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I Can't Wait to See You!

Rabbi Brown

We had a great Purim at Beth Israel-The West Temple! The party on Friday night was incredible, and the celebration on Sunday morning was amazing.

As we were celebrating Purim, and as we move into planning for our Beth Israel-The West Temple seder this year, what keeps popping into my head is something that my teacher in rabbinical school taught us: 99% of Judaism is simply showing up.

I sometimes wonder about our American culture – the culture that dictates that “I come first, my needs come first.” In Judaism, *the community's needs* come first. Did you know that when someone is sitting *shiva* during the week after a funeral, they are not allowed to officially sit *shiva* on Shabbat? That's because the community's need to celebrate Shabbat has a higher status than an individual's need to mourn – the community comes first.

In the short-term it is much easier to think about only what I need. But in the long term, it benefits me and everyone else if I think about what I need to do to help sustain *our* community. There is no party without party-goers. There is no prayer service without worshippers. When we come together to celebrate, to commemorate an event, or to honor a person, we weave threads that bind us together. When we show up, we stop being an “I” and become a “we” – a we that supports each other, that holds each other up.

Often, when I ask someone to show up, they will say that they are nothing, that no one will care if they are there or not. But even if you don’t know people in the group, your presence makes a difference.

I went to a wedding last month. In the program booklet that the bride and groom put together, they wrote: “The biggest *mitzvah* (sacred commandment) for everyone at the wedding is to make the *kallah* (bride) and *chatan* (groom) as happy as possible. Please join in with the singing and dancing – don’t hold back!” Showing up at this wedding wasn’t about “me” or whether my family would have a good time or not. It was about making the bride and groom as happy as possible – it was about the need for the bride and groom to have people to celebrate with.

Beth Israel-The West Temple has opportunities for you to do this mitzvah of showing up:

- show up on Zoom for Friday night services.
- Show up on Shabbat/Saturday morning for Torah study and a short service – or simply to socialize.
- Show up on Sunday morning to hang out with the adults while children and teens study.
- Show up on Passover for our second-night community seder at Dianne’s.
- Show up for Jewish Federation-sponsored events on Yom Ha’atzma’ut/Israeli Independence Day.
- Show up. You’ll be happier. You’ll feel more connected to our Beth Israel-The West Temple community. And you’ll make it possible for *others* to party, to celebrate, to study, and to pray.

99% of Judaism is simply showing up. I look forward to seeing you!

Rabbi Rachel Brown



President's Desk

Shalom chaverim. I hope that you are all doing well.

I am incredibly excited about the next two months at Beth Israel. We have wrapped up our Purim celebration and are getting ready for Passover. We are hosting a congregational seder on Sunday, April 13 – look for information in the News You Can Use about how to RSVP.

The weekend of May 2-4 promises to be a memorable one, as we officially install Rabbi Brown as the eighth rabbi of our congregation. Everyone is invited to join for a weekend of worship, studying, and festive meals. The schedule will be:

- May 2 – Shabbat service and congregational dinner
- May 3 (morning) – Torah study followed by the installation service and a luncheon
- May 3 (evening) – Mediterranean-themed dinner and art sale at Cove Community Center
- May 4 – Religious School programming to celebrate Rabbi Brown

The Friday and Saturday events will require an RSVP and payment so that we can have enough food. We hope you'll join us for as much of the weekend as you can.

Lastly, as you read recently, Beth Israel received a large grant to replace the sanctuary windows. We are working to update the original proposal and are confident that the finished product will take your breath away when you enter the sanctuary. Much more information to come about this project.

I hope that you all stay happy and healthy. If you ever have questions or concerns or just want to talk, please reach out.

Josh Levy (president@thewesttemple.org)



Educator's Desk

This month, my article will take a different format. I am writing a letter highlighting my February trip to Israel.

Dear Families, Students, Teachers and all Members of Beth Israel-The West Temple,

For the past fifteen months, I have been part of a Cleveland cohort of 18 Senior Jewish Educators who have been participating in an initiative through an organization called M2 The Institute for Experiential Jewish Education. This community-wide initiative brings together Jewish educators and leaders from various Jewish schools and settings. M2's objectives include developing a shared language and approach for transformative Jewish education, introducing new ways of thinking about educational practice, and acquiring skills and methodologies that are relevant across different settings.

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Besides seminars and bi-monthly community meetings, the Cleveland Cohort participated in an intensive weeklong seminar in Israel. Despite uncertainty due to the current conflict, we collectively decided that visiting a place integral to our Jewish identities was essential.

