

## From the Rabbi Michael Silbert

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Our sage, Rashi, explains to us:

*"The departure of a righteous person from a city makes an impression. As long as a righteous person is in their city, that person is its glory and splendor and beauty; but when they*

*leave, there depart also the city's glory, its splendor and its beauty."*

We as a congregation are made up of the members of our community. And so, what happens to us, what does it mean for us a community when members leave us?

And herein lies a sticky point, a truth which is difficult to say out loud. For in our community, every participant is welcome and cherished. Everyone who walks through our doors contributes to the unique collective character of who we are. And as our morning prayer says of the ministering angels:

*"All of them are loved, all of them pure, all of them mighty, and all of them in reverence and awe carry out the will of the One who has dominion over them."*

And so it is true for every member of Temple Beth David.

But the issue which causes hesitation is how despite the equality which is genuinely shared, we find a way to acknowledge the truth that there are some members of a community who quite simply go above and beyond. How some members become "pillars" of a community; people on whom the rest of us come to depend so much that we fear we might flounder without them and not know how we will cope.

I mean what I've said to you before: each of us is unique in our blessings and our gifts such that never before in the history of humanity has there ever been someone quite like each and every one of us, with what we have to offer. And for some people, those gifts lie in their remarkable ability to organize community, to make community happen.

They are driven by the question: If I don't stand up, then who will? If I do not make this happen for everyone, then what will I have? What will I be left with?

So, if truth be told, there's definitely more than just a modicum of self-interest here, because they also are driven by their own need for community, which is fine, so long as the type of community that they need is compatible with the type of community that the rest of us need.

Those rare individuals who get it right are more than just leaders, they

are statesmen - or statespeople - people who show wisdom, skill, vision and outstanding competence in conducting a public agenda.

So, what then will we do without Ellen and Bill Gertzog? What will become of us in their absence as they move to Massachusetts?

Certainly, the greatest tribute we can pay to them is to learn from them. Instead of being paralyzed with fear, we choose to be inspired by them, to try to wrap our heads around all that they have done for us over many years and the sheer volume of work and service they have performed on a daily basis.

I'm not even going to present a list here because I'm afraid that *will* trigger paralysis, but suffice it to say, there are plenty openings, plenty opportunities here at Beth David for others now to step up to the plate, to make mistakes and to learn, but to continue to mold this into the type of community we want it to be.

In that regard, our future is bright. Just think of what we can accomplish if we do it together!

At the same time though, we are forced to acknowledge that saying Goodbye is one of the toughest things that we ever have to do.

The first week will feel strange, and so will the week after that. But when I think about what they are doing, I have nothing but admiration for them.

Together they have acknowledged that they are moving into a new phase of their lives. And this part isn't about location or geography, it's about age and stage. But they've taken this bull by the horns as well, have stared it straight on, have asked tough questions, have communicated about it with each other, and have dared to dream.

From this, too, we draw inspiration from them about how to live our lives and what to make of the only chance we get. We salute them, not just for what they have done for us, but for their courage to do this for themselves. While it may have come as a shock to us, when we really think about it, there should be nothing surprising about this decision of theirs as it is entirely consistent with the boldness of vision and boldness of action that we all know of them.

בואכם בשלום וצאתכם לשלום –

They came to us in peace all those years ago; while they were with us they blessed us with meaning and joy; and now we wish that they should leave us in peace, knowing that we are forever changed by them. May they always know that they have a place here with us so that they should feel free and unencumbered to return and visit with us, when the time is right.

Thank you.

Michael



## It Is Not Beyond Reach

*Surely, this Instruction which I enjoin upon you this day is not too baffling for you, nor is it beyond reach. It is not in the heavens, that you should say, "Who among us can go up to the heavens and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?" Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who among us can cross to the other side of the sea and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?" No, the thing is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to observe it.*

*Deuteronomy 30: 11-16*

When I was a newlywed and began hanging out in shuls, one of the first things that made a deep impression on me was the Torah, the physical Torah. We went to a shul where, if there wasn't a bar mitzvah going on, everyone was invited to crowd around while the Torah was being read. I couldn't get enough of it, seeing the parchment, the sinews binding the pages together, the hand-written text with the little crowns and decorative flourishes. It felt very magical in a way that physical objects seldom do, and immediately connected me to the long history of the Jewish people.

