable to open to the presence of another.

To exit exile, then, we must render ourselves vulnerable, capacious, receptive. Redemption and revelation demand radical openness, an inner quieting so that we might hear the sounds of the others who call to us. Such an emptying, will return us to deep breath (*neshima*) and to our expansive souls (*neshama*). ...”

Rabbi Dr. Smokler is suggesting that for us to be able to hear hope, to access optimism, we simply need to breathe deeply: to stop for just a moment and breathe.

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Often I get so busy and so caught up in the myriad things that I have to do or the current events of the day that I feel oppressed. I forget to breathe. And I get to the end of the day and wonder why I feel so very stressed, like the world is against me. And then, when I can remember, I breathe – just breathe. Breathe in, breathe out, breathe in, breathe out. And I know that I won't be this busy forever and I know that I'm not alone.

As we tackle our daily chores, as we stay informed of the news of disasters and strife around the world and at home, I hope you will remember to breathe. Breathe deeply. Breathe slowly. In and out, in and out, in and out. And make space to know that you aren't alone, and that the next moment will bring something else – perhaps even blessings.

**Rabbi Rachel Brown**

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## President's Desk



Shalom chaverim. I hope you are all well and staying warm during these cold January days. May February bring us a bit more warmth.

Thank you to everyone who attended the Congregational Meeting on January 19. We heard from our Board committees about all that is happening at Temple – it's really impressive! We had a lively discussion about using the Bulletin to share information more frequently so please be on the lookout for information in the coming months. We strive to keep everyone informed and have realized that we've not done a good job.

As we move through winter and think about spring, please mark your calendars for Purim. Our Purim fun-raiser (thank you Karen) will be held on Friday, March 14. Sunday School that week (March 16) will be our Purim celebration – pull out your costumes for the Megillah reading, prepared yourselves for the Purim Carnival, and remember that BIC will be running Queen Esther's Cafe with hot dogs and hamantaschen.

Stay safe and warm out there. As always, please reach out if you have any questions, concerns, suggestions, or just want to say hi.

**Josh Levy**  
[president@thewesttemple.org](mailto:president@thewesttemple.org)

## Educator's Desk



"Avodah" is a Hebrew word used in the bible that has two distinct yet intertwined meanings which include both "worship" and "work." The dual meaning of this ancient word inspires powerful wisdom for modern times. One of the images that Avodah invokes is that it is a word for how the Israelites "worked in the fields" and at the same time was a word that was used for worshipping the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. The Israelites understood that, as they worked in the fields, they were also responsible for helping to feed those who did not have enough food. Sharing with others in need was... and still is, a sacred responsibility.

This is a message that we continue to teach over and over to our children, and it is one that was exemplified by a Mitzvah project our students in Religious School took part in this past January. Our K-12 grade students fulfilled their work helping people in need living in our local community. The students in BI-TWT's Religious School participated in a special Mitzvah Project to help feed residents at the Lutheran Men's Homeless Shelter. The students assembled over seventy-five homemade bagged lunches which were delivered to the shelter. The program was made possible through donations of food from our families and BI-TWT's Rosenblum Social Action Fund. *Kol HaKavod!* to all our amazing students and teachers who illustrated how working together as a community brings us close to each other and to God.

(continued Page 6)

## February Schedule

**Sunday, 2nd** – Religious School-10-12 pm

- Grades 4-7- Family program- “It’s All About the Torah”- 10-12 pm
- Grades 10/11- Family Conformation Meeting- 12-12:45pm

**Monday, 3rd** – Hebrew School-6:30 pm

**Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup>** – Religious School – 10-12 pm

- Yad B’Yad- 10:30 am
- 

**Monday, 10<sup>th</sup>** – Hebrew School- 6:30 pm

**Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup>** – No Religious School- President’s Day Weekend

**Monday, 17<sup>th</sup>** – No Hebrew School

**Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup>** – Religious School – 10-12pm

**Monday, 24<sup>th</sup>**- Hebrew-6:30 pm

**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.



## Joyful Retreat Info:

Experience a unique **Shabbat celebration featuring meditation, engaging text study**, and your choice of **creative afternoon workshops**, including **writing, mask making, and jewelry making**. Enjoy a special **Shabbat nature experience** and cap off the weekend with a **soulful musical Havdalah around a campfire**.

