

ANNUAL BBQ & BARECHU

Friday, September 5, 2025

BBQ 5:30pm

Kabbalat Shabbat 7:00pm

Rain or Shine

Registration required:

www.tinyurl.com/tbebbq9-5

**Prospective Members
WELCOME!**
Come see what's new at TBE



**Kabbalat Shabbat led by
Rabbi Michael Knopf and Cantor Katie Kaplan
with special guests
Koby Hayon, Yousif Sheronik,
Marc Phaneuf and Peter Slavov**

TEMPLE BETH EL

**350 Roxbury Road,
Stamford, CT**

office@tbe.org

Co-sponsored by TBE Sisterhood



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WHERE TO FIND IT

Michael Knopf, Senior Rabbi	Page 3
Katie Kaplan, Cantor	Page 3
Joshua Hammerman, Rabbi Emeritus	Page 4
Kesher Beth El	Page 8
Sisterhood	Page 15

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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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MICHAEL ROSE KNOPF, SENIOR RABBI

Dear Friends,

As Cantor Kaplan and I — along with our extraordinary team here at TBE — prepare for the High Holy Days, we've been reflecting on what this sacred season might offer us, and what we hope it might provide for you.



Because if we're honest, this past year has pulled many of us off course. Tugged from crisis to crisis, heartbreak to heartbreak, distraction to distraction — some of us have felt overwhelmed, others disoriented, some numb, others simply worn thin. Perhaps you're still in it. Perhaps you're just beginning to find your way back.

We've been wondering what this season might come to mean, and what it might make possible. And we're sensing — at least for many of us — a yearning for something more than just another service to attend or another item on the calendar.

Maybe you're craving breath — not only in the literal sense (though that, too, is holy), but the space to pause, to quiet the noise, to hear the still small voice inside again, and maybe even feel the presence of the Breath of Life that animates all things.

Maybe you're seeking rootedness — the grounding that comes from reconnecting with ancient wisdom, with purpose, with a tradition that insists your life is part of something larger than yourself.

Maybe you're hoping for hope — not false promises or easy answers, but honest, resilient hope: the kind that looks pain in the eye and still insists on the possibility of healing, justice, and love.

Maybe you're longing for relationship — not just to be surrounded by others, but to truly connect. To feel seen. To be held. To be part of a community that embraces complexity and chooses compassion.

These are the longings we're trying to honor and hold as we prepare. And we'd love to hear from you.

What would it take — for you — to return? What do you need to release, or reclaim, in order to live this year with more courage, conviction, and compassion?

Please share your reflections with me at rabbiknopf@tbe.org by Monday, September 8. I'd be honored to read them.

I can't wait to gather, connect, celebrate, pray, and dream with you in the coming weeks.

*L'Shanah tova,
Rabbi Michael Knopf*

P.S. One point of personal privilege — Adira and I especially hope you'll join us for Shabbat services on **October 10–11 (during Sukkot)** as we celebrate our daughter Lilah ascending to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah.

Also, in preparation for this milestone, Lilah has chosen a mitzvah project that is both meaningful and deeply personal

Continued on page 4...

KATIE KAPLAN, CANTOR

Teshuva and Gratitude *Thank You for Returning My Soul*



"Return again, return again, return to the land of your soul," these haunting Carlebach lyrics often heard in synagogues around the globe during this season call us back to our shared spiritual roots. They call us back to ourselves, urging us on in the act of *teshuva* (returning) as well as reorienting and reattuning our very human lives with attentiveness to our souls' spiritual directives. It can be challenging to heed the call toward *teshuva* when Elul comes around each year. We may struggle to find ourselves within the depths of our individual longing and pain. Daily survival may have caused us to shut down just to make it through the barrage of information each day, and the thought of pulling out a mirror and taking a good look at ourselves may be overwhelming. If this resonates for you, I'd like to offer a glimpse through the window of understanding that has helped me return and look myself in the eyes; the window of gratitude.

