

Temple Beth El Bulletin

A Conservative, Inclusive, Spiritual Community

www.tbe.org

Volume 47 Issue 1 (bi-monthly)

January-February 2020

Tevet/Shevat/Adar 5780

Neshama Carlebach Cabaret Evening

November 2, 2019



Professor Stephen Berk

November 3, 2019



8th Graders at RPM Speedway

November 3, 2019



BabyBimBam

November 17, 2019



7th Grade Brit Milah

December 15, 2019



The New TBE Connect Committee



The New TBE Connect Committee under the leadership of Carol Krim, Denise Greenman and Renee Migdal Judd.

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WHERE TO FIND IT

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Ritual Committee

Eileen H. Rosner	203-461-0506
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OUR STAFF IS MOST EAGER TO ASSIST YOU

Monday - Thursday, 9am - 5:00 pm | Friday, 9am - 2:00pm

Phone: 203-322-6901 Fax: 203-322-0532

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Beth Styles, Music Director	ext. 300
Cantor Moshe Bear, B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator	ext. 300

ON ONE FOOT

A few weeks ago, while we were all being distracted by small things like Israel's endless election cycle and, over here, that little impeachment thing, something of truly earthshaking significance was happening under the proverbial radar and most of us missed it: Conservative Judaism's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) issued a landmark ruling on whether women and girls should wear yarmulkes or other head coverings during prayer. While this matter has been discussed for a long time, this was the first time a formal responsum (*teshuvah*) was written and passed, by a vote of 16-1, with five abstaining.

And the answer: A resounding "Yesss! ...Sort of." As with everything in life and in Judaism, it's complicated. But the complexities illustrate important truths.

The responsum is 17 pages long – you can read it at https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/kanarek_-_headcovering_for_women_and_girls_-_nov_2019_final.pdf but let me cut to the chase and deliver its four main recommendations:

1. Women and girls should cover their heads when reading from the Torah and when receiving an *aliyah*.
2. In deference to the notion of respecting the mores of the community (*kavod ha-tzibbur*), women and girls should cover their heads when acting as prayer leader.
3. When praying the three daily services - *shaharit*, *minhah*, or *ma'ariv* - as an individual, women and girls should cover their heads at least when reciting the *Amidah* and ideally during the entire prayer service.
4. Head covering at other times is a matter of personal piety, and a woman or girl may cover her hair with a garment of her choice; that garment need not publicly identify her as a Jew.

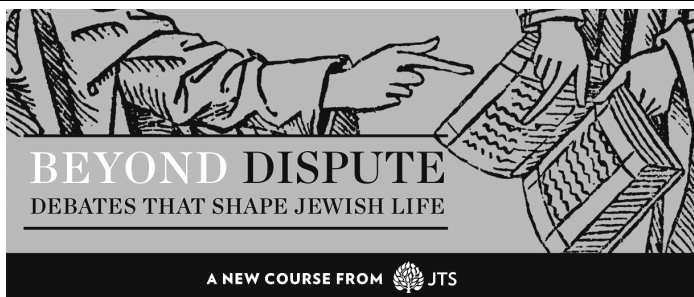
There's a whole lot to digest here, but the recommendations are consistent with our longstanding philosophy, which embraces both tradition and egalitarianism. We've long encouraged girls and women to wear tallit, for instance, but have respected that some have more traditional views on what is proper religious attire for women. That's part of what being pluralistic is all about. We need to be respectful of people's feelings and not be shaken when their priorities differ somewhat from ours.

The responsum provides some background to the dilemmas we face:

For some women, a decision about head covering rests on the following calculus: Head covering, while not obligatory for males, has long been understood as such a strong Jewish custom as to have become obligatory. Even if traditionally worn by men, a head covering need not be inherently male. Thus, egalitarianism would suggest that women also understand themselves as part of this custom and similarly cover their heads.

For other women the decision rests on a different

Continued on page 15...



A TBE Adult Learning Series led by Rabbi Joshua Hammerman

Tuesday Evenings, 7:30pm
January 14 and 28, February 11 and 25
March 10 and 24, May 5, 19, and 26



Fee: \$36 TBE members, \$50 non-members

Register at www.tinyurl.com/tbeadulted or call 203-322-6901.