A weekend filled with fun, learning, and meaningful connections awaits!

This is an overnight retreat.

The registration includes a private guest room, all food and activities for the retreat. We will arrive at 9:30 am on 3/8, and end by 10:30 am on 3/9.

**Please RSVP to [education@thewesttemple.org](mailto:education@thewesttemple.org) now for the retreat as space is limited. You may pay via venmo or by a check made out to BI-TWT.**



8:00-11:00 FONDUE, DESSERTS, TWO  
DRINK TICKET AND CASH BAR

# BETH ISRAEL

## Purim

A JOYFUL CELEBRATION OF THE  
PURIM HOLIDAY FOR ADULTS

HOSTED AT BETH ISRAEL THE WEST  
TEMPLE - 14308 TRISKETT ROAD

14 MARCH 2025

MEGILLAH READING BY  
RABBI RACHEL BROWN AND  
FRIENDS 7:30-8:00 PM

RSVP REQUIRED BY MARCH 9TH AND CHOOSE A TICKET  
CONTRIBUTION THAT IS COMFORTABLE FOR YOU

DJ, DANCING, AND RAFFLES.  
SHUTTLE PARKING AVAILABLE

See newsletter for link to RSVP form

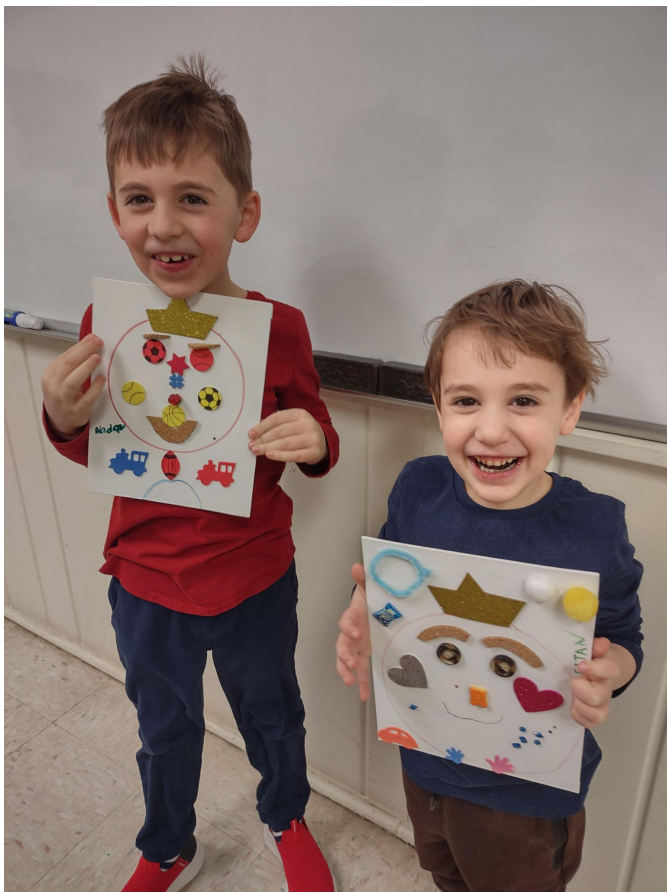
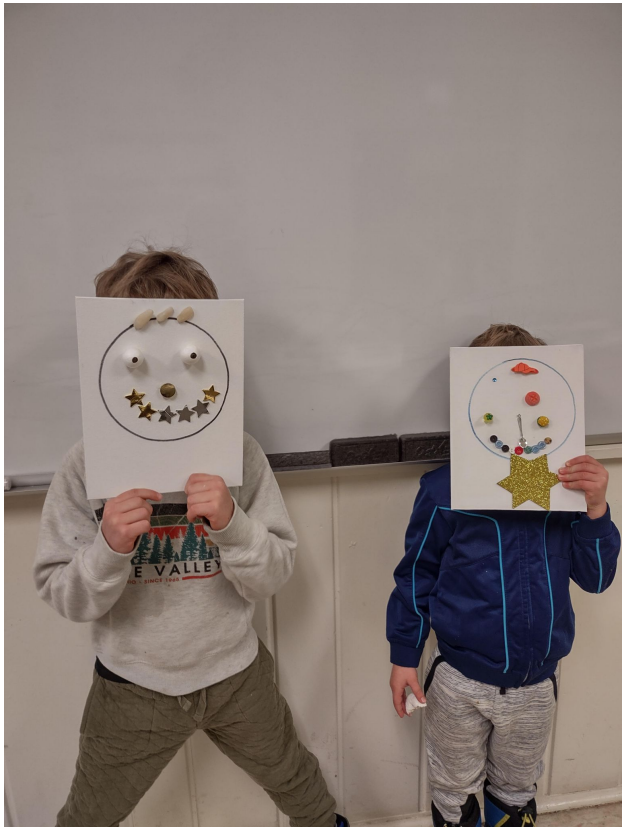
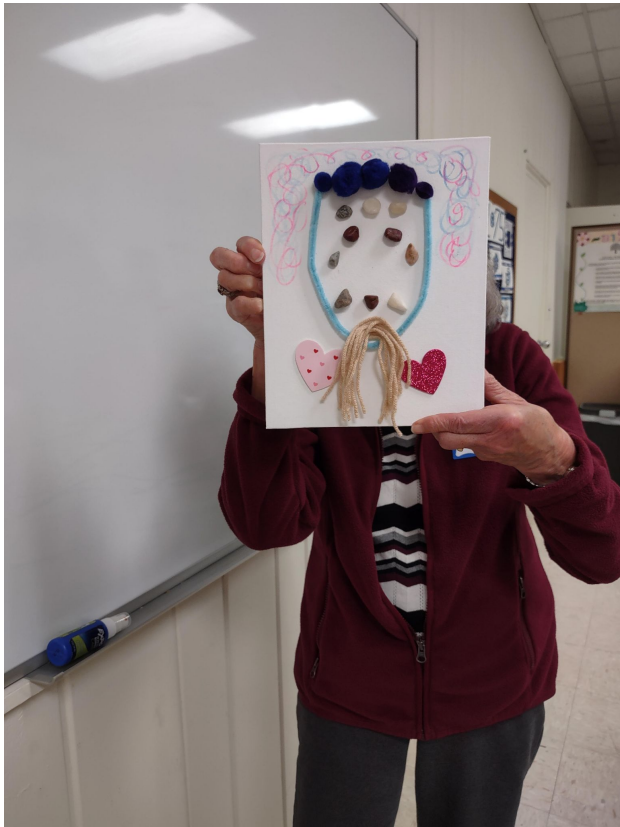
January: This past month students and adults took part in art, cooking and Israeli dancing workshops for Winter U. Enjoy the pictures!



# Winter U









☆ Celebrations ☆

**February Wedding Anniversaries**

Dr. Theodore Provder & Joan Saks	February 5	8 <sup>th</sup>
Sid & Margery Ordog	February 14	68 <sup>th</sup>
Mike & Janina Levin	February 26	36 <sup>th</sup>

**February Birthdays – Young People**

Leona Fisher	February 17	5 <sup>th</sup>
Clara Payne	February 17	11 <sup>th</sup>
Evan Wald	February 18	6 <sup>th</sup>
Camille Lazar	February 20	8 <sup>th</sup>