When talking of *teshuva*, it might come as a surprise that gratitude falls easily hand in hand. Yet, every single morning upon waking and returning to the conscious world, we begin by reciting "Modeh/ah Ani" and thanking God "for returning my soul to me". Right away we are linking the act of returning with gratitude and the soul, a perfect prelude for the Yamim Norim. We thank God for returning our souls to us each morning, because it is said that while we are sleeping our souls go off and leave us and it is not to be taken for granted that they are returned to us upon waking. So, *teshuva* (return) plus gratitude equals life.

When the weight of the world feels so heavy, and everything coming at you is negative and spun which way or another by media outlets, our tradition teaches us that we can come back to gratitude to begin again, to reconnect with the root of our soul, and to set forth from a place of thanksgiving and fullness. I'm not saying it is easy to be grateful or that we should forget about the awful situations that exist in the world around us, but if we approach each day, moment, and breath with gratitude our actions will be imbued with ruach and energy with which we can restore the world. Thank you, God, for the gift of this life, this soul, and this journey. I am ready to return to the land of my soul and emerge realigned, energized, and attuned to support my family, the Jewish people, and all inhabitants of this world. Will you join me? What are you grateful for at this very moment?

Come join me for a coffee and let's discuss. e-mail me at cantor@tbe.org and let's find a time.

Shanah Tova!
Cantor Katie Kaplan

RABBI MICHAEL ROSE KNOPF continued from page 3...

for her: a **book drive to benefit Read to Grow**, a Connecticut-based organization that provides free books to children and families in need.

Lilah writes:

"Reading has always been something I've really enjoyed — it lets me explore new worlds, learn new things, and just escape into a good story. Not every kid has access to books at home, and Read to Grow helps fix that by giving books to families who need them. I chose a book drive because it felt like a real way I could make a difference and share something that matters to me."

She's collecting **new or gently used books** for children and young adults, especially **board books, picture books, bilingual books (Spanish/English), and books featuring characters of color**. All books must be in excellent condition — no tears, writing, or excessive wear.

You can drop off books in one of the bins at Temple Beth El during office hours or on Shabbat. If you prefer to donate from afar, books can also be mailed directly to our home address.

We're so proud of Lilah for choosing a project that reflects both her love of reading and her heart for justice. Thank you for helping her bring the gift of books — and the joy of reading — to more children across our state.

JOSHUA HAMMERMAN, RABBI EMERITUS

ASK THE ETHICIST

Ask the Ethicist: Is Cultural Appropriation OK?



Can I participate in a Jewish wedding that borrows from Hindu and Native American traditions?

BY RABBI JOSHUA HAMMERMAN

On One Foot

As we make our way toward the beginning of a fateful year, for America, Israel and the world, we pray for a better future for us all. Before we say goodbye to the summer, I do want to look back with immense gratitude at the Shabbat Mara and I spent back at TBE in July, which included an outdoor Kabbalat Shabbat service that was simply heavenly. Many of you know I've always been partial to these services, but rarely before had the weather been so cooperative. I appreciate Rabbi Knopf's invitation to cover for him that week, and it was a joy to work alongside Cantor Katie and Chris Coogan once again, and to see so many of your smiling faces.

I mentioned last bulletin that I am doing some writing these days for MyJewishLearning's Jewish Ethicist column, and I want to share something both timeless and of great current relevance, revolving around the churning question of cultural appropriation. Also, please subscribe to my Substack if you haven't - if nothing else, as a subscriber, you'll be the first to know about some special projects I'm planning for the coming weeks. It's at <https://rabbiJoshuaHammerman.substack.com/>

From my family to yours, best wishes for a sweet new year!

Rabbi Joshua Hammerman

Question: Dear friends of mine are planning their wedding and have asked me to participate. They are both Jewish, but plan to incorporate various Hindu and Native American traditions into the ceremony simply because they find them beautiful. This feels like cultural appropriation, which I oppose. Is there an ethical problem with this?

Let me start by saying that I'm a former religious studies major who routinely shares wisdom from diverse traditions and who quoted Kahlil Gibran at his wedding. So, my first instinct is to say that bringing some cultural diversity into what is unquestionably a Jewish wedding would probably not be offensive, either to Jews or others.