Our week in Israel started with the song “Kama Tov She'bata Ha'baita” (How Good It is That You’ve Come Home). The song expresses the joy and belonging of returning home. For my cohort and me, Israel is more than a place; it's a cultural, spiritual, and historical homeland that brings feelings of connection, comfort, and sometimes tension. The song prompted us to reflect on what "home" means for our Jewish identities and how Israel shapes that sense of home.

Whether Israel is perceived as a second home, a distant relative, or a complex aspect of one's identity, the song's message initiated an exploration of individual and communal connections to Israel.

The first day of the program started by setting the tone and outlining the objectives for the week. We examined the following poem by Dan Pagis:

Four talked about the pine tree.

One defined it by its genus, species and variety.

One assessed its disadvantages for the lumber industry.

One quoted poems about pine trees in many languages.

One took root, stretched out branches and rustled.

As we considered the poem as a metaphor for our understanding and engagement with the world, we were asked to outline how we each intended to engage with Israel. I expressed my hope "to witness, listen, connect, reflect, and share." Thus, the week commenced.

The seminar started with two days in Tel Aviv, a modern city on the Mediterranean coast tied to Israel's history and foundation. We toured graffiti in the Kiryat Hamelecha neighborhood of Tel-Aviv with local artist Maia Yehezkel, discovering that each piece conveyed deeper messages about Israel's current state and evolving political climate.



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After the tour, we visited Hostage Square in central Tel Aviv, a memorial site and location for community gatherings. We met with Avi Daboush, a peace activist and politician, to learn about his work in Israel since October 7. During that afternoon, our group also reviewed the Megillat Haatzmaut (Israel's Declaration of Independence) with one of our leaders, Jonny Ariel. We examined and discussed the values and principles outlined in the document to better understand Israel's historical and current challenges and aspirations.



On the following day, the group visited Ben Gurion's residence in Tel Aviv to discuss his hope for Israel and the challenges associated with state-building. The group also met with Israeli Jewish educators who shared their experiences and approaches to teaching about Israel during a time of crisis. This conversation provided insights into the difficulties faced in discussing recent events in Israel over the past 15 months.



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As we traveled from Tel Aviv to the capital city of Jerusalem, I was struck by the evolving geographic landscape dividing the two cities. This led me to contemplate our next theme, "Boundaries of Belonging" - exploring how people share space across different divides.



Our cohort then visited an iconic site, the Migdal David in Jerusalem. The tower symbolizes Jerusalem and the connection between God and humanity, celebrating a meeting place of various religions and cultures. The museum, created with input from Jewish, Islamic, and Christian archaeologists and historians, tells the story of Jerusalem's past, present, and future.



During our museum visit, we studied the story of Chanah and Chaya Gilboa. We explored how people from different religions perceive each other and discussed the complexities of sharing space with people of other faiths. Our afternoon that day included a workshop with local artist Elyssa Moss Rabinowitz from Kol Haot. During this session, we had the opportunity to reflect on the themes of boundaries and belonging through the study of Kohelet. We also created artwork that expressed our individual interpretations of the verses.

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By the end of the week, our studies focused on both individual and collective narratives within Israel. We engaged with several local activists at an organization called Feel Beit, which aims to bridge divides in Jerusalem by bringing together Israelis and Palestinians to create art and music collaboratively. The stories shared by both the leaders and members of Feel Beit instilled in me a renewed sense of optimism that through open-hearted dialogue, mutual listening, and respect, it is possible for people to live and work together harmoniously.



Leaving Feel Beit that morning, our optimism faded upon hearing the Bibas family's bodies were being returned to Israel. Horror and grief engulfed our cohort, a stark reminder of Israel's ongoing mourning. That evening, we used both music and poetry with poet Shlomit Naim Naor as a way to express our collective catharsis.

Rabbi Nissimmi Naim Naor's cooking workshop on the eve of Shabbat capped an intensive week of learning. Using text and food, he taught our group about hospitality and welcoming strangers. The activity welcomed Shabbat and reflected on the week's lessons. This was followed by sharing a Shabbat meal with former M2 alumni families.



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During Shabbat rest, our cohort discussed turning experiences into learning opportunities. Reflecting on the week, I realized that I would be leaving Israel with more questions than answers. Here are some of my observations: I met individuals striving for positive change in Israel and worldwide. The sites visited underscored Israel's foundational principles, and I witnessed examples of hope and resilience in the people and places we encountered.

As I finish this letter, I acknowledge that Israel has faced and is currently experiencing challenging times. It is a country in mourning. However, I believe that despite the difficulties, the people of Israel will continue to strive for better times ahead. Wishing everyone in Israel love (ahavah) and peace (shalom)!

Debbie Chessin*
Director of Education

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

Beth Israel- The West Temple's Purim Festivities

Sunday, March 16, 2025 10am-12:15 pm

Schedule of Events!