Future debate topics - Philosophical, spiritual, ethical, and cultural, are to be addressed in sessions:

- Are religion and reason compatible?
- Can Jewish law change based on context?
- How do we teach and talk about the Holocaust and the State of Israel?
- Is our relationship with God defined by human obligation or divine compassion?
- Should we prioritize Jewish causes or universal causes in our giving?
- Is Jewish tradition intrinsically patriarchal and ableist?

Join us for this unique opportunity to explore how these debates have been manifested over the course of Jewish history, and to discuss their continued resonance for contemporary Jewish life.

This course is made possible through
the generous support of Mr. Earle Kazis
and the Kazis Family Publications Foundation.

ADULT LEARNING

TBE ADULT BAR/BAT MITZVAH CLASS



Led by Rabbi Joshua Hammerman
and Cantor Moshe Bear
Tuesdays, 7:00-8:30pm
in the TBE Library



Fee for educational materials: \$36 for TBE members, \$50 for non-members. Participants who paid the materials fee in 2018-2019 do not need to pay again.

New participants are welcome! If you've never had the experience of a meaningful Bar/Bat Mitzvah, this is your opportunity.

Each session will be divided into two parts: Intro to Judaism, led by Rabbi Hammerman, and Prayer and Synagogue Skills, led by Cantor Baer. For questions and registration, contact Rabbi Hammerman at rabbi@tbe.org.



SHABBAT AND FESTIVAL SERVICES



JANUARY

Friday, January 3

Kabbalat Shabbat 7:30 p.m.
Featuring Beth Styles, Music Director

Shabbat, January 4

Breakfast and Schmooze 9:15 a.m.
Shabbat-in-the-Round 9:45 a.m.
Featuring Beth Styles, Music Director
Kids-in-the-Round 11:00 a.m.
ShaBaBimBam 11:00 a.m.

Friday, January 10

BYO Vegetarian Shabbat Family Dinner 5:30 p.m.
Family Kabbalat Shabbat 6:30 p.m.
Featuring Katie Kaplan, Cantorial Soloist

Shabbat, January 11

Shabbat Services 9:30 a.m.
Featuring Cantor Deborah Katchko-Grey

Friday, January 17

Kabbalat Shabbat 7:30 p.m.
Featuring Beth Styles, Music Director

Shabbat, January 18

Breakfast and Schmooze 9:15 a.m.
Shabbat-in-the-Round 9:45 a.m.
Featuring Cantor Deborah Katchko-Grey

Friday, January 24

Shabbat Unplugged with Cantor Deborah Jacobson 7:30 p.m.

Shabbat, January 25

Shabbat Services 9:30 a.m.
Featuring Cantor Deborah Katchko-Grey
Rabbi Gerry Ginsburg - D'var Torah
ShaBaBimBam 11:00 a.m.

Friday, January 31

Kabbalat Shabbat 7:30 p.m.
Featuring Katie Kaplan, Cantorial Soloist

FEBRUARY

Shabbat, February 1

Shabbat Services 9:30 a.m.
Featuring Cantor Deborah Katchko-Grey
7th Grade B'nai Mitzvah Club 9:30 a.m.

Friday, February 7

Kabbalat Shabbat 7:30 p.m.
Featuring Beth Styles, Music Director

Shabbat, February 8

Breakfast and Schmooze 9:15 a.m.
Shabbat-in-the-Round 9:45 a.m.
Featuring Katie Kaplan, Cantorial Soloist
Kids-in-the-Round 11:00 a.m.
ShaBaBimBam 11:00 a.m.

Friday, February 14

Kabbalat Shabbat 7:30 p.m.
Featuring Katie Kaplan, Cantorial Soloist

Shabbat, February 15

Shabbat Services 9:30 a.m.
Featuring Cantor Deborah Katchko-Grey
Rabbi Gerry Ginsburg - D'var Torah

Friday, February 21

Kabbalat Shabbat 7:30 p.m.
Featuring Beth Styles, Music Director

Shabbat, February 22

Breakfast and Schmooze 9:15 a.m.
Shabbat-in-the-Round 9:45 a.m.
Featuring Beth Styles, Music Director
Kids-in-the-Round 11:00 a.m.
ShaBaBimBam 11:00 a.m.