But the key is not to offend our fellow humans, who like us are created in God's image. This is the Jewish ethical principle of *kavod habriyot*, honoring God's creations by promoting human dignity.

The principle originates in the ethical maxim from Tractate *Avot 4:1*: "Who is honorable? The one who honors others." The possibilities for applying this are theoretically limitless, but for the ancient rabbis, the principle was largely invoked to make allowances in the law if human dignity was

Continued on page 20...

Shanah Tova u'Metukah



From
Temple Beth El
Board of Trustees
Clergy and Staff

SHABBAT SERVICES

Friday Night services are held at 7:00 pm

Shabbat Morning services are held at 10:00 am

Our services may be seen on livestream

<http://www.tbe.org/tbe-live/>

All are welcome!

WE WELCOME YOU TO JOIN US ON SHABBAT MORNINGS

We warmly welcome you to show up for services on Shabbat in whatever way is meaningful to you. A reminder: you don't have to attend services to come for lunch on Shabbat! Services begin at 10 am, and we get to lunch around 12:15 pm. You can also show up for and/or leave services any time:

- From 10 until about 10:30 am, we sing the joyous and soulful melodies of P'sukei D'zimrah, the preliminary service.

- From about 10:30 to 10:45 am is the morning service, Shaharit (including greatest hits like Shema and the Amidah).

- We take the Torah out at about 10:45 am, and chant from the Torah and Haftarah portions until about 11:30 am.

- The D'var Torah (sermon) takes place around 11:30 am.

Between 11:45 am-12:15 pm, we conclude the service with Musaf, Aleinu, and Adon Olam (we always invite children up to help lead some of these final prayers, and any kid who helps lead gets to pick a prize from the Rabbi's "Tchotchk Chest"!).

And for those who wish to partake, you are welcome to make a "L'chaim!" with us on a beverage of your choosing (whether alcoholic or non-alcoholic) after services.

SUKKOT

October 7 & 8, 2025

Service schedule and special events to follow...



Special Occasion?

Sponsor the Shabbat Announcements
(emailed every Thursday afternoon)
or

Rabbi Knopf's Shabbat Reflections
(emailed every Friday morning)

Donation of \$118

All sponsors will be acknowledged at the top of each of the eblasts and also listed in our bi-monthly Bulletin.

[Click here](#) to reserve your date.

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 Jon Eisenstein at jon.eisenstein@gmail.com

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

B'NAI MITZVAH

October 11

LILAH KNOPF

Daughter of Rabbi Michael & Adira
Sister of Shemaya & Akiva
Attends Bi-Cultural Hebrew Academy
Mitzvah Project: Read to Grow



MAZAL TOV TO...

Guy Sasson and Jane Berzner on their marriage last summer.

Ariel and Stephen Bedik on the birth of a son, Brody Harrison, and to the proud grandparents, Caryl Ferber Poser and Peter Poser.

Gregory Schneider and Kathryn Callahan on the birth of a son, Benjamin Padraig, and to the proud grandparents, Janet and Mark Schneider.

Emma and Brian Adler on the birth of a daughter, Margot Rose.



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

BARRY ERNER ✦ AMANDA GEFFNER
RABBI GERRY GINSBURG ✦ RABBI JOSHUA HAMMERMAN
LEO LINDER ✦ BERT MADWED ✦ SUSAN SCHNEIDERMAN

THANK YOU FOR SPONSORING KIDDUSH

LESLIE GLENN and NEIL KATZ

THANK YOU FOR SPONSORING THE SHABBAT ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIZ and SCOTT KROWITZ
LOIS STARK and GARY LESSEN
IRMA ROSS

CHECK US OUT ON **facebook**

facebook.com/tbestamford/

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 203-274-1708.

Project Ezra: Providing shiva meals to the bereaved in the congregation. Contact Debbie Adler-Klein at dakmd75@gmail.com or 203-253-1664.

Serving the homeless: Help prepare and serve food — you can do either or both throughout the year. Contact Julie Rosenberg at julierosenbergslp@gmail.com or 203-273-6794.

High Holiday Food Drive: Contact Sharon Turshen at 203-323-3872

Christmas dinners at local homeless shelters: Contact Karen Resnick at kmr925@sbcglobal.net or 203-536-3115.