The **High School Class** will perform their annual **Purim Spiel** from **10AM-10:30AM**

Following the Spiel, the students will **march in a costume parade**. **Students and teachers are encouraged to wear their costumes!**



The **Purim carnival** will run from **11AM-12:15PM**- tickets will be **\$.50 a ticket** (each game requires one ticket) or 10 tickets for \$4.00. Tickets can be purchased the day of the carnival with cash, or a check made payable to BI-TWT or you may pay via Venmo @bitwt

**This year Grades 6/7 BIC class will sponsor
Queen Esther's Café Bagged Lunch
Sunday, March 16, 2023 from 11:00AM-12:15 PM**

The lunch will be packed in bags ready to eat and enjoy! You may eat lunch in Ratner Hall or take the bagged lunch home. Included in the lunch is: beef hot dog/bun, chips, piece of fruit, Hamantaschen, can of soda, kisses from Esther and condiments.

Cost: \$8.00 per lunch (proceeds support the BIC Junior Youth Group)

You may also be able to purchase a la carte hamantaschen will be sold for **\$2.00 per hamantaschen** beginning at 11:30 am.

You can pick up and pay cash or check (payable to BI-TWT) in Ratner Hall or via Venmo at @bitwt

Wishing everyone a season of good health and happiness!

Debbie Chessin

Director of Education*

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

April Schedule

Sunday, 6th- Religious School-10-12 pm

- Yad B' Yad- 10:30
- 10-12 - Speakers- Tony McAleer and Peter Hutchinson –
Presentation About “The Cure for Hate”- Gr. 9-12 and adults

Monday, 7th- Hebrew-6:30 pm

Saturday 12th- First night of Passover

Sunday, 13th - No Religious School- Passover

Monday, 14th - No Hebrew School- Passover

Sunday, 20th- No Religious School Passover

Monday, 21st - Hebrew- 6:30

Sunday , 27th - Religious School- 10-12 pm

Monday, 28th - Hebrew- 6:30 pm

SAVE THE DATE!!! Camp Kee Tov 2025 will be making its return July 28- August 1st . More information to come in the next few weeks!





**SUNDAY APRIL 13TH, 2025
5:30 PM AT DIANNA'S DELI
1332 WEST 117TH 44107**

**BETH ISRAEL
COMMUNITY
PASSOVER SEDER**

\$25 per adult, half price under 13 years old. Please bring a non-dairy, Passover dessert or fruit tray to share

**REGISTER HERE BY
APRIL 4**

**Beth Israel
Community Seder**

**Sunday , April 13th, 2025
5:30 pm**

**Registration Link- Click
Below**



**Dianna's Deli and Restaurant
1332 West 117th Street
Lakewood, OH, 44107**

\$25 per adult, half price under 13 years old:

Roast chicken & potatoes, vegetables, salad, Matzah Ball soup [regular and vegetarian], beverages, matzah, charoset and horseradish provided

Please bring a Passover friendly, non-dairy dessert to share!

You must register online by April 4th, 2025

See newsletter for link to RSVP form

Installation of Rabbi Rachel Brown

Saturday, May 3, 2025
6pm – 8:30pm

[Registration Link - Click Here](#)

Please join Beth Israel to celebrate as Rabbi Enid Lader officiates the Installation of Rabbi Rachel Brown at for a mediterranean mocktail party. Enjoy creative non-alcoholic mocktails and heavy hors d'oeuvres, along with the opportunity to peruse a wide variety of original local art, original prints, Judaica and home decor for purchase.

Ticket purchases and art purchases support local artists and Beth Israel – The West Temple.
Tickets: \$36 per person, Maximum \$108 per family

Cove Community Center
12525 Lake Ave
Lakewood, OH, 44107



Highlights from March: We enjoyed a wonderful Women and Girl's Retreat called Finding Our Joy at Bellwether Farms-enjoy the pictures!



Photos from our Purim Party!





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Service Schedule April

Friday Evenings

All Friday services on ZOOM,
unless otherwise noted.

Saturday Mornings

All Saturday services in person,
unless otherwise noted.

April 4

7:30pm Kabbalat Shabbat
On ZOOM
Rabbi Rachel Brown

April 5

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

April 11

7:30pm Kabbalat Shabbat
On ZOOM
Rabbi Enid Lader

April 12

9:30am Torah Study
11:00am Shabbat Service
Rabbi Enid Lader

April 18

7:30pm Kabbalat Shabbat
On ZOOM
Luis Fernandez

April 19

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

April 25

7:30pm Kabbalat Shabbat
ON ZOOM
Rabbi Enid Lader

April 26

9:30am Torah Study
11:00 am Shabbat Service
Rabbi Enid Lader