

170
CONGREGATION
BETH ISRAEL
— 1854-2024 —

SEPTEMBER 2024 BULLETIN

Vol. 172 | No. 1



*Our complete clergy team on the bimah together for the first time at
Rabbi Samuel Rheins' Service of Welcome on Friday, September 6.*

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CLERGY

Senior Rabbi.....David A. Lyon, D.D.

Senior Associate Rabbi.....Adrienne P. Scott, M.A.H.L.

Assistant Rabbi.....Samuel I. Rheins

Cantor.....Kenneth J. Feibush, M.S.M.

STAFF

Director of Lifelong Learning & Engagement...David M. Scott, RJE

Interim Director of Operations.....Mike Mason

Head of The Shlenker School.....Dr. Michelle Barton

Controller.....Wendy Airlie

Cemetery Director.....Michael Kirstein

Director of Special Events & Catering.....Marsha Gilbert

Director of Marketing & Communications.....Hannah Schiff

Director of Facilities & Security.....Michael Reddick

Director of Audio Visual & Production.....Mark Eggleston

Director of Center for Spiritual Direction.....Dr. Tom Cole

Assistant Director of the MBJLC.....Kerri Zerlin

Membership & Engagement Manager.....Stephanie Shargal

Librarian.....Susan Whitman

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President.....Susan Feigin Harris

Vice Presidents.....Doug Aron

Leslie Margolis

Caren Sweetland

Ed Wolff

Treasurer.....Tom Fish

Secretary.....Jeffrey Gilbert

Immediate Past President.....Richard Kaplan

Cover, (left to right): Rabbi Samuel Rheins, Rabbi Adrienne Scott,
Rabbi David Lyon, Cantor Kenneth Feibush

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

- Elizabeth & Christopher Bell
- Lady & Larry Brown
- Ingrid Castillo & Tyler Cortner
- Lisa & Michael Friedlander
- Sarah & Jason Kappa
- Svetlana & Simon Kukes
- Alix & Justin LaPoten
- Leslie & David Lerner
- Caryn & Shawn Mackoff
- Monica McGrann & Yoram Borodaty
- Rebecca & Brian Ray
- Sara & Mike Silverman
- Lynley & Alex Stern
- Ashley & Jennifer Wermuth

Do you know someone interested
in becoming part of our community?
Are you new to town or looking to find
a way to connect with Beth Israel?
Contact Stephanie Shargal,
Membership & Engagement Manager,
at sshargal@beth-israel.org.

LIVESTREAM

Watch Shabbat Services live
at beth-israel.org

Watch Shabbat Services later at
[YouTube.com/BethIsraelHouston](https://www.youtube.com/BethIsraelHouston)

TEMPLE TEXTS

To receive text message updates
about news and events at Congregation
Beth Israel, text “Yes” to 87569.

PAYMENTS & DONATIONS

Please send payments
and donations to:

Congregation Beth Israel
DEPT.
PO Box 4851
Houston, TX 77210-4851

Soulful Wishes for the New Year 5785



The Jewish New Year is coming. It still holds the promises of sweetness, prosperity, and peace. I understand that it's difficult to be optimistic about the future when the present world is raging and each week is filled with uncertainty. But as Jews, we're optimistic about the world, because our historical memory remains strong. Its familiar tension enables us to learn from what we remember about the past. Those memories, joyful and sorrowful, have taught us to remain faithfully hopeful.

In Talmud, in Berakhot, a tractate about principal prayers and blessings, we can learn two lessons for the New Year. First, every tractate of Talmud begins on page 2. The idea is that every tractate of Talmud that we begin to read is a conversation that began years ago, long before our generation. A conversation that has no formal beginning also has no formal conclusion. The lessons flow like a stream that we enter, where our toes and insights cause ripple effects but leave no permanent evidence of our being there. The experience is meaningful to us, but it leaves room for everybody who enters to learn and grow in their own ways. The possibilities and the hopefulness are ever-present as long as we return to the proverbial stream from time to time, and especially each New Year.

Second, Tractate Berakhot teaches us that "three things contribute to our optimism and cheerfulness: a beautiful home, a beautiful partner; and beautiful things" (57b). A beautiful home is not the same as an elegant mansion; rather, it's a home that reflects who we are when we're at our best. A beautiful partner is a spouse or companion with whom we encounter daily life without fear of being alone. Beautiful things aren't necessarily fancy; they might simply be dear to us and sacred to our family.

All these things enable us to face the world, no matter its current condition, with gratitude, friendship, and generosity. When our soul feels full, then we have something to give and share. A person who has plenty but remains miserly is a person whose soul suffers. How do we know? Because people who have much less but give what they can are people whose souls feel full. Only once did a man tell me on his deathbed that his "soul aches." I had never heard those words before, but it came to mean that though he longed for more, it was no longer within reach. Our souls should never ache as long as we have life and more to give. "With all your heart, and soul, and might" (Deuteronomy 6), let us give and share with gratitude for all that we've been given.

My hope is that our New Year might be all that we wish each other, and that we can enjoy those wishes by contributing to each other's well-being through the awareness of the fullness of our souls. What can we give? With whom will we share? May the New Year 5785 be a year of gratitude for all that we have done and for all that we have become, together.

L'Shanah Tovah,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Lyon". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and personal.

Rabbi David Lyon

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL PRESENTS “H-TOWN JEWS” YOUNG PROFESSIONALS GROUP



Congregation Beth Israel recently formed a new young Jewish professionals group called H-Town Jews, led by Assistant Rabbi, Rabbi Samuel Rheins. The group is open to Jewish professionals between the ages of 22-35 who are interested in networking, socializing, and building community across Houston. You do not need to be a member of Congregation Beth Israel to join.

The group hosted its first social event at Rudyard's Pub on Thursday, September 19. New members mingled, enjoyed delicious pub food and drinks, and brainstormed event ideas for the 2024-2025 year. Just two weeks before Rosh Hashanah, it was the perfect way to kick off the New Year.