BETH EL CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

Information about the Beth El Cemetery Association, Inc. is available from:

Allan Lang at 203-327-6418
or
Eileen H. Rosner at 203-461-0506

Get involved, please...

Help Wanted! In order to maintain our vibrant and dynamic community, the Fund-Raising Committee needs more members to support TBE and volunteer their skills and talents. Many of these opportunities ask for very small-time commitments. Please consider getting involved with the:

Annual Appeal | Temple Rock | Cantor's Concert

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact us and we will give you more information.

Thank you!

Contact Ron Zussman rmzussman@gmail.com or Steven Lander execdir@tbe.org for information.

An Evening of Hope

ICRF's 50th Anniversary Connecticut Gala

Sunday, September 14, 5:30 pm Temple Beth El, Stamford, CT



Former Stamford Mayor
David Martin
Evening of Hope Honoree



Burt Rubin, MD
Physician Honoree



Shaya Speter
Guest Speaker
Cancer Survivor's Father



Learn more and register: icrfonline.org/cthope2025
For more information, contact David Kwasin at david.kwasin@icrfonline.org.



High Holy Days Services 5786

EREV ROSH HASHANAH

Monday, September 22

Service 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

ROSH HASHANAH

Tuesday, September 23 - First Day

8:45 a.m.

Family Service with children 5 and younger
10:00 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. in the tent
Family Service with children K-6th grade
11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. in the tent
Tashlich 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, September 24 - Second Day

8:45 a.m.

KOL NIDREI

Wednesday, October 1

Musical Prelude 5:45 p.m. Service 6:00 p.m.

YOM KIPPUR

Thursday, October 2

Service 8:45 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Family Service with children 5 and younger
10:00 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. in the tent
Family Service with children K-6th grade
11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. in the tent

Mincha: 3:45 p.m. Yizkor: 5:15 p.m.
Neilah: 6:00 p.m. Shofar: 7:20 p.m.

All times are approximate.

**Temple Beth El, Stamford
and
Congregation Beth El, Norwalk
Proudly Present:**

KESHER BETH EL
*Beth El Connections: Two Synagogues,
One Learning Community*



**IN PERSON SUNDAY MORNINGS GRADES K-7
ZOOM HEBREW TUTORIALS THURSDAY
AFTERNOONS GRADES 3-7**

- **Monthly Sunday Morning Learning Program for ages 3-4**
- **Amazing Holiday Celebrations**
- **Experiential, Interactive Learning**
- **Small Group Hebrew Learning**
- **Weekly Tefilah (worship service) led by our clergy, teachers, and students**
- **TRY US OUT FOR A YEAR! For grades K-2, registration for the first year is open to non-members; tuition is reduced 50% for the first year for members.**

For more information contact Leo Linder:
eddir@tbe.org.

K'TANIM

**A monthly Jewish learning Sunday drop-off program for 3 and 4 year-olds.
9:00am-11:45am**

**GAMES! MUSIC! TORAH! HOLIDAYS!
STORIES! CRAFTS! BLESSINGS! FUN!**

**You do not need to be a member
of a synagogue to participate.**

Questions? Contact Leo Linder at eddir@tbe.org.



Welcome back, Kesher families! We're excited to welcome you back on the 7th, and to share some of the big changes we've been working on behind the scenes, like our revamped curriculum and new one-on-one Zoom sessions. And I know we're all looking forward to the upcoming special events, like our sofer visit for the second annual Torah Day. It's going to be a great year, full of plenty of chances to learn, pray, and play!

And don't forget to register for youth services on the High Holidays, too. On both the first day of Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur, services will be in the tent. The service for families with kids 5 and under is from 10 to 10:45; kids in Kindergarten through 6th grade can join us from 11 to 12, and families are welcome (but not required) to attend. Registration is available at <https://tinyurl.com/HHYouth25>.

Interested in joining us or want to learn more? Email me (eddir@tbe.org) for more info, or to arrange a trial day!

Leo Linder
Kesher Director



Talia and Dina say,
"I'm giving Kesher three thumbs up!"





