

Letter From Rabbi Michael Silbert

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I've never been to Australia, though many of my people have. The Australian government's Department of Home Affairs estimates that by mid-2023, there were some 215,000 South African-born people living "Down Under". I'll save you the Google search: that's nigh on 1% of the country's population, which works out to be their seventh largest migrant population. How far is my hometown of Cape Town from Australia's largest city, Sydney? Its a schlep.

While there are no direct flights, it can take more than 23 hours to conquer the distance of over 7,000 miles. The main attraction for many South Africans are the cultural and climate similarities. Immigration is a traumatic upheaval, but the rewards of mutual national obsessions that "Oz" offers to people from my country of origin such as rugby, cricket, the beach, beer and warm, sunny skies, have proven to be quite the allure. Ironically, most of those "attractions" have always served to push me in the opposite direction, which partly explains why I've never made the trip there. I've also always been somewhat dubious about spending time in a country where the old ditty "Waltzing Matilda" is widely held to be the "unofficial national anthem".

The size of Australia's Jewish population is difficult to estimate, largely because Jewish identity in this day and age is so complicated. Different sources seem to hover somewhere between 120,000 – 150,000, similar to a city like London in the UK, or Atlanta, Ga., today.

Apparently most Australian Jews identify as "traditional" and belong to Orthodox synagogues, even though they don't live Orthodox lifestyles. Yet another reason why Jewish immigrants from South Africa (and England) should have an easy time fitting in.

In fact, I remember hearing anecdotes in the 1990s that so many Jewish South Africans were emigrating to Australia that existing students at some Australian Jewish Day schools were beginning to come home from school with South African accents.

It seems that Australian Jews have integrated well into their country and have long found it easy to have an open, fulfilling Jewish life. The community is well-organized and has historically been closely connected to and supportive of Israel.

The recent period since October 7, 2023, though has been a trying time for Jewish life everywhere; I don't think there's a single country which hasn't seen a rise in antisemitism from both the extreme Left and extreme Right. When Jews around the world are held responsible for the policies of the Israeli government or the actions of its military, that's antisemitism. When Jews are seen as legitimate targets simply because they are Jews, that's antisemitism. And whether attacks against Jews take the form of words, vandalism or murder, they're all antisemitism.

The mission of Temple Beth David is to provide an environment where the concepts of community prayer, education, and service to the greater Jewish community are provided within the context of Conservative Judaism. We take pride in being a friendly, participatory, egalitarian community, welcoming all to be a part of our synagogue family.

It's abusive. It's belligerent. It's bigoted. It's calculated. It's clandestine. It's coordinated. It's classic. It's contemporary. It's demoralizing. It's discouraging. It's discriminatory. It's draining. It's exhausting. It's fashionable. It's hateful. It's hostile. It's intolerant. It's ideological. It's irrational. It's pervasive. It's prejudiced. It's rabid. It's racist. It's rampant. It's sexy. It's supremacist. It's vicious. It's violent. It's virulent. It's vulgar. It's xenophobic.

To say the least of it.

And quite honestly, it detracts and distracts us, for instead of focusing on the joy that comes from Jewish life and learning, our individual and communal energies are increasingly diverted to this anxiety that's imposed upon us and to the defense that's incumbent upon us.

The first night of Chanukah this last weekend was Exhibit "A": instead of being allowed to be filled with celebration and delight, we were forced to run for our lives. Again.

This tragic escalation of antisemitism in recent years has been tough on Jews everywhere, and especially in Australia. The barometer has been rising there to the point that so many who've been interviewed this week have said that they're not surprised by this obscene outcome.

As we despair about how to continue as Jews in this global climate, there is something else though that we MUST pay attention to: an act of heroism amidst the horror. The man in the white t-shirt, Syrian immigrant Ahmed al Ahmed, who ran into the fire at Sydney's Bondi Beach in order to stop it.

Can you only imagine how the impulse to preserve life and everything that is good can beat so strongly within an individual that without even stopping to think, they instinctively risk their own?

Blessed is the One who has such beauty in His universe.

Mr. al Ahmed has taught us the most Jewish of lessons – how to embrace life fearlessly – and for this we are eternally indebted to him. As Rebbe Nachman of Breslov taught the Jewish world: "Know that a person needs to cross a very, very narrow bridge, and the rule - the essence of life - is to not give in to fear at all."

L'Shalom,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael". The script is cursive and fluid, with a long vertical stroke at the end.