Friday, February 28

Shabbat Across American Service with Grades 3&4 6:00 p.m.
Featuring Katie Kaplan, Cantorial Soloist
Shabbat Across America Congregational Dinner 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat, February 29

Shabbat Services 9:30 a.m.
6th Grade B'nai Mitzvah Club 9:30 a.m.

Check out our special website
Dedicated to TBE's event space

www.thebigeventspace.com

Please let your friends and business associates
know how we can fulfill their celebratory
and meeting needs.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A GABBAI?



Training available!



Please contact Rabbi Hammerman
at rabbi@tbe.org.



Services and Events

ShaBaBimBam

A Shabbat program for families with children 5 and younger (older siblings welcome)

Shabbat mornings 11am - 12pm
followed by Kiddush lunch - open to the community
led by Natasha Fenster & Steve Epstein

Join us for a warm family Shabbat experience in the TBE Clubhouse (in the rear of the building)

Dates: January 4 & 25; February 8 & 22; March 7 & 21; April 4; May 9; June 6



Kids-in-the-Round

Family Shabbat Service for families with children ages 5-8



January 4 and February 8, 22 at 11:00am

in the Mo'adon (formerly known as the Youth Lounge)

Led by Bobby Doowah!

Services are followed by a special, congregational Shabbat luncheon.

Questions? Contact Jami Fener at youngfamilies@tbe.org or Lisa Gittelman Udi at eddir@tbe.org

MY GYM FAMILY PARTY!

**Sunday, January 26
3:00pm - 4:30pm**



MY GYM STAMFORD
7 Hyde Street, Stamford

Family activities for toddlers and preschoolers or school children through age 9.

This is a free program!
Register to reserve your space:
www.tinyurl.com/tbemygym

Questions? Contact Jami Fener at 917-680-9413 or youngfamilies@tbe.org

*BabyBimBam presents...
Sunday Jam Sesh*



Sunday, February 9 from 4:00 - 5:00pm
in the Clubhouse at TBE

Join us for Sunday jams, singing, and playing with other families!

BabyBimBam is a program of TBE designed for babies under 2 and their parents. No need to be a TBE member to attend.

Questions: Contact Jami Fener at 917-680-9413 or youngfamilies@tbe.org

TBE Family Shabbat | Friday, January 10, 2020

5:30pm Bring Your Own Vegetarian Shabbat Dinner. We'll provide drinks.

6:30pm Family Kabbalat Shabbat Service led by Rabbi Joshua Hammerman and Katie Kaplan, Cantorial Soloist, with student participation

This will be our only Kabbalat Shabbat service on this night. Yahrzeits will be recalled.

You don't need to be a TBE member to participate. There is no charge.



Please RSVP for the BYO dinner so we know how many tables to set up:
Jami Fener at youngfamilies@tbe.org or Lisa Gittelman Udi at eddir@tbe.org

MAZAL TOV TO...

Susan and Marc Peyser on the birth of a granddaughter, Liv Violet, born to Amanda and Robert Haggerty.

Lois Stark and Gary Lessen on the marriage of their daughter, Stacy, to Gregg Arenson.

Nancy and Jerry Kapchan on the marriage of their daughter, Aly, to Brett Ackerman.

Stephne and Kerrin Behrend on the marriage of their son, Neal, to Natalie Kamenetsky.

Joan and Robert Rosenthal on the marriage of their daughter, Rachel, to Sam De Roest.

Joanne and Marshall Goldberg on the marriage of their son, Jonathan, to Grace Gould.

Allison and Jonathan Ostroff on receiving the UJF's Harvey A. Peltz Young Leadership Award.

Cathy Satz on receiving the UJF Volunteer of the Year Award.



Share your family's simcha (engagement, marriage, birth, Bar or Bat Mitzvah of a child or grandchild) and other joyous event. Just contact the TBE office at office@tbe.org or 203-322-6901, ext. 301.

HONORABLE MENSCHEN TODAH RABAH TO OUR TORAH READERS!