TBE Adult Learning

THE SIX SCROLLS



**Join Rabbi Michael Knopf and Rabbi Gerry Ginsburg
in exploration of *The Six Scrolls: The Six Megillot***

**On Shabbat, September 6, Rabbi Ginsburg will lead the discussion on
The Book of Jonah.**

**On Shabbat, October 4, Rabbi Knopf will lead the discussion on The
Book of Kohelet.**

**You are also invited to attend the Shabbat service at 10:00 am and/or
the Kiddush prior to the class.**

Class will start at approximately 12:45 pm.

All backgrounds are welcome. No prior knowledge is necessary.

Temple Beth El
350 Roxbury Road, Stamford, CT
203-322-6901 | www.tbe.org | office@tbe.org



SELICHOT

Saturday, September 13, 2025

at Temple Beth El, 350 Roxbury Road, Stamford, CT

7:00pm: Dinner - \$36 per person (\$72 max/family-parent & children)

8:00pm: Havdalah

8:15pm: Musical Selichot Service followed by dessert

Reserve here: www.tinyurl.com/dinner9-13

**We will usher in the High Holidays with a soulful and
musically inspired Selichot service featuring:**

Rabbi Michael Knopf, Cantor Katie Kaplan and Leo Linder



with musicians Koby Hayon, Yousif Sheronick and Peter Slavov

**This service features the first round of the penitential prayers
of the season and many of the most beloved High Holiday melodies.**

**It is sure to help you open up spiritually
for the Yamim Nora'im (Days of Awe)**

Can't attend in person? Join us online:

<http://www.tbe.org/tbe-live/>



Temple Beth El

350 Roxbury Road, Stamford, CT 06902

www.tbe.org | 203-322-6901 | office@tbe.org

Koleinu Shabbat

*Friday, September 12 & October 17, 2025
7:00 pm*



"Koleinu" means "our voices," and this special Shabbat evening service invites us to join our voices in song, prayer, and reflection.

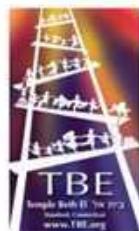
With seating in the round, we'll create an intimate and uplifting atmosphere, blending traditional Hebrew prayers, soulful melodies, and moments of quiet intention to foster connection and spiritual renewal.

Stay to enjoy an Oneg Shabbat after the service.

All are welcome.

Due to the special setup for this service and its location in the social hall, there will be no livestream.

Temple Beth El
350 Roxbury Road, Stamford, CT
www.tbe.org | 203-322-6901 | office@tbe.org



ROOTS SHABBAT

Friday, September 26 & October 10, 2025

7:00 pm

Step into an unplugged Shabbat evening service that blends the depth of tradition, the warmth of connection, and the energy of joyful community.

Through a fuller Kabbalat Shabbat and Ma'ariv, focused on traditional prayers, familiar melodies, and spirited congregational participation, we'll create an intimate, vibrant, and uplifting atmosphere.

Celebrate Shabbat with song, connection, and the warmth of shared spirit – where ancient roots meet resonant voices.

All are welcome!

Can't join us in person? Join us on live stream: <http://www.tbe.org/tbe-live/>



Temple Beth El
350 Roxbury Road, Stamford, CT
www.tbe.org | 204-322-6901 | office@tbe.org



Shanah Tova!

