



A Message from Rabbi Rachel

Who are We?



I've been thinking about CBTBI's identity, because of two reasons. First, our identity as a congregation has changed as a result of the pandemic. We are no longer simply a group of people who meet in the building on East Holly Ave. Secondly, and more personally, I am approaching my second

anniversary with CBTBI. I began officially as CBTBI's rabbi on January 1, 2019, and last winter, we celebrated my one-year anniversary at CBTBI. CBTBI and I have evolved together during these past two years.

When I have big questions, such as "Who are we?", I tend to go back to basics. It's the same impetus, I bet, that started the tradition of talking with our b'nai mitzvah kids about their names at their b'nai mitzvah. So – what is our name and what does that say about us?

Congregation B'nai Tikvah Beth Israel. Let's unpack that name. First, we are a *congregation*, not a *synagogue* or a *temple*. I like this a lot. The word *congregation* refers, first and foremost, to the people who are members. The members, not the building or the clergy or the staff, define this organization. We are people who like to *congregate* or *get together*. What for? The rest of our name spells it out.

The word *B'nai* is probably familiar to many non-Hebrew speakers. We know it from *B'nai Mitzvah* – the children of mitzvah; or *B'nai Israel* – the children of Israel. While it can literally mean *children*, perhaps a fuller translation is *descendants of* or *recipients of the tradition of*. Our third word, *Tikvah*, famous also for referring to Israel's anthem, means *hope*. Put them together: We are the *recipients of the tradition of hope*. When we get together, physically and virtually, we seek *hope* together.

Our name concludes with *Beth Israel*, the house of Israel. Wherever our congregation meets, whether that is on Zoom or on Facebook, we imply, is the house of Israel. The

biblical namesake of Israel lived a nomadic lifestyle, and, just like Jews for generations, resided in many different places. *Israel* also is defined by his wrestling with an angel, and, indeed, is the name that the angel gave Jacob after he did so, literally meaning God wrestler, or even morality wrestlers.

So, if we put Congregation B'nai Tikvah Beth Israel's name together in translation, it means something like this: *Congregation of the Recipients of Hope; House of Morality Wrestlers*. It's a pretty striking name for these times, when we all need hope, and are figuring out, anew it sometimes seems, how to wrestle with what is truly important to us, and prioritize in this new normal. Thinking about our identity as a congregation, I also think it rings true: We have been giving each other hope; we created homes on wheels, and been helping each other to wrestle with what is important.

*L'Shalom,
Rabbi Rachel*

Story Time with Wendy Marder
Every Friday at 4 PM



www.facebook.com/cbtbi

From the President's Desk by Lori Samilson

It All Comes Down to Community



If you were anxiously awaiting the latest edition of the shofar for the last month, I apologize. I am the reason it is late. Trust me, I started working on my article in the beginning of November. However, so much has happened since November that each day, the previous day's thoughts became outdated.

Before our general

membership meeting in November, I wanted to write about the importance of community and belonging in the time of social distancing. I decided to wait until after the meeting, hoping for some deep inspiration from our membership. Alas, the day after the meeting my computer died, completely separating me from the outside world and paralyzing my law practice.

As Thanksgiving approached, I wanted to write about all of the things in our CBTBI community for which I am grateful. That would have taken more space than I am allotted.

As Chanukah approached, I wanted to talk about light and dedication, but I was too overwhelmed with the hustle and bustle of the holiday to sit down and write.

Now we are approaching the secular New Year and another opportunity to review the last year and plan for the

coming year. I am now approximately half-way through my first year as president and I've spent a good portion of that time deciding what inspiration I can give you in a few hundred words or less. Here it is: The last few months have been overwhelming for me, in a good way. I watch open-mouthed in staff meetings as I see how Judy and Steve keep the synagogue running smoothly and professionally in a way I did not experience when I was president of B'nai Tikvah. I am amazed by Wendy Marder's expertise in Jewish education and at how she strives to bring our children into the community from afar and to give them the best education possible. I am exhausted by Rabbi Rachel's energy level and her determination to keep the sense of *Yiddishkeit* in everything we do, even if we, as leaders, have

to take a few extra steps. Yes, we are a business, but we are also a religious organization and must be guided by Jewish values in everything we do and in the way we run our business. I am forever grateful for our volunteers who help make all of this happen and the people I see, members and non-members, who are participating.