NOAH DOFT ☆ RABBI GERRY GINSBURG
RABBI JOSHUA HAMMERMAN ☆ LARRY KATZ
JOSHUA LEVINE ☆ BERT MADWED
NAOMI MARKS ☆ CRAIG OLIN
JONAH ROSENBERG ☆ JULIE ROSENBERG
REMI ROSENBERG ☆ SUSAN SCHNEIDERMAN
LAEL SHAPIRO

WE THANK OUR VOLUNTEERS

ALAN JAFFE, SARI JAFFE, EILEEN H. ROSNER
CAROL SANDER

THANK YOU FOR SPONSORING THE SHABBAT ANNOUNCEMENTS

JULIE and REMI ROSENBERG

THANK YOU FOR SPONSORING KIDDUSH

MARIA LEVIN and GREG BUSCH
JULIE and REMI ROSENBERG

DID YOU KNOW?

TBE offers free family membership for the first year to any member's child on the occasion of his or her marriage. For more information, contact Steve Lander at 203-322-6901, ext. 304.



BETH EL CARES

Beth El Cares focuses on *chesed* and *tzedakah* by helping the poor and unfortunate through mitzvot, both in our synagogue and the greater Stamford community. We welcome volunteers! This is the work we are currently engaged in. If you are interested in volunteering in any of these endeavors, please contact the person listed.

Reyut (Friendship): Committed to serving the needs of those in our TBE community, including friendly visits, assistance with errands and transportation, Shabbat bag delivery to hospitalized patients. Contact Melanie Massell at reyut@tbe.org or 203-324-7190.

Project Ezra: Providing pre-shiva meals to the bereaved in the congregation. Contact Joy Katz at joyakatz@yahoo.com or 203-329-3359.

Serving the homeless: Helping prepare and serve food — you can do either or both — to the homeless at New Covenant Center in Stamford on the fifth Thursday of each month. Times are 2:30-4:15 pm and 4:15-5:30 pm. Contact Amy Temple at aetemple@optonline.net or 203-496-1309.

High Holiday and Passover food drives: Contact Ken Temple at kbtemple@optonline.net or 203-962-1491.

Christmas dinners at local homeless shelters: Contact Amy Temple at aetemple@optonline.net or 203-496-1309.

If you have your own idea for a Beth El Cares project, please contact Ken Temple at kbtemple@optonline.net or call 203-962-1491.

SEEKING SHABBAT GREETERS

Do you like getting a warm "Shabbat Shalom" as you enter shul on Saturday morning?

Our greeting program has been extremely well received. To keep this program going, we need volunteer greeters like you.

For more information Contact Barry Strom at barrystrom@gmail.com

Thanks for helping make Temple Beth El a warm and welcoming place to be.

Torah Fund Pin for 5780 (2019-2020)



Every year Torah Fund offers a special pin for a donation of \$180. The theme of this year's pin is Chesed - "kindness" or "loving kindness" conveying the deep love of Jewish acts of kindness which are done without thought of reward.

The 5780 (2019-2020) Torah Fund pin depicts a heart surrounded by three circles, one larger than the next. This symbolizes the ever-widening realms of generosity: From family, to community, to the larger world; from North America, to Israel, to the world. As it is said in Psalm 89, "May we build a world of kindness." What message could be more appropriate in today's world? Purchase from Suzanne Stone, suzanneshorn@yahoo.com, 203-866-2273.



Happy 2020!

Our 2020 schedule is full of wonderful events. Please join us for as many as you can! We look forward to sharing these programs with you. Look in the Shabbat Announcements for all of the details.

- ◆ **Surprise Event - February 23** Watch for details in the Shabbat Announcements.
- ◆ **Yom HaShoah Breakfast** featuring Kurt Kleinman, Holocaust Survivor - **April 19 at 9:30 am**
- ◆ Join us for *Crossing Delancey Street* at **Curtain Call in the Dressing Room Theater - April 30**
- ◆ **Sisterhood Shabbat - May 9**
- ◆ **Congratulations to the Adult B’Nai Mitzvah - May 16**

Our past few months were very busy. We had a wonderful turn out for our **Annual Sisterhood Brunch** and an extremely impressive speaker, **Lauren Redniss**. Lauren shared her talents as an author and artist focusing on her book, *Marie & Pierre Curie: A Tale of Love and Fallout*. We continue to receive such positive feedback – Everyone loved Lauren!