Terri Afromowitz and Family

Marian J. Bauer and Family

Carol and Wil Brewer

Melody and Jon Bryant

The Dalgin-Suchin Family

Barry Erner and Melissa Dreyfus Erner

Cathy Bernstein and Bud Freund

The Frieden Family

Heidi and Harrison Ganz

Amanda and Michael Geffner

Rabbi Gerry and Dr. Fran Ginsburg

The Gottlin Family

Nancy Greene

Bill and Susan Greenfield

Denise and David Greenman

Leslie and Joseph Heyison

Israeli Dance with Leng

The Jaffe-Berkowitz Family: Parry, Devra, Zoë and Andrew

Nancy and Jerry Kapchan

Cantor Katie and Eric Kaplan and Family

Madelyne Kirch

The Knopf Family: Rabbi Michael, Adira, Lilah, Shemaya and Akiva

Vicki Kobliner and Sal DeStefano

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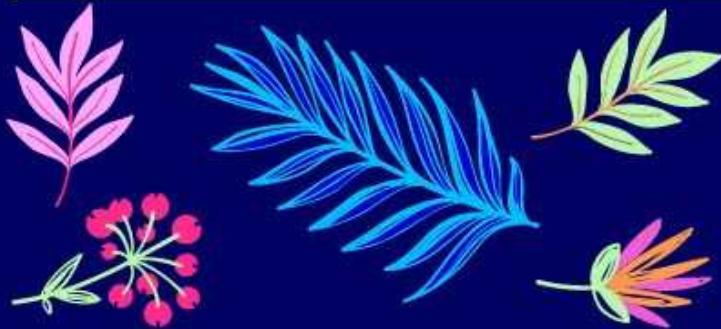
Judy Schneiderman and Family

Susan Schneiderman, Patrick Delaney and Lowell Eitelberg

The Springer Family

The Welt Family

TBE SISTERHOOD



Sisterhood is a dynamic, welcoming group of women dedicated to:

- Supporting our synagogue through service, celebration, and tradition
- Organizing social, spiritual, and educational events
- Giving back to the wider community through acts of tzedakah
- Building friendships with women of all ages that last a lifetime

Whether you're new to the community or a lifelong member, there's a place for you here!

Keep your eyes out for upcoming activities and events!

Ready to Join? email Sisterhood@tbe.org for more information on how you can get involved!

Order Your Lulav and Etrog



Sukkot 5786/October 7-14, 2025

NAME _____

PHONE _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

Please print neatly.

NUMBER OF REGULAR SETS _____ **at \$65/set**

NUMBER OF CHILDREN'S SETS _____ **at \$55/set**

TOTAL = \$ _____

Please order by Monday, September 15 at 2:00 p.m.

Go to: www.tinyurl.com/tbelulav2025

or

Send this form with your check payable to:

**TEMPLE BETH EL
350 Roxbury Road, Stamford, CT 06902**

**Pick-up will be Monday, October 6
from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

For information call 203-322-6901.

FAITH IN ACTION: JEWISH VALUES AND THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE



Join us for a yearlong pilot program for Temple Beth El teens in grades 8-12 that explores how Jewish faith and values inspire action in the world. The program will empower students to engage with social justice through learning, discussion, relationship-building, and a culminating justice-themed trip.

Led by Rabbi Michael Knopf



4 IN PERSON GATHERINGS*

NOVEMBER 15

DECEMBER 20

JANUARY 31

FEBRUARY 21

Back up date if needed: March 28



EVENINGS



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\$180/student plus cost of trip
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Trip options will include New York City, Boston, Newport or Philadelphia.

*Participation in at least 3 of 4 cohort sessions is required to join the trip.

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After consulting your tax advisor, please contact the TBE office at 203-322-6901.

MEMORIAL PLAQUES



Inscribe the names of your loved ones on a plaque in our Chapel foyer along with a light to commemorate their *yahrzeit* and *yizkor* observances throughout the year.

For details, contact Mindy at office@tbe.org or 203-322-6901, ext. 301.

TREE OF LIFE



A beautiful way to commemorate a special occasion is to purchase a "leaf" on our beautiful "Tree of Life" sculpture adorning our Temple lobby. There are many more leaves available for your own personal inscriptions.

The following categories are still available:

Triple Chai	\$1,000
Silver Leaves - Gold Border	\$750
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Call the office for information 203-322-6901.

INFORMATION FOR YOU...

When making a donation an acknowledgement will be mailed to the designee for donations of \$10 or more. Donations of less than \$10 will be acknowledged only in the Bulletin. All donations will be published in the Bulletin unless you state that you wish to be anonymous.

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at stake. For example, for the sake of a person's dignity, the rabbis permitted someone to [carry three small stones on Shabbat](#) if they were needed for wiping oneself in a latrine. In modern times, the principle has been applied in ways the ancient rabbis could never have imagined. In 2006, for instance, it was the foundation of a landmark halachic responsum by the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of Conservative Judaism (CJLS) affirming same-sex relationships and the possibility of LGBTQ Conservative rabbis. Another modern application allows for the use of hearing aids on Shabbat.