I am in awe of everything we have accomplished since the world was turned upside down last March. From streaming our services, Zooming our High Holidays, and reaching out to the community, to the virtual programming we provided for the High Holidays and Chanukah and are planning for Purim, we have tried to offer something for everybody. But there is always room for improvement. I am aching to have more contact with the community and to establish relationships with the families I have not yet had the opportunity to meet. I have a few ideas for some new programs to implement in the coming secular year, but I would love to hear from you as well. If you have any ideas, suggestions, or would just like to help, I am always available.

Stay happy and healthy!



The Shofar

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A Message from Wendy Marder, Educational Director



Our goal for CBTBI Religious School is to keep our students and families engaged in Judaism, community, and in learning about their heritage. This is happening, albeit with a lot of work, patience, creativity, flexibility, and

tech learning on everyone's part. Thank you!

When I sit down in front of my Zoom screen with a full class, I feel like I am on Hollywood Squares with the nine of us. I don't give out *x*'s and *o*'s but we do spend a lot of time sharing opinions, ideas, and even some facts, as we study Torah, review prayers, and discuss history. My students said class is calmer, it's easier to hear each other, and it's less distracting. Yes, a roomful of teens and pre-teens is not usually easy to keep focused, but on Zoom, each student has his/her own space and is muted until speaking. Many students spoke about remote class being less stressful since they didn't have to leave one activity to run to another.

Socializing is really minimized and though this makes it easier to manage a classroom, it is also something the students miss. They miss just being with their friends and the classroom bonding and activities that are part of an in-person setting. We miss them, and you, too.

Some students are struggling with concentrating and paying attention to lessons online, and that is why we have built in the individualized learning time with every student in grades 3 through 7. Classroom teachers have only one group of students and are happy to have this chance to really get to know all their students better. Lisa Parker is also able to work with students one-on-one in her capacity as "in-class" support teacher.

Certainly remote learning is a work in progress and not ideal, but so many good things have come out of it

that I think some aspects of it will be continued even when we return to in-person learning. The internet is a constant source of information, entertainment, and challenges. Keeping everyone safe and tuned in, technologically, is a task we are aiming to perfect. Keeping our students engaged and motivated to learn in the time they are not on screen with Hebrew school is also a challenge. So, whether it is Zoom, Google Classroom, DoJo, group text/chat, Jewparty, Go Noodle, and/or various other games and techniques, it is clear that we all have much to learn and much to be grateful for.

A big *yosher koach* (good job) to our teachers for their commitment and determination to bring online learning to our students in the most positive and fun



Students helped to lead services on Zoom during a recent Shabbat B'yachad.

way possible, as they too learn to navigate these new waters. Thank you to our parents and students for keeping up with all the changes and emails and information and for helping us and each other.

Do look forward to monthly assemblies on Zoom, contests, spirit days, in-person, social distanced activities, student/family led services with the Rabbi on Zoom and Facebook, b'nai mitzvah celebrations, and continued fun and learning!

Be safe. Be well. Be happy.

Wendy

Mazel Tov!

Congratulations to Our Recent B'nai Mitzvah

Samantha Markham — October 17, 2020

Hebrew name: Shayndel - שינדל

Parsha: Bereshit

Samantha's family includes parents Colin and Marie, and her older sister, Sarah. For her mitzvah project, Samantha created a fundraising campaign to assist her beloved Jewish summer camp, Camp Louise, through the sale of crazy socks. She enjoys painting, cosplay, special effects makeup, and reading about Jewish history.

To Samantha, becoming a bat mitzvah means becoming a Jewish adult, and taking on the responsibilities and choices it entails. She thanks all of her teachers, Mrs. Marder, Rabbi Rachel, Miss Lori, her family, friends, and the entire congregation.



Aaron Veytsman — December 12, 2020

Hebrew name: Aharon - אהרן

Parsha: Vayeshev

Aaron is the son of Natalie and Peter. He has two siblings — Jacob and Kate — and two dogs, Tessa and Indy. His mitzvah project was assembling goody bags with a personal note, and delivering them to the residents of Cardinal Village Senior Living.

Aaron's favorite activities are football and wrestling. He said the most challenging part to becoming a bar mitzvah was the work and time commitment, but it helped him to better understand Judaism.

He thanks all of the teachers and staff.