Spread the word to your networks, and stay tuned for more details about upcoming events and activities! If you are interested in joining H-Town Jews, contact Rabbi Samuel Rheins at srheins@beth-israel.org or 713-771-6221.

MAZEL TOV, MOHAMED! CELEBRATING 40 YEARS AS A CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL STAFF MEMBER



Mohamed Bah

It is with deep appreciation and awe that we extend a Mazel Tov to Mohamed Bah on his 40th anniversary as a Congregation Beth Israel staff member.

Mohamed is an integral part of the Temple's maintenance team. He is not only devoted to his colleagues and his work, but also to our members, most of whom have gotten to know, and love, Mohamed over the years.

Reflecting on the last four decades, Mohamed emphasized how much he cherishes the Beth Israel community. "I can't believe how fast time has flown," he said.

Please join us in congratulating Mohamed on this significant milestone, and thanking him for his many years of dedicated service.

**IT'S ALL
IN THE
DETAILS**



Do we have your most up-to-date information in our system? Let's make sure! Log in to your ShulCloud account at beth-israel.shulcloud.com, click on the Welcome tab at the top right corner, and select My Account to verify and/or update your account details.

2024/5785

High Holy Days

SERVICE SCHEDULE

All services and programs will take place in the Sanctuary and via Live Stream, unless otherwise noted.

SELICHOT

Saturday, September 28 · Selichot

7:30 PM Good Shabbos

A play by Miriam Kalman Friedman

Note: The performance will not be live-streamed

8:30 PM Reception

Gordon Chapel Foyer

9:00 PM Service

Gordon Chapel

ROSH HASHANAH

Wednesday, October 2 · Erev Rosh Hashanah

6:30 PM Service

Thursday, October 3 · Rosh Hashanah

9:15 AM Children's Service

10:30 AM Main Service

10:30 AM Teen Service

Levit Hall

12:30 PM Tashlich

Meet in the Gordon Chapel Foyer

Sunday, October 6 · Cemetery Services

4:00 PM Beth Israel Memorial Garden

(Antoine cemetery)

5:00 PM West Dallas Cemetery

YOM KIPPUR

Friday, October 11 · Kol Nidre

7:30 PM Service

Saturday, October 12 · Yom Kippur

9:15 AM Children's Service

10:30 AM Meditations of the Heart

10:30 AM Yom Kippur Study Sessions

Finger Board Room & The Margolis Gallery

11:30 AM Main Service

2:00 PM Yom Kippur Symposium

3:00 PM Teen Service

Levit Hall

3:00 PM Afternoon Service

4:00 PM Yizkor & Neilah

*We invite you to break the fast with us
immediately following services.*

*Entries will be required for admittance to
the Temple during High Holy Days services.*

2024/5785

High Holy Days

SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS

Congregation Beth Israel is pleased to announce this year's Yom Kippur Symposium speakers, four inspiring Temple members who will address the prompt, "How Judaism Has Shaped My Life."



CISSY SEGALL DAVIS

For more than 50 years, Cissy Segall Davis was involved in the production, management, and promotion of the commercial and nonprofit entertainment, theatrical, and special event industries in Houston and across the U.S., including 15 years as Managing Director of the Miller Theatre Advisory Board. Cissy is a Senior Fellow of the American Leadership Forum. She's served on a number of nonprofit boards, including Congregation Beth Israel, Texans for the Arts, and Texas Institute for Arts in Education, to name a few. In 2012, she was named one of Houston's 50 Most Influential Women by *Houston Woman's Magazine*. She and her husband, Marty Davis, have been married since 2004.



ED SEPTIMUS

Ed Septimus attended Ohio State University as an undergraduate in pre-med. He attended Baylor College of Medicine where he earned his MD degree, and went on to complete a fellowship in infectious diseases. Over the next 15 years, he developed an infectious diseases teaching service and practice at Memorial Hermann Southwest. Ed returned to his Jewish roots to give back to his community. He joined Congregation Beth Israel nearly 15 years ago, and has chaired the Adult Education Committee six of the last 12 years. He was recently elected to the Temple's Board of Trustees. With his wife of 54 years, Ed has two children and five grandchildren.



NAOMI WITTLIN

Naomi Wittlin was recently awarded her Masters in Jewish Studies from Gratz College and is currently a second-year rabbinical student at the Academy for Jewish Religion in New York. She is a writer, mother, and mixed-media artist, and incorporates themes of Jewish texts into her artwork. She has an amazing 15-year-old daughter and a supportive husband of 22 years. She is a dedicated student and facilitator of Mussar, whose passion is watching people grow toward their spiritual potential. You can find her spiritual reflections, artwork, and monthly book reviews at poeticaperture.com.



JENNIFER WIZEL

Jennifer Wizel is a native Houstonian and lifelong member of Congregation Beth Israel. She graduated from Emory University and earned a Masters in Early Childhood and Elementary Education at Bank Street College in New York. Jennifer sits on the board of the ADL Southwest Region and is a former chair and current member of Advisory Council of Children's Learning Institute. She is a founding member of the Women of Emory Impact Circle, which supports the causes of women and girls through the power of collective philanthropic giving. Jennifer enjoys spending time with her husband, Neil, and their four children.

EVENT SPOTLIGHT

ISRAELI GUESTS RABBI-CANTOR SHANI BEN OR AND BOAZ DOROT OFFER COMFORT AND HOPE THROUGH SPIRITUAL SONG AND PRAYER



Shabbat Evening Service on Friday, August 23



Havdalah concert on Saturday, August 24

New year, new opportunities to bring exceptional talent, education, and spiritual perspective to Congregation Beth Israel. On Friday, August 23 and Saturday, August 24 we welcomed Rabbi-Cantor Shani Ben Or and Boaz Dorot from Israel, our first guests of the programming year.