Thank you to the **Redniss Family** for donating all of the proceeds from the book sales, \$600!, to the TBE Music Fund in memory of Lauren’s grandmother, **Claire Redniss, z’l**.

Our Baubles & Bangles sale was also a wonderful success during the Brunch due to the efforts of **Leslie Heyison, Paula Shulman** and **Linda Kopel**. Since its inception Sisterhood has made over \$2,400!! Fantastic!

Sisterhood is extremely grateful to our volunteers for making the **Sisterhood Brunch** such a beautiful event filled with fun, friendship and learning. Co-chairs **Leslie Heyison** and **Karen Resnick** thank you for your hard work and dedication: **Barbara Berman, Fran Ginsburg, Jaffa Gross, Juli Harris, Linda Kopel, Lieba Lander, Jennifer Meth, Susan Plotzky, Caryl Poser, Dora Salm, Judy Schneiderman, Paula Shulman, Beth Silver, Linda Simon, Amy Temple, Donna Wolff, and Steve Lander and Alberto Eyzaguirre, Rad Vazquez**. Thank you to **Dora Salm** for decorating our tables with unusual and beautiful center pieces! Thank you to **Rabbi Hammerman** who led us in a meaningful reflection in memory of the Tree of Life – Or L’Simcha Congregation shooting. Thank you also to **Donna Woolf** who donated dairy free ice cream, called WINK, which uses non-GMO, plant-based ingredients. A VERY BIG THANK YOU to **Joe Heyison** for his incredible help running around and fixing our projector!!! He saved the day!



We welcome **Ginette Kellner**, a new Sisterhood member who also became a Temple Beth El member at our brunch!

A special congratulations to **Cathy Satz**, who was awarded, Volunteer of the Year by United Jewish Federation!

Our very own Sisterhood Past-President, **Linda Simon**, is a famous actress! Last year she performed in NYC and on YouTube. Currently she is performing in Cinderella at the New Canaan Town Players. Very impressive!

Karen Resnick, Sisterhood President

Sisterhood of TBE Judaica Gift Shop

*Beautiful items for holidays, Shabbat
and B’nai Mitzvah*

BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

Contact:

GIFT SHOP ITEMS

**Barbara Berman: 203-329-7750,
bfberman@optonline.net**

B’NAI MITZVAH AND WEDDING
**Beth Silver: 203-249-7046,
beth@silverconsulting.net**

TORAH FUND CARDS AND PINS
**Suzanne Horn: 203-866-2273
suzanneshorn@yahoo.com**

Proceeds Support TBE and Youth Education!

Please contact Sisterhood at sisterhood@tbe.org or feel free to call/email a Sisterhood board member with any comments. We love hearing from you and are always looking for volunteers!

Karen Resnick, President
203-536-3115, kmr925@sbcglobal.net

Judy Schneiderman, Treasurer
203-569-4969, irs2125@optonline.net

Dora Salm, Secretary
203-461-8596, d_salm@yahoo.com

Barbara Berman, Gift Shop
203-329-7750, bfberman@gmail.com

Donna Wolff, Board Member
917-601-1878, donna@wolffmedco.com

Paula Shulman, Board Member
203-461-9396, paulashulman51@gmail.com

Juli Harris, Board Member
203-276-0589, jaharris99@aol.com

Leslie Heyison, Past President & Advisor
646-354-3950, lheyison@gmail.com

SAVE THE DATE

RUTH MESSINGER, GUEST SPEAKER

Sunday, March 8, 2020

Breakfast sponsored by Sisterhood and Men’s Club

TBE IMMIGRATION TASK FORCE

Over 60 men at Building 1 Community enjoyed dinner, gifts, games, raffle prizes and entertainment by the Street Angels at a Holiday Dinner sponsored by the Temple Beth El Immigration Task Force.

Thank you to our congregants who prepared food, donated gifts for the men, prizes for the raffle and volunteered at B1C. Thank you to the Street Angels for entertaining and to **Belle Horwitz** and **Stan Friedman** for coordinating the dinner.