Michael

Letter from President Phil Katzman

Dear Congregants,

As many of you already know, Marty Yesowitch, one of our longtime members, was elected TBD President for the next 2 years starting on January 1, 2026. I am thankful that Marty stepped up and took on this position after I agreed at the end of last year to continue my term of presidency for another year. It has been my honor to serve over the past 3 years. I have truly learned in practice how we keep the traditions of our temple vibrant and I have also become much better acquainted with many congregants who I had not known well before this time period.

The temple has changed a lot over these 3 years. Perhaps the biggest change is that we moved from the TBK building to the TBE building in 2023. Helen Kashtan and Andrew Berger were instrumental in getting that move to happen. Once in the TBE building, our ability to collaborate with TBE was increased and to host Shabbat and High Holiday services in the handicap-accessible first floor chapel has been wonderful. Our access to the Youth Lounge for Kiddushim and other functions has also been a nice addition.

In 2023, I convened an Activity Committee. With the assistance of several congregants, we organized our 70th Anniversary celebration in 2024. Since then Stan Schaffer took the reins of the Activity Committee and subsequently there has been the Jewish Book Club (hosted by Sue Lederer), the Colonial Belle cruise, sukkah hopping, the annual picnic, and pickleball. Most recently, there have been Acts of Loving Kindness (Tikkun Olam) by several congregants who have delivered meals to congregants who are in senior living communities in the area. The Jewish Movie Club, organized and hosted by Rabbi Silbert has remained active for several years since its introduction during the pandemic.

Thank you to Alison Helms for her continued commitment to organizing Kiddushim and for her efforts to organize the archives.

The continued spiritual support of Rabbi Silbert and the continued participation of congregants to read Torah and Haftarah have allowed us to continue to have meaningful Shabbat services with a minyan most weeks. Ron Brandwein, VP Ritual, has been instrumental in organizing our Shabbat and High Holiday services over the last 3 years.

In the ritual realm we also introduced a pair of Torah holders that were contributed by Stan and Elaine Schaffer. We are also planning on replacing High Holiday Torah covers that would be available for next years' High Holiday services.

As we move into a new calendar year, I want to thank the Executive Board and the Board of Trustees, who met monthly, for their continued commitment to provide guidance to our temple. A special thank you to Scott Davis, who has been working in the office on our administrative functions. We have begun to get administrative assistance from TBE's office. We are converting our office operating system from Rakefet to ShulCloud, which will allow congregants to access their temple accounts online and the TBE office to help us in additional tasks that involve ShulCloud.

We are currently in the process of working with a consultant, Lara Dorfman, from Build Better Non-profits to evaluate our congregation and TBE concurrently to plan for how we should move forward with our collaboration with TBE. Many of you have already met with or will be meeting with Lara over the next few weeks in order for her to get a sense of our community. Although I am stepping down from the president position, I will continue to be the contact with Lara as this consultant work continues into the spring.

Over this year, I wish you all good health and may we go from strength to strength.

Phil Katzman

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Hyman Abrams

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Beverly Zwick

IN HONOR OF

**Naming of Linda & Marc
Servetnik's granddaughter, Lily**
Cindy Halpern

GENERAL DONATIONS

**Bernard Roth
Edward & Susan Drexler**

January - March 2026 Yahrzeits

These are the dates of observance which match the Hebrew calendar for the actual date of death.

January 2

Adele Katzman

January 3

Bella Nussbaum

January 5

Sam Cohen
Robert Saltzman

January 6

Sylvia Weber

January 7

Martin Roth

January 8

Max Gross
David Matis Przewuzman
Abraham Lutzky

January 10

Tania Jacobson
Eugene Roth

January 11

Miriam Kaufman
Milton Lande
Irving Mindlin

January 13

Bernard Kaufman
Sheldon Feuerstein
Donna Wexler Larca

January 21

L. Grant Meeker
Yuda Kinel

January 23

Norman Gilman

January 24

Ada Rosenthal
Abe Rousso

January 25

Sarah Ann Berke
Ida Gertzog

January 26

Arthur Bauman
Laurie Feuerstein Walsh

January 31

Morris Klein
George Moidel

February 2

Ida "Toots" Skopitz

February 3

Janet Gordon
Charles Jaffey

February 4

Lillian Sardone

February 6

Charles Conwell
David Nussbaum

February 7

Harry Sigelow

February 8