Rabbi-Cantor Shani Ben Or, Scholar-in-Residence, is the first Reform cantor ordained in Israel and the first person ordained as cantor and rabbi simultaneously by HUC-JIR in Israel. Together, she and master musician Boaz Dorot founded the Nigunim Ensemble, a musical group that composes and arranges sacred music inspired by Jewish music from around the world.

On Friday, August 23, Rabbi-Cantor Ben Or and Dorot participated in our Shabbat Evening Service. They introduced us to new melodies to our prayers, sang new songs, and shared their perspectives—both heartbreaking and hopeful—on the war in Israel.

The following evening, nearly 150 members, family, and friends returned for the Nigunim Ensemble's Havdalah concert.

To reiterate the feedback of our members who were present, this was a “much needed” Shabbat. And to top it all off, Rabbi-Cantor Ben Or and Dorot, in partnership with Cantor Kenneth Feibush, dedicated a new musical composition to Congregation Beth Israel titled, “Mikolot,” in honor of our 170th anniversary. “Mikolot” blends traditional Ashkenazi motifs with hints of jazz and contemporary sounds of Reform Judaism in Israel. The piece made its debut on Friday night and will be continue to be sung, with Rabbi-Cantor Shani Ben Or and Boaz Dorot in mind, on many Shabbats to come.

On behalf of Congregation Beth Israel, we extend our gratitude to the Alexander Family Israel Programming Fund for generously underwriting this special Shabbat weekend.

EVENT SPOTLIGHT

PAINT BY NUMBERS EXHIBIT ILLUMINATES THE PREVALENCE OF NUMBERS IN JEWISH TRADITION, BIBLICAL TEXT, AND OUR EVERYDAY LIVES



Karen Bookstaff, Shirley Lavine, and Jennifer Greenberg with Rosalyn & Barry Margolis



David Scott, RJE, discussing how numbers create meaning and deep connection throughout Judaism

On Thursday, September 5, more than 100 Congregation Beth Israel members, family, and friends gathered in The Margolis Gallery for the opening exhibit and reception of *Paint by Numbers*, a collection curated by Hebrew Union College Museum in New York that explores how numbers create order, connection, and profound meaning in our lives.

The event included light bites and refreshments, including apples, honey, and pomegranate cocktails in honor of the upcoming New Year. Rabbi David Lyon and Art Committee Co-Chairs Karen Bookstaff, Shirley Lavine, and Jennifer Greenberg offered opening remarks, followed by a dynamic presentation by David Scott, Director of Lifelong Learning & Engagement. Afterwards, participants viewed the collection and enjoyed testing out the Gematria Calculator, which can compute the numerical value of our Hebrew names and connect that value to other words and phrases in Hebrew scriptures and beyond.

Paint by Numbers will be on view in The Margolis Gallery until December 2024. All are welcome!

JOIN FRIENDS OF MARGOLIS GALLERY

Through the Friends of Margolis Gallery membership, you'll receive invitations to members-only events and help support the beautiful Temple gallery. Email margolis@beth-israel.org for more information.

BECOME AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE ART COMMITTEE

Committee members have the privilege of selecting exhibitions from across the country to be showcased in The Margolis Gallery. The committee also plans educational programs, gallery tours, and events. Email margolis@beth-israel.org if you are interested in joining!

A Rabbi and a Pope Enter the Room

Adapted from a blog by Rabbi David Lyon, September 2024

Some weeks ago, the organizers of TMO (The Metropolitan Organization), a region of IAF (Industrial Area Foundation), of which Congregation Beth Israel is a member, invited me to join 18 people on the third of three meetings that their west and southwest organizers have had with Pope Francis.



On Wednesday, August 28th, at Santa Marta, his residence, we sat around a large living room in a small circle awaiting His Holiness. At the top of the hour at 3:00 pm, Pope Francis entered the room. He walked carefully around the circle to shake hands with each of us. We took turns to introduce ourselves and share our roles in the work we came to address with him. Quickly, we learned that Pope Francis is a humble man despite his high position, and has a sense of humor that eased us into shared conversation. The meeting was in Spanish, so some of us wore earpieces to hear a simultaneous translation.

I was called on to report to the Pope how Beth Israel participates with TMO. As a profound and historic congregation, I said, we're dedicated to social action initiatives that express our commitment to the Hebrew prophets who advocated for the poor, the hungry, and the vulnerable among us. I acknowledged my working relationships with Cardinal Daniel DiNardo and Bishop John Ogletree in Houston. I concluded my remarks by citing Mishnah Pirkei Avot, "It is not our obligation to do all the work, but neither are we free to desist from trying. The day is short, the work is long, and the Lord is waiting" (Mishnah Avot). The lesson urges us to lean in and join hands with others who are engaged in the same work. Pope Francis liked it very much.

One of the goals of our convening was to identify our community organizing as a model for other places in the world. And with a nod to the Middle East, Pope Francis, though not political, was hopeful about what we can do and pray to change the course of events happening there.

To Catholics and Protestants in the group, his blessing was an extraordinary gift filled with inspiration and grace. To me, the only Jew and rabbi in the room, his blessing was not lost on me, either. Pope Francis has been kind to the Jewish community and not unsupportive of Israel. The fact that he leads billions of Catholics places him in a role to address the world where his words, actions, and hopes cannot be ignored or misunderstood. That is enough to make even a secularist feel the enormity of his role as a Pope in the stream of world history and for these contemporary times.



CONGREGATION
BETH ISRAEL

Wolff-Toomim Distinguished Lecture Series presents

Bret Stephens



Tuesday,
October 22



7:00 pm



Congregation
Beth Israel

How will this year's election impact the American Jewish community?