A few years later, we visited the Holocaust museum. One of the moments that hit me the strongest was near the end. There is a room about the Displaced Persons camps, and it contains Judaica that the survivors made as art therapy. There were challah covers and seder plates and towels with the blessing for washing hands embroidered on them. The artwork is about what you'd expect from a random crowd of people, nothing special, but I was struck that collectively they were recreating Jewish culture. There were enough people who know the language and the blessings to recreate Jewish practices. I was struck by how the broadness of the distribution of Jewish learning is what has let the Jewish people survive such a long and traumatic history. We are able to pass on our culture because so many people hold pieces of it. If it were more narrowly held by a small number of experts, we might have been wiped out. Since that day, I have wanted to be a part of that story, of being a minor and unimportant Jew who can learn enough of our deep tradition to help it survive and pass on.

It's the project of a lifetime. I started with trying to learn Hebrew. That didn't happen very fast, but each time I restarted the effort, I gained a tiny bit more, and over the years it added up. In 2001 at the age of 45, I did my bat mitzvah. I struggled to learn a tiny bit of Torah, but I shared the bimah with fourteen other people between the ages of 25 and 75. Our friends and relations filled the B'rith Kodesh sanctuary to bursting, and we read from a Torah from the Czech collection, which bore a tag the Nazis had affixed. They'd acquired it to build a museum about the Jewish people, whom they expected to disappear. I felt quite triumphalist to be reading from that Torah, which is in normal service rather than a museum, while Nazi remnants resided in museums.

Undoubtedly you've noticed that Bill and Ellen Gertzog have left Temple Beth David, moving to the Berkshires. They were pillars of our community, providing so much loving devotion to the congregation in so many ways, including the chanting of Torah. I'm taking this as a signal to step up my own efforts. There is space for me to lein more lines and more often. By doing so, I'll progress in my mission to broaden and deepen my learning so that I can be a part of the story of the wide and deep distribution of Jewish learning which lets our people survive and thrive.

I hope that others will take this opportunity to lein more as well. If you've done it once or twice a year, try doing it more often. Four to twelve times a year? Why not? It gets easier, the more you do it. If you've done it several times a year, try doing it monthly or twice a month. That's how we acquired the lovely group of leiners we have. Bill told me that until he joined Temple Beth David, he'd never really leined beyond his bar mitzvah. Cindy Halpern started as an adult. So did Gary Cohen and Sarisa Zoghlin. I think that what distinguishes Temple Beth David is the fact that we are

# All in the Family

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## January Birthdays

Ethan Aranov	January 3
Aaron Freedman	January 3
Paul Eissenstat	January 8
Bruce Goldin	January 8
Hannah Eckhaus	January 12
Melissa Meynadasy	January 16
David Langmann	January 18
Mindy Zoghlin	January 23
Linda Servetnick	January 25
Sarisa Zoghlin	January 27

## February Birthdays

Marc Lande	February 2
Bonnie Abrams	February 3
Pam Rosen	February 7
Marlena Berger	February 10
Susan Langmann	February 14
Gabe Franklin	February 17
Tom Wolbert	February 18
Helen Kashtan	February 23
Rabbi Michael Silbert	February 24
Arthur Bernberg	February 27

We'd like to thank the entire congregation for the lovely send-off kiddush on December 7.

We are grateful to you for being our Jewish home for the past 20 years, and for your warmth and generosity.

We will miss you and hope you'll stay in touch!

Bill and Ellen Gertzog



Thank you to Linda Roth and to the families of Perry Kest - Michael, Rachel, Nadav, Elie, Stephen, Tali, Nava, Rafi and Ilan - for sponsoring Kiddush and to Maxine Manjos, Bernie Roth, Karen Schaffer and Lilly Sherman for sponsoring the Kiddush soup.

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small enough to give space to those who aren't superstars to work on their skills and grow, and that we're largely made up of members who keep growing and learning.

When I started leining at Temple Beth David, it wasn't at all easy for me. I struggled to learn my few lines, and I was very nervous each time it was my turn. Gary would try to ease my nerves by giving the honor of blessing the reading to my husband Howard at first, and having him by my side helped me feel supported. Then one day my turn was coming up and it wasn't Howard who'd been given the little bronze plaque. I frantically looked around wondering who it would be. I saw Yolanda, who is a good friend, and thought maybe it was her. That would be OK, I'd feel supported by her. Then I saw Ellen and I knew I'd feel supported by her. One by one I looked at each member of the congregation and knew that every single person there would make me feel supported. In that moment, I was overcome with knowing what a wonderful place TBD is to grow and learn. It is not too baffling, nor beyond reach. It is very close, in our mouths and in our hearts.