**February Birthdays – Adults**

Jeffrey Heller	February 2
Donna Sweet	February 5
Julian Ross	February 6
Becky Watts	February 8
Valerie Tate	February 12
Lynn Mansfeld	February 18
Mindy Bedrossian	February 19
Lisa Feldman	February 19
Arthur Gold	February 19
Carole Mason	February 22
Ellen Goodworth	February 26
Susan Wagner	February 27

# PERPETUAL YAHRZEITS

February 2024

## WEEK ENDING

### February 1

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

## WEEK ENDING

### February 8

Sidney Berns  
Molly Lader  
John F. Paliyan  
Mildred Sherrick  
Larry Steven Keller

## WEEK ENDING

### February 15

Rose Kantor  
Lester Ackerman  
Sarah Schwartzfeld  
Linda Smilgoff  
Richard Smilgoff  
Ed Heller  
Hyman Miller  
Gertrude Sackett



**May their memory be a blessing**

## WEEK ENDING

### February 22

Helen Cooper  
Marc F. Greenbaum  
Howard Bruce Cohen  
Irving Karp  
Robert Barenboim  
Joe Hilliard Smith  
Betty Butensky  
Abraham Clymer  
Janet Feigenbaum  
Frances Feldmar  
Steven Carl Cooper  
Arie Isaac  
Gustavo Schliserman  
Christine Spear  
Morris Roberts

## WEEK ENDING

### March 1

Harold Friedman  
Nita Zisser  
Herman Provder  
Wayne T. Puntel  
William Winokur  
Jeana Mandel  
Alfred Zisser  
Charlotte Ryan  
Sara Brecher  
Lona Gruber  
Joann Zabarsky Jessup  
Ruth Erlick Lisbon  
Morris Schwartzfeld  
Janice Eilberg  
Shepsel Grinberg  
Carol Schwartz



The congregation extends condolences to Myrna Pendery and Family on the death of her Stepmother, **Bernadene Strager**, who passed away on January 16, 2025 in Detroit, Michigan.  
May her memory be for a blessing.



Our sincere sympathy goes out to Rick Keller and Family on the passing of his Father, **Harvey L. Keller**, on January 9, 2025 in Boston, Massachusetts.  
May his memory be for a blessing.

**May their memory be a blessing**

**Please see weekly Newsletter  
announcements for service  
leader schedule. Thank you!**

# CONTRIBUTIONS

## General Fund

We gratefully acknowledge donations from:

Abby Wald  
Art Gold  
Mark B. Felber

In Honor of  
Gabriel Brown-Ross's Bar Mitzvah  
-Jay Krasnow

In Memory of  
Estelle Loeb  
-Judith Weiss  
Mark Mittleman  
-Judith Weiss  
Dorothy B. Copen  
-George & Alice Copen  
Dr. Phyllis Ehrlich  
-Linda Ehrlich  
Harvey Sherman  
-Dr. Sylvia Rimm  
Bernadene Strager  
-Pat Outlaw  
Harvey L. Keller  
-Pat Outlaw

## Rabbi Brown's Discretionary Fund

In Honor of Rabbi Rachel Brown  
-Dr. Sylvia Rimm

In Memory of  
Philip Mason  
-Carole Mason

## Rabbi Lader's Discretionary Fund

In Honor of Rabbi Enid Lader  
-Dr. Sylvia Rimm

## The Evy & Lou Rosenblum Fund for Education & Social Justice

In Memory of  
Anne Webster  
-Dr. Harry & Rabbi Enid Lader  
Ilse Machol  
-Scott & Barbara Machol  
Alvin Kayloe  
-Scott & Barbara Machol  
Hal Steinhart  
-Scott & Barbara Machol

## Tree of Life Fund

In Memory of  
Alvin Kayloe  
-Beryl & Michael Palnik  
Jack Palnik  
-Beryl & Michael Palnik

## The Alan B. Lettofsky Fund for the Center for Jewish Life

In Memory of  
Rosellen Weiss  
-Valerie Tate



**Thank you!**