Bret Stephens is an Opinion columnist for *The New York Times*, writing about foreign policy, domestic politics, and cultural issues. He studied political philosophy at the University of Chicago and comparative politics at the London School of Economics. He is the former editor-in-chief of *The Jerusalem Post* and former foreign-affairs columnist of *The Journal*, for which he won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize. Congregation Beth Israel is thrilled to welcome Bret Stephens on Tuesday, October 22, to discuss how this year's election will impact the American Jewish community.

Register at beth-israel.shulcloud.com/calendar

This event is underwritten by a generous grant from the Wolff-Toomim Education Fund.



CONGREGATION
BETH ISRAEL

NOA TISHBY

Save the Date

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3 - 7 PM

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL

5600 NORTH BRAESWOOD BLVD., HOUSTON, TX 77096

Congregation Beth Israel is thrilled to host and co-sponsor opening night of the Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center's Annual Book Festival, featuring *New York Times* best-selling author & Israel's former Special Envoy for Combating Antisemitism and Delegitimization, Noa Tishby. This event will focus on Tishby's latest book, *Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth*.

A Tel Aviv native, Tishby has been a leader in pro-Israel activism for over a decade, co-founding and initiating several organizations and projects, including Act for Israel, Reality Israel, and Eighteen, an institute that combats antisemitism and inspires Jewish pride.

TICKETS AVAILABLE NOW AT WWW.ERJCCHOUSTON.ORG

This event is funded in part by a generous grant from the Alexander Family Israel Programming Fund.

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL PRESENTS

Nefesh Mountain



"A POWERHOUSE UNIT"
- ROLLING STONE

FRI-SUN | NOVEMBER 8-10

5600 North Braeswood Blvd., Houston, TX 77096

New York-based Progressive Americana group, Nefesh Mountain Band, was created by husband and wife Eric Lindberg and Doni Zasloff. The band includes a collective of violinists, mandolinists, pianists, bassists, drummers, and multi-instrumentalists. Since their formation nearly a decade ago, Nefesh Mountain has been proudly open and vocal about their background and heritage as Jewish Americans, and are among the first preeminent Americana/Bluegrass bands to infuse Jewish tradition and soul into the beautifully diverse tapestry of American roots music.

**Nefesh Mountain will join forces with our clergy team
for an unforgettable weekend of Jewish music!**

Learn more & register at beth-israel.shulcloud.com/calendar

If you are interested in joining the Host Committee for this event, contact David Scott, RJE, Director of Lifelong Learning & Engagement, at dscott@beth-israel.org.

This event is underwritten by a generous grant from the Wolff-Toomim Education Fund.

REFLECTING ON 170 YEARS WITH “DECADES OF CONFIRMATION” REUNIONS



Confirmation Class of 1968

As part of our 170th anniversary celebration, Congregation Beth Israel is delighted to host two reunions for the Confirmation classes that were confirmed at our North Braeswood campus:

Friday, November 15

Reunion for Confirmation Classes of 1968-1989

Friday, February 21

Reunion for Confirmation Classes of 1990-2024

The reunions will include a special blessing on the bimah during our Shabbat Evening Service, followed by a delicious Shabbat dinner in Wolff-Toomim Hall—an opportunity to reconnect, reminisce, and rejoice.

To receive an invitation, please reach out to Marsha Gilbert, Director of Special Events & Catering, at mgilbert@beth-israel.org.

SAVE THE DATE: NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM WITH RABBI DAVID LYON



Join Rabbi David Lyon on a life-changing journey to Israel with Congregation Beth Israel from June 7-17, 2025, in partnership with Frosch Travels. Mark your 2025 calendars and stay tuned for more details!

RABBI DAVID A. LYON ON THE RADIO

Rabbi Lyon can be heard on Sunday mornings at 6:45 AM on KODA, Sunny 99.1 FM radio. Each segment will be available as a podcast, “Heart to Heart with Rabbi David Lyon.” Go to www.beth-israel.org/radiorabbi, www.sunny99.com (“Blogs & Podcasts”), or download the iHeartRadio app.

 [@bethisraelhouston](https://www.facebook.com/bethisraelhouston)  [@bethisraelhouston](https://www.instagram.com/bethisraelhouston)

SPONSOR AN ONEG SHABBAT!

Oneg Shabbats at Congregation Beth Israel provide our community with an opportunity to have a social connection on Shabbat—a chance to renew friendships, welcome newcomers, and make new friends. Sponsoring an Oneg is a wonderful way to honor, remember, or celebrate a loved one, event, or milestone. Or simply, just because. To learn more, contact Marsha Gilbert at mgilbert@beth-israel.org.



THE SCHACHTEL LIBRARY & ARCHIVE

Your resource for Jewish literature in Houston

VISIT OUR COLLECTION & ARCHIVE

This summer we've added exciting and relevant books on Jewish thought and experiences to our library collection. To view our full catalog and information on the Congregation Beth Israel Archive, visit beth-israel.org/lifelong-learning/library. Our librarian, Susan Whitman, is available Mondays-Thursdays from 9 AM-2 PM. Additionally, you can call 713-820-6410 or email her at swhitman@beth-israel.org to inquire about or reserve books.

SCHACHTEL LIBRARY READERS' GROUP

Summer break is over, and the Readers' Group is back in action. All are welcome! Contact Susan Whitman to be added to the Readers' Group mailing list. Our sessions take place in the Finger Board Room and online via Zoom at 1 PM. View our upcoming schedule below:

Wednesday, October 9

The Most Human: Reconciling with My Father Leonard Nimoy · Adam Nimoy

Wednesday, November 6

My Hebrew Teacher · Maya Arad

This is the book selected for the 2024 JCC Book & Arts Festival Community Read. As is tradition, all Readers' Group participants are invited to the JCC's community discussion on Tuesday, October 29. Stay tuned for details.

Wednesday, December 11

Taking Miracles Seriously · Rabbi Michael Zedek

Author Rabbi Michael Zedek will participate in our discussion online via Zoom!

BINGE WITH WRITERS' CIRCLE!