CELEBRATING A SPECIAL EVENT? COMMEMORATING A YAHRZEIT?

Please consider sponsoring a Kiddush, following Shabbat Services, or an Oneg Shabbat, following our Friday evening services.

Contact Steven Lander for all of the new, reasonably priced Kiddush options at 322-6901, ext. 304 or execdir@tbe.org.

TBE CONNECT



JAM SESSION WITH OTHER TBE MUSICIANS! JOIN NOW!

Do you like to sing? Do you know how to play a musical instrument but haven't played in a while? Well then, TBE is looking for you!

TBE Connect is interested in connecting any musically inclined people for a Jam Session to plan future activities and events - possibly as part of one of the many events being planned to celebrate the 100th anniversary of TBE.

If you're interested in joining a group of music lovers, please email Lisa Grove-Raider at lgroveraider@gmail.com.

Stay tuned for a meeting date/Jam Session in the near future.

Havdalah + Dinner A TBE Connect Event

December 7, 2019



Havdalah led by Rabbi Gerry Ginsburg



Dinner at the home of Dana & Carl Weinberg
(See page 15 for more photos)



Join Temple Beth-El as we explore our Jewish heritage in

EASTERN EUROPE

Prague * Budapest * Krakow * Lublin * Warsaw
Led by Rabbi Joshua & Dr. Mara Hammerman

July 5-17, 2020

optional Berlin pre-tour July 1-6, 2020

On our journey together we will...

- Discover Prague's Josefov, and learn why architecturally, this is the most intact pre-Holocaust Jewish neighborhood in any major European city
- Explore beautiful Budapest's Castle Hill and visit the Dohany Synagogue, the largest in Europe
- Stroll through Krakow's Kazimierz (Jewish town), then encounter the community's rebirth at the Krakow JCC
- Travel to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the infamous Nazi concentration camp
- Encounter a righteous gentile and hear her story in Krakow
- Tour Warsaw's outstanding new POLIN Museum

...and so much more



MAIN TOUR:

\$4,299 Check/\$4,428 Credit

Land tour cost per person, based on double occupancy.
For single occupancy, add \$1,499 (check)/\$1,544 (credit)

BERLIN PRE-TOUR:

\$2,399 Check/\$2,471 Credit

Land tour cost per person, based on double occupancy.
For single occupancy, add \$799 (check)/\$823 (credit)

**Save \$100 per person if registered
by October 11, 2019!**

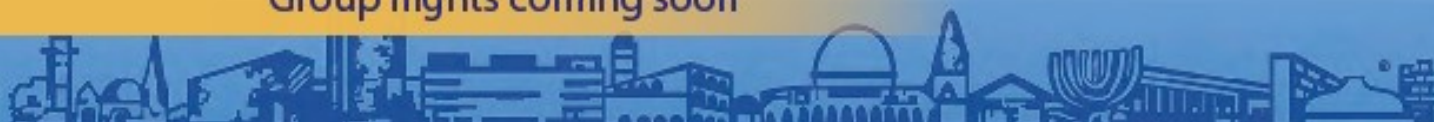
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A Message from Our Rabbi



ON this happy Day of Dedication we may say with the Psalmist, "This is the day which the Lord hath made." Well may we exclaim: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, King of the universe, who kept us alive, sustained us, and caused us to reach this season."

On this auspicious occasion in the history of our Temple, I extend to you all, men and women of our Congregation, my heartiest greetings and sincere congratulations. It has taken much planning and labor, much effort and sacrifice, much zeal and devotion, thus to have your dream of a dozen years materialize in this edifice in all its beauty and grace.

Our Temple has been erected not for the few, but for all Jews of our city. Every man, woman and child is welcome here—welcome to our services, welcome to our Religious School, welcome to our social activities. Our portals will remain open to all who may come to seek the Lord and to drink at the fountain of the Torah.

To all people, irrespective of race, creed or denomination, we extend our hand of fellowship and of brotherhood.

And today it is our sacred privilege to dedicate this sanctuary to God, to Israel, and to all mankind.

May it always serve as an inspiration to all good work and noble endeavor. May it promote a deeper spirituality among our brethren, a closer unity between the citizens of our country, and love and peace among all the inhabitants of the earth.