I would contend that cultural appropriation, or insulting the faith of another person, could be seen as a betrayal of kavod habriyot. Admittedly, I have yet to see the concept used in this manner. And the sages would probably not be thrilled about introducing Hindu rituals into Jewish wedding ceremonies. But neither would they have imagined using the principle to justify LGBTQ rabbis.

In applying the principle in this way, the key is to distinguish between cultural *appropriation*, which is disrespectful and exploitative, and cultural *appreciation*, which is well-intended and gracious. The difference rests in part on consideration of the power dynamics at play, especially when discussing minority groups that have faced discrimination — in this case, Native Americans. And it rests in part on how the rituals themselves are performed. Is their original meaning and intent being distorted? Is another person's faith being mocked?

In considering these questions, it might help to imagine how it would feel if the shoe were on the other foot and people at a Hindu wedding started [stepping on a glass](#) and yelling "Mazal tov." I'd likely feel a little disrespected, or at the very least confused. Do these non-Jews genuinely understand the power and purpose of that ritual? Do they recognize the pain that Jews felt 2,000 years ago when mourning the destruction of the temple, which gave birth to that practice? Do they understand that this ritual now cries out with an intensified pathos following the Holocaust and October 7?

When I stumble upon a YouTube video of a [Messianic congregation](#) and see how they distort the original meanings of Jewish rituals to incorporate belief in [Jesus](#), and yet still call it Judaism, I find it offensive. It seems inauthentic and manipulative to me, especially if it is aimed at proselytizing. I would be careful not to do the same thing in considering how to participate in this wedding.

Personally, I would tend to play it safe and not bring in actual rituals unless Hindu and Native American representatives are present to fully explain and authenticate them. But whatever you decide, I would recommend focusing on respect, sensitivity and authenticity in deciding whether and how it's appropriate to appropriate.

One question you didn't ask but might consider is whether incorporating those traditions into a Jewish ceremony might be offensive not to Hindus and Native Americans, but to Jews. Some might be offended at bringing

foreign religions — especially two that have long been considered idolatrous — into a Jewish ceremony. Strictly speaking, associating with rites from polytheistic faiths is forbidden in Jewish tradition.

For me, this wouldn't be a problem. I personally do not feel a Jewish wedding ceremony is compromised by a demonstration of cultural coexistence. If it's a Jewish wedding with a meaningful passage from Rabindranath Tagore or Chief Seattle thrown in — or the music of Pachelbel's Canon, for that matter — well, Judaism has long benefited from the influence of other traditions. It's a perk of surviving nearly 4,000 years. But not everyone will necessarily feel this way, so it may be wise to consider who will be in attendance at this particular wedding.

Bottom line: Choosing to participate can be an ethical choice. But you might ask whether the added selections will truly do honor to those faith traditions and their adherents. And if the couple is looking for suggestions, they can contact me for a great passage from Kahlil Gibran.

REYUT COMMITTEE TO THE RESCUE

While delivering Shabbat packages to patients at Stamford Hospital, Gail G. Trell and Carol Krim met Reut and Joseph from Israel, who were visiting family in the U.S. for Passover, when Reut suffered a medical emergency. Gail and Carol helped the family manage Passover in the hospital with food, the Shabbat elevator and Aaron's Place, a Kosher Comfort Room (a project of UJF).

Their daughter arrived early and spent some time in the NICU. The family was finally able to return to Israel in July.

For more details, please refer to The New Jewish Voice, September 2025 issue.



Photo courtesy of UJF

Noah's Ark



Have you seen our replica of Noah's Ark in the lobby by the main office? It is walnut, measures 76" by 72", and has 149 plaques and 18 larger animals that can include engraved messages in honor of a family's children or anyone else, or in honor of a significant family event .

We are asking you to consider honoring your children (or anyone else) by donating \$250 to this project and buying a plaque. We hope that you might be further moved to buy one of the remaining animals for a donation of \$1,000.

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