The Writers' Circle is a BINGE group led by Congregation Beth Israel member and author, Miriam Friedman. The group meets twice a month on Thursdays at 1 PM to discuss creative writing and share personal work. Writers of all levels, published or not, are welcome. To join, contact Stephanie Shargal, Membership & Engagement Manager, at 713-771-6221 or sshargal@beth-israel.org.

Upcoming Meeting Dates: September 26 · October 10 & 31

November 7 & 21 · December 5 & 19

SAVE THE DATE

The Library will be hosting a collaborative Jewish archive in partnership with the Joan and Stanford Alexander South Texas Jewish Archives on Wednesday, December 11. More details to come!

Securing Our Community

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

\$2.5 MILLION —



\$1.98 MILLION —

Congregation Beth Israel launched its Securing Our Community campaign to address concerns around the unfortunate rise in hatred, bigotry, and violence targeting Jewish communities. This initiative, which includes the construction of a perimeter fence, an access control system, surveillance equipment, and additional lighting, will enhance the safety and peace-of-mind of members, clergy, staff, and guests who enter our community spaces, as well as the students and faculty at The Shlenker School and The Miriam Browning Jewish Learning Center.

\$1.5 MILLION —

This summer, gates at each entrance and exit were installed. We are now in the process of running electricity to the gates and installing perimeter-facing cameras to further survey the outskirts of our campus. The final stage of the initiative will include the construction of a guardhouse at the main entrance on Mullins Drive.

HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

We are deeply grateful for the support we have received thus far from members, family, and friends, totaling \$1.98 million to-date.

But we need your help to achieve our fundraising goal of \$2.5 million.

Your engagement as a Congregation Beth Israel member is, and has always been, instrumental to our Temple's success and survival. We ask you to consider making a contribution to this important campaign. Your generosity will go directly towards protecting our community—our family—for generations to come.

To donate, contact David Scott, Director of Lifelong Learning & Engagement, at dscott@beth-israel.org or 713-771-6221.

Adult Education MOVIE NIGHTS

Our Adult Education Committee is excited for another year of engaging and educational movie nights. Save this year's series on your calendar:

Thursday, December 5 at 7 pm: *School Ties*

Thursday, February 20 at 7 pm: *Origin*

Thursday, April 24 at 7 pm: *Zone of Interest*

LEARN MORE & REGISTER AT
[BETH-ISRAEL.SHULCLOUD.COM/CALENDAR](https://beth-israel.shulcloud.com/calendar)

SOCIAL
JUSTICE
COMMITTEE



Your Vote is Your Voice

In Talmud, Rabbi Hillel reminds us to “not separate yourself from the community” (Pirke Avot 2:4). It is our privilege and our responsibility to vote. Every election has proven to be more important than the last, and the November 5 election is no exception.

As part of the Union of Reform Judaism, Congregation Beth Israel participates in activities with URJ's Religious Action Center, including its Every Voice, Every Vote campaign. We're working to help more people, in our congregation and beyond, feel better prepared and more confident to vote.

On Sunday, September 22 at 11 AM, the Harris County Clerk's Office will return to the Temple for a second voter education program. If you missed the first program in July, or if you have additional questions about the voting process, we encourage you to participate!

If you have any questions or want to work with the Social Justice Committee, contact committee co-chairs Lisa Stone at lestone@aya.yale.edu and Dena Marks at denasokolow@gmail.com.

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL CEMETERIES

Honoring and visiting our departed loved ones



The columbarium at Beth Israel Memorial Garden



Lisa Ansari, Betty Tapick, Jordan Ansari, Allison Ansari and Amir Ansari in front of our new Memorial Trees

Beth Israel Memorial Garden, located on Antoine Drive, is the home of two unique memorial spaces: a columbarium—the first and only Jewish columbarium in Houston—which was unveiled in the fall of 2022; and the new Memorial Trees in Donor Plaza, installed earlier this year.

The columbarium was created in response to the increasing number of requests from the Jewish community for cremation. For many reasons, chief among them financial and environmental, cremation was, and continues to be, a preferred method for many families. While the boxes containing cremains are known not to be sacred, the columbarium provides a sacred space for cremation boxes or urns to take permanent shelter. Like a marker on a grave, cremains are covered by a stone with the name, date, and a few words to remember one's loved one. And similar to a graveside service, our clergy are available to lead a sacred service for the interment of cremains into their final resting place.

The Memorial Trees were conceived of by our Cemetery Committee as a way to honor loved ones near and far. Each tree has the capacity to hold 700 custom metal leaves that are individually engraved with the memory of a loved one. These trees offer a unique way to memorialize our congregants' family members who are buried at this cemetery, but also to remember those who are resting elsewhere.

While we hope to all live well and long, please know that your Beth Israel clergy and staff are available to respond to your questions and to assure you of our dedication to your family's needs. If a niche in our columbarium or a leaf on our Memorial Trees is of interest to you, contact Michael Kirstein, Cemetery Director, at mkirstein@beth-israel.org or 713-771-6221.

WOMEN OF BETH ISRAEL

A group for women who want to strengthen their own Judaism, support the congregation and Houston community, and offer opportunities for socialization

The Women of Beth Israel 2024-2025 Annual Membership Drive is underway! Join or renew your annual membership online by scanning the QR code or visiting beth-israel.shulcloud.com/form/sisterhood, or by filling out and mailing in the form on the following page.

Planning is underway for our fall and winter programs. Below is a snapshot of exciting upcoming events, and we need your help! If you are interested in helping us plan events for the 2024-2025 year, contact Anita Seline, Gift Shop Manager.



SUNDAY
November 10

FLOWER ARRANGING CLASS | 12-2 PM

Work with a flower designer to create beautiful arrangements for your Shabbos table.

WEDNESDAY
December 4

CHANUKAH SIP N' SHOP | 5-7 PM

A chance to mingle, sip on festive beverages, and shop for Chanukah gifts!

SUNDAY
February 23

MAHJ & MORE GAME DAY | Time to be announced

Spend time with friends, play a variety of games, and enjoy delicious desserts.

Additional programming for the spring will be announced in the coming months. Stay tuned for information about our Hamantaschen Bake Sale and Women of Beth Israel-sponsored Mitzvah Project!

The Women of Beth Israel Gift Shop **YOUR SOURCE FOR ALL THINGS JUDAICA**

Extraordinary gifts for all occasions

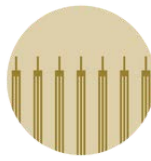
Candlesticks · Challah Trays · Greeting Cards
Jewelry · B'nei Mitzvah Gifts · Wedding Gifts

Your Judaica Shop is stocked and ready for all your personal gift-giving needs—and gift wrapping is always free!

Shop Hours: 10 AM-4 PM · Tuesday-Friday

Questions? Contact Anita Seline, Gift Shop Manager, at 713-777-4315.





Women of Beth Israel

WOMEN OF BETH ISRAEL MEMBERSHIP FORM

Your membership supports initiatives for women, provides a gift to each Congregation Beth Israel b'nei mitzvah, and helps cover expenses associated with our Judaica Shop. We offer honorary memberships to members who are 80 years of age and older. All members will receive complimentary registration for Women of Beth Israel programs, now through June 2025. Join or renew today!

REGISTRANT INFORMATION

☐ New Women of Beth Israel member ☐ Returning Women of Beth Israel member

Full Name _____ Birthday Month _____

Mobile Phone _____ Email Address _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Age Group (select one)

- ☐ 20s & 30s
☐ 40s & 50s
☐ 60s & 70s
☐ 80 & over

The Women of Beth Israel membership is Tax Deductible.
Annual tax donor information is provided by Congregation Beth Israel.

Please select one:

- ☐ Standard Membership: \$72.00
☐ Members 80+ Years Old: Complimentary

Please check all that interest you:

- ☐ Volunteering in the Judaica Gift Shop
☐ Sending Communications / Posting on Social Media
☐ Baking
☐ Planning a Program or Event
☐ Contributing to Mitzvah Activities

Special talents that I can lend to WBI:

- ☐ Finance/Accounting
☐ Merchandising/Sales
☐ Fundraising
☐ Computer/Technology
☐ Other _____

Underwrite a WBI Event or Program

Please select one:

- ☐ Bronze Level: \$250.00
☐ Silver Level: \$500.00
☐ Platinum Level: \$750.00
☐ Diamond Level: \$1,000.00 and above
☐ I would not like to sponsor an event/program

**Thank you for being a part of the
Women of Beth Israel!**

Please mail the completed Membership Form
and check to:

Congregation Beth Israel
DEPT.
PO Box 4851
Houston, TX 77210-4851

KIDS' MEALS, INC. PARTNERSHIP

Working together to end childhood hunger



Clergy and staff delivering 1,728 juice boxes



Receiving the Juice Box Champion trophy and certificate

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL NAMED SMALL TEAM "JUICE BOX CHAMPION" BY KIDS' MEALS, INC.

This summer, Congregation Beth Israel, along with other synagogues, churches, and businesses, participated in the annual Kids' Meals Summer Juice Box Challenge to collect as many juice boxes as possible for food-insecure children across Houston.

On Wednesday, July 31, Cantor Kenneth Feibush, Assistant Director of the MBJLC, Kerri Zerlin, and Director of Special Events & Catering, Marsha Gilbert, brought 1,728 juice boxes that were collected at the Temple to the Kids' Meals headquarters. This batch, in addition to the 6,272 juice boxes that were purchased online, amounted to a grand total of 8,000 juice boxes donated.

We are proud to announce that Congregation Beth Israel tied for first place and was named Juice Box Champion in the small team category of the challenge! This award is a testament to the incredible generosity of our members, family, and friends.

Kids' Meals, Inc. delivers nearly 9,000 healthy lunches each day to food-insecure families in Harris County. We invite you to participate in our monthly Kids' Meals lunch-packing programs at 9:30 AM on the third Wednesday of every month. To learn more about our partnership with Kids' Meals, Inc., contact Marsha Gilbert at mgilbert@beth-israel.org or 713-771-6221.

SAVE THE DATE: KIDS' MEALS 10,000

*Help us pack 10,000 sack meals
for Houston's hungriest
preschool-aged children.*



Sunday
February 9, 2025



9:30 AM-
12:00 PM



Congregation Beth Israel
5600 North Braeswood Blvd.

FALL IN LOVE WITH BINGE

Beth Israel New Group Engagements

Our BINGE groups (Beth Israel New Group Engagements) are gearing up for another busy fall season! BINGE groups are fun affinity groups that promote new friendships and engaging discussions between Beth Israel members with similar interests. We encourage you to get involved with one of our thriving BINGE groups, or reach out to us with an idea for a new BINGE group.

WEEKLY BINGE GROUPS

TORAH 101

Fridays · 11:30 AM

Led by David Scott, RJE

SHARING SUPPORT IN TROUBLED TIMES

Thursdays · 7 PM

Led by Drs. Tom Cole & Sharon Romm

PICKLEBALL

Sundays · 9 AM

Led by Linda Caplan

JEWISH MEDITATION

Tuesdays · 7:30 PM

Led by Jay Tarnow

SWIMMING IN THE SEA OF TALMUD

Wednesdays · 2 PM

Led by David Scott, RJE

WRITERS' CIRCLE

First & Third Thursdays · 1 PM

Led by Miriam Kalman Friedman

MONTHLY BINGE GROUPS

WHAT ARE YOU WATCHING?

First Monday of each month · 7 PM

Led by Sheila Horn

MUSSAR LEARNING

One Sunday each month · 10 AM

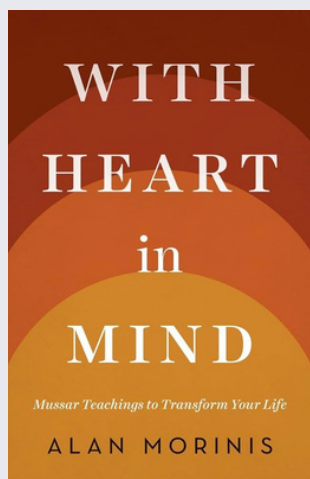
*Led by Heather Westendarp
& Naomi Wittlin*

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

One Sunday each month · 10 AM

Led by Steve Tamber

No prior experience is necessary to participate in any of our BINGE groups! Visit our website for updates, as our BINGE groups are constantly adding fun, innovative programs to the calendar. If you have questions related to our BINGE groups, contact Stephanie Shargal, Membership & Engagement Manager, at sshargal@beth-israel.org or 713-771-6221.



REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN FOR THE NEXT MUSSAR PROGRAM

BASED ON ALAN MORINIS' BOOK

With Heart in Mind: Mussar Teachings to Transform Your Life

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20 · 10 AM

Congregation Beth Israel · 5600 North Braeswood Blvd.

Facilitated by Temple members Heather Westendarp & Naomi Wittlin

Contact Naomi Wittlin at nshabot@yahoo.com to register!

MIRIAM BROWNING JEWISH LEARNING CENTER

Providing fun, stimulating learning and social activities for students & families



MBJLC madrichim at their 2024-2025 orientation



Madrichim engaging in team-building activities

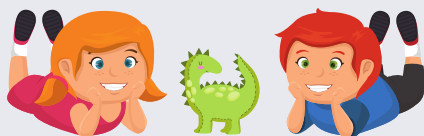
On Sunday, September 8, our Miriam Browning Jewish Learning Center welcomed back the religious school community, including our Madrichim teen leaders, faculty, and staff, for another year of meaningful Jewish learning. More than 50 teens are participating as Madrichim this year, and they are excited and ready to help guide our younger children. With all the planning that took place over the summer, followed by an engaging Madrichim orientation in August led by MBJLC Assistant Director Kerri Zerlin, we expect this year to be our best one yet!

In addition to our wonderful programs, special events, and field trips, we look forward to welcoming renowned guests, including Bluegrass Jewish music band, Nefesh Mountain, on November 10, and world-famous Jewish comedians, the Bible Players, on December 15. Plus, there will be plenty of surprises for our students and families along the way!

If you have not yet registered your children or grandchildren for the MBJLC, there's still time! Scan the QR code or visit beth-israel.org to register today. To learn more about or join our Madrichim program, contact Kerri Zerlin at kzerlin@beth-israel.org



**TOT SHABBAT
& HAVDALAH**
with Mike Mason



UPCOMING DATES

Saturday, October 19 at 10 AM

Saturday, December 7 at 5 PM

Saturday, February 22 at 10 AM

*Families with young children are invited to Tot Shabbat!
We'll share stories, prayers, songs, and blessings for our families. For
more information, contact Kerri Zerlin at kzerlin@beth-israel.org.*

KEHILLAH HIGH

An innovative, supplemental education program for Jewish students in grades 8-12 to enrich their Jewish identities through learning, community engagement, and connection to Israel

SCHOOL IS BACK IN SESSION, WHICH MEANS IT'S TIME FOR ANOTHER YEAR OF KEHILLAH HIGH!

Kehillah High is a place where Jewish learning comes to life, bringing together the best elements of the Houston Jewish community to provide transformational experiences for participating teens. The goal of Kehillah High is to inspire teens to become engaged lifelong learners who are committed to living a Jewish life guided by Jewish values and traditions. The program allows its students to grow their individual Jewish identities, gain leadership skills, and meet like-minded Jewish teens from across synagogues and counties.

Kehillah High rotates the location of its classes each trimester between Congregation Beth Israel, Congregation Beth Yeshurun, and Congregation Brith Shalom. Classes take place on Wednesdays from 7-9 PM.

This year, we are excited to announce a new course offering for 11th and 12th graders, taught by David Scott, RJE, Director of Lifelong Learning & Engagement, focused on Israel education. This course will entitle students to receive three hours of college credit.

There's still time to register your teen for upcoming programs and classes. For more information, email mbjlc@beth-israel.org.

Congregation Beth Israel presents

FAMILY SHABBAT

Upcoming Dates

Friday, October 18

Friday, November 15

Friday, January 31

Friday, February 28

All families with children and teens are invited to celebrate Shabbat! We'll share familiar prayers, blessings for our children, and joyful music. All events start at 6 PM. Questions? Contact Kerri Zerlin at kzerlin@beth-israel.org.





Share the Load

Alone, I can do little. Together, we can do anything.

Simply select a Congregation Beth Israel service that is most important to you.



Since 1854, Congregation Beth Israel has been a sacred community in the lives of its congregants. Each year, in order to provide for the special services, programs, and events, the Temple relies on the financial support of its member families.

Your family's annual commitment provides 80% of the Temple's operating budget.

Additional funding is needed to offset expenses. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the Temple's total operating expenses are \$5.2 million.

We need your help!

The Share the Load program helps underwrite the remaining expenses. Every family is asked to choose the Temple program or operational service that feels important to them. Your gift will help close the gap in the Beth Israel budget.

Please do your part in Sharing the Beth Israel Load. Your generous gift will ensure the continuity of Beth Israel's quality of service to our community.

Julie Gilbert | *Development Committee Chair*

David Scott, RJE | *Director of Lifelong Learning & Engagement*

Congregation Beth Israel

Support Opportunities

OPERATIONAL

Campus Security

Safety and security first.

Help support \$200,000 annual cost

Live-streaming

Making the at-home experience as joyful as the in-person experience, on Shabbat and beyond.

Help support \$100,000 annual cost

Campus Beautification

Maintain landscaping, exterior building, parking lots, and exterior lighting.

Help support \$40,000 annual cost

Cemetery Upkeep & Beautification

Respect and maintain our departed loved ones' resting place.

Help support \$150,000 annual cost

Critical Infrastructure

Electricity, HVAC, cybersecurity, and communications systems.

Help support \$350,000 annual cost

Temple Unrestricted

Funds for the organization to use at its discretion, typically to support general operations, cover day-to-day expenses, invest in new initiatives, or address unforeseen needs.

HOLIDAY PROGRAMS

High Holy Days (services, programs, music); Chanukah Service; Purim programming; Sukkot programming; Second Night Seder; and more

Help support \$42,000 annual cost

MEMBER & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

BINGE Group Programming

BINGE Groups (Beth Israel New Group Engagements) are fun affinity groups that promote new friendships and engaging discussions between Beth Israel members with similar interests.

Help support \$5,000 annual cost

Kids' Meals Programming

Pack over 15,000 brown bag lunches per year for children facing food insecurity, in partnership with Kids' Meals, Inc.

Help support \$15,000 annual cost

Oneg Shabbat

Help support \$15,000 annual cost

YOUTH/TEENS/YOUNG ADULTS

Family & Tot Shabbat

Shabbat fun and food for the whole family.

Help support \$8,000 annual cost

Jeremy Tucker Fund for Jewish Special Education

Our unique Aliyah program allows children with special needs to stay connected and involved with Jewish education, and ultimately, become Bar, Bat, or B'rit Mitzvah themselves.

Help support \$8,500 annual cost

MBJLC Scholarships

Provide a Jewish education for children without the barrier of tuition.

Help support \$1,000 annual cost per child

MBJLC Unrestricted

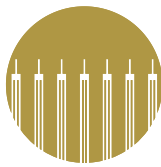
Funds for the MBJLC to use at its discretion.

DONATE

No donation amount is too little.
All giving levels are welcome.

All checks should be mailed to:
Congregation Beth Israel
DEPT.
PO Box 4851
Houston, TX 77210-4851

To donate online, visit:
tinyurl.com/share-the-load



Center for
Spiritual Direction
of Congregation Beth Israel

LIFE IS A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

by Tom Cole, Director of Center for Spiritual Direction

As I look ahead to the High Holy Days, I wonder what the New Year has in store. Will I be among those who live—or those who die? Will I be among “those at rest or those who shall be tormented”? Last year, I spent many hours under a surgeon’s knife. In two separate five-hour surgeries, my neurosurgeon replaced damaged discs, implanted two metal rods on either side of my lumbar spine, and secured it all with 12 four-inch screws. I am tremendously grateful to be alive, to be able to walk without pain—and to face the bewildering question of what it all means.

I have long been touched by Rabbi Alvin Fine’s poem, “A Sacred Pilgrimage.” Now at age 75, I find that Rabbi Fine’s poem challenges me in a very personal way. *Physically*, I am moving, in his words,

*From weakness to strength or
From strength to weakness
And often back again.*

Spiritually, I am seeking to live in the knowledge that

*Victory lies not
At some high point along the way
But in ... [making] the journey
Step by step
A sacred pilgrimage.*

How do I make my journey a sacred pilgrimage? How do you make your journey a sacred pilgrimage? We must each attend to our own spirituality.

Spirituality, as Sarah Lentz puts it, “is a feeling of Connectedness to something greater than oneself, experienced through cultivating a relationship with oneself, one’s community, one’s environment, and one’s perception of the transcendent.” It’s all about relationships.

Do you have regular spiritual practices that help you grow your own feelings of Connectedness?

Prayer? Torah study? Meditation? Mitzvot? Attendance at Temple activities and services? Walks in nature? Carefully tending to the needs of those we love? Community service?

As Director of the Center for Spiritual Direction, I am called to nurture my own spirituality in the service of loving and caring for others. Each morning, for example, I offer the traditional morning prayer thanking God for the gift of “restoring my soul to me in compassion.” It reminds me: yes, each breath really is a gift—not my private property, not to be taken for granted. If, after reciting the prayer, I am not really feeling grateful, I sometimes repeat the prayer again in Hebrew and in English. I may recite the prayer a third time if I haven’t sufficiently awakened to the sheer awe and amazement of being alive. In the New Year 5785, I am thrilled to be offering regular support groups with Dr. Sharon Romm; individual counseling; pre-Shabbat Spiritual Nourishment sessions; an ongoing Neshama group, and much more. I hope that Temple members will feel free to contact me at any time to talk about ways we can together celebrate our life’s journey as a Sacred Pilgrimage.



**Ignite the spark that
will last a lifetime**



Contact Tara Gassett, Director of
Admissions, at tgassett@shlenker.org
or 713.270.6127 for more information.



The Shlenker School | 5600 N. Braeswood Blvd. Houston, TX 77096 | 713.270.6127 | www.shlenker.org

Shanukah Torah



The Shlenker School wishes you and your family a healthy and sweet new year!



The Shlenker School | 5600 North Braeswood Blvd. | Houston, Texas 77096 | 713.270.6127 | www.shlenkerschool.org



CONGREGATION
BETH ISRAEL

5600 North Braeswood Blvd.

Houston, Texas 77096

713-771-6221

beth-israel.org

relevant. modern. joyful

FRI-SUN SAVE THE DATES! 12.13-12.15



The Bible Players are a Torah Comedy team based out of New York City, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Los Angeles that use improv and comedy to teach Jewish values to all ages. They will join us in December for Chanukah-themed programs that will have you laughing (and learning) all weekend long!

[Learn more & register at beth-israel.shulcloud.com/calendar](http://beth-israel.shulcloud.com/calendar)

Congregation Beth Israel • 5600 North Braeswood Blvd., Houston, TX 77096