Rabbi MAURICE M. MAZURE

Memorable Dates



Temple Beth-El Organized Sept. 4th, 1920.

August 26th, 1921, Rabbi Max Arzt engaged as first resident rabbi.

Dec. 14th, 1921, Council of Jewish Women Religious School merges with Temple Beth-El Religious School.

January 9th, 1922, Beth-El Sisterhood Organized.

January 13th, 1922, first issue Beth-El Bulletin.

January 13th, 1922, Junior Beth-El Organized.

First Community Sedar, March 31st, 1922.

Building Committee Organized, June 7th, 1922.

First reception to High School Graduates, June 23rd, 1922.

Site for Temple Beth-El purchased September 24th, 1924.

Beth-El Cemetery purchased May 13th, 1925.

Cantor Tobey engaged as first cantor, August 23rd, 1926.

Contract for erection of Temple signed March 16th, 1927.

Ground Broken, March 22nd, 1927.

Cornerstone laid June 12th, 1927.

First services held in new temple on High Holy Days, Sept. 27th, 1927.

Temple Beth-El dedicated Dec. 14th, 15th, 16th, 1928.

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Dana Horowitz (danalhorowitz@gmail.com)
Steve Sosnick (mssosnick@att.net)
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For details, contact Mindy at office@tbe.org or 203-322-6901, ext. 301.

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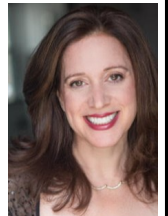


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ON ONE FOOT continued from page 3...

calculus: Head covering as a symbol of piety and Jewish identity has largely been a male practice. Women's head covering is too easily identified (even if mistakenly) with women's hair covering after marriage. Head covering, in this view, should not be conflated with covering one's hair for reasons of modesty.

Furthermore, the problems of non-egalitarian practice cannot all be solved through a model that presumes men as the norm and requires women to imitate their practices. Since there is no decisive female tradition about head covering and the lack of a head covering does not have any ritual consequences, the male norm need not necessarily apply. Indeed, in contrast to tallit and tefillin which are both categorized as time-bound commandments, there is no specific commandment to cover one's head. Therefore, a woman who strongly believes in the obligation of both men and women to fulfill the mitzvot of tallit and tefillin might choose to take a different position in regard to head covering. Recognizing the integrity of both of these positions and the commitment to egalitarian practice that each position reflects, this *teshuvah* will lay out a *halakhic* path for women and girls who are deciding whether or not to cover their heads in synagogue and for communities considering communal policy on head covering.

The crux of the matter is that wearing a yarmulke is just a custom, and so we are welcome to be creative with it. The problem is that this custom has been practiced for so long that it has taken on the impact of something of far greater import. If you don't believe it, look at how indignant some people get when a male visitor – Jew or non-Jew – forgets to don a kippah when entering our sanctuary. People get indignant because it is seen as disrespectful. Yet in so many synagogues of movements to our left, not wearing a kippah is the norm, while in synagogues to our right, a woman wearing a yarmulke might be looked at with scorn. That actually has happened at the Kotel of all places where, in 2015, a security officer actually refused entry to one of the Women of the Wall for wearing a yarmulke.

What we put on our heads may not be a matter of law, rather than custom, but the choice carries enormous emotional baggage. Our ethnic and national identities, ideologies and tribal affiliations are all mixed in, along with gender considerations. If my hat has an interlocking N-Y, it conveys a very different message than one with a big, bold B. To be wearing the same garment means we are, to a degree, on the same "team."

In one of Shalom Aleichem's most famous stories, "On Account of a Hat," a pious but gullible Jew mistakenly exchanges hats with a gentile officer, and this ordinary Jew is suddenly treated like royalty. (See the story at https://www.facinghistory.org/sites/default/files/ON_ACCOUNT_OF_A_HAT.pdf). Maybe we shouldn't be so quick to judge people by appearance or let looks be so important to us.

But the new CJLS responsum also reminds us that, to a degree, clothes do make the man – and woman. If we want to be true to our egalitarian ethic, we need to offer women the opportunity to be fully expressive of their Jewishness, right down to the choice of what to wear on their head. And we all need to be open to creative ways of taking our ideals and putting them into practice.

If we can foster a more tolerant, welcoming and loving society by sensitively addressing the way we cover our heads, maybe we can then turn our attention to the doing the same for our democracy.



Rabbi Joshua Hammerman

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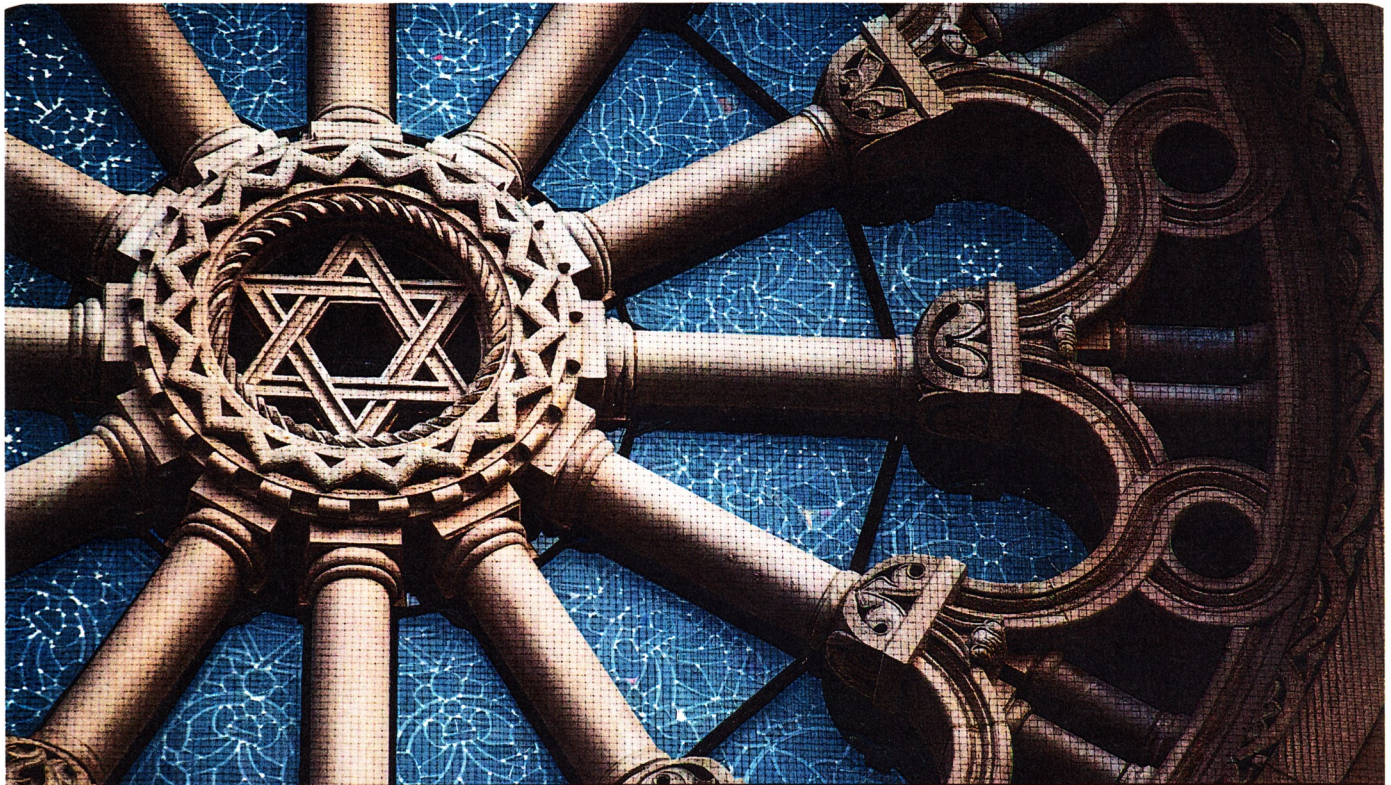
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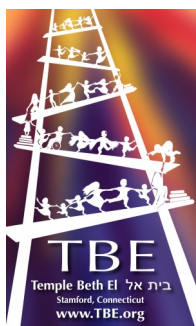
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