I invite you to join me by stepping out of your comfort zone and leining a little more Torah. And if you've never done it at all, you can join the rest of us adult learners in starting. Rabbi Silbert is talking about offering a class for beginners. Let him know of your interest. I'm reminded of a saying of Rahm Emanuel's (he may have gotten it from someone else, but I learned it from him). Never let a crisis go to waste. Temple Beth David needs more Torah chanting after losing the Gertzogs. We can't afford to let Bernie Roth take it all on, though he would do it and do it well. We need to collectively deepen and broaden our skills. Join me. Our little crisis can also be our opportunity to grow and flourish.

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Received October 16, 2019 - December 15, 2019

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**January 24**

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RSVP is required for dinner, no later than the previous Wednesday. For more information or to make your reservation, contact Ronna Marsh at 585.473.4317 or [ronnamarsch@yahoo.com](mailto:ronnamarsch@yahoo.com).



## Books & Brunch

**Join us for a discussion of Jewish-themed books over brunch.**

Hosted by: Linda Servetnick  
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Open to the community! RSVP by Wednesday, January 15  
Linda Servetnick 585.820.4615 [landeserv@gmail.com](mailto:landeserv@gmail.com)



# PUKIM

**Wednesday, March 20 7:00 PM at BHD!**

**Volunteer to help bake hamantaschen!**

# Yahrzeits

			Date Observed
<b>January 1</b> Robert N. Herman	<b>January 16</b> Max Gross Abraham Lutzky	<b>January 31</b> Norman Gilman	<b>February 15</b> Max Gordon Harry Sigelow
<b>January 2</b> Lillian Mountain	David Matis Przewuzman Y'hoshua Schnidman Nathan Zeif	<b>February 1</b> Ada Rosenthal Abe Rouso	<b>February 16</b> Miriam Bauman Rose Kurlanshik Alexander Phillips
<b>January 3</b> Fanny Rosen Michal Tal	<b>January 17</b> Aaron Solomon	<b>February 3</b> Arthur Bauman Ida Gertzog Laurie Feuerstein Walsh	<b>February 19</b> Rose Kessler Florence Levinson
<b>January 4</b> Mac Gan Elsie Perlman	<b>January 18</b> Eugene Roth	<b>February 4</b> Julius Himmelstein Regina Schier	<b>February 21</b> Herman Miller
<b>January 7</b> Annette Formicola	<b>January 19</b> Miriam Kaufman Milton Lande	<b>February 5</b> Bertha Dobkin	<b>February 24</b> Minnie Himmelstein Sidney Schatz
<b>January 8</b> Harold Feinberg	<b>January 20</b> Helen Steinberg	<b>February 7</b> Barbara Goldman Minnie Haymoff	<b>February 25</b> David Phillips
<b>January 10</b> Adele Katzman Morris Schnidman	<b>January 21</b> Sheldon Feuerstein Bernard Kaufman Donna Wexler Larca	<b>February 8</b> Morris Klein George Moidel Lee Schwartz Don Vanas	<b>February 26</b> Julian Braiman Frank Sherman Fanny Simon Passer
<b>January 11</b> Bella Nussbaum Nissim Ojalvo Solomon Phillips	<b>January 22</b> Sheldon Himmelstein	<b>February 9</b> Dorothy Schwartz	<b>February 27</b> Werner Schaffer
<b>January 12</b> Bessie Braiman Jean Levy Gan Ben Passer	<b>January 24</b> Rae Goldman Herbert Kraus Max Schwartz	<b>February 10</b> Ida Skopitz	The yahrzeit date that appears above is the date of observance using the secular calendar.
<b>January 13</b> Sam Cohen	<b>January 26</b> Blanche Levine Benjamin Rosenbaum	<b>February 11</b> Charles Jaffey	
<b>January 14</b> Anna Alva Sylvia Weber	<b>January 27</b> Esther Aroesty	<b>February 14</b> Charles Conwell Garson Kleinberg David Nussbaum Alfred Stiller	These dates match those of the Hebrew calendar for the actual date of death.
<b>January 15</b> Martin Roth	<b>January 29</b> Yuda Kinel Grant Meeker		



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- ☐ Get Well Wishes \_\_\_\_\_  
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☐ Congratulations on \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ In Honor of \_\_\_\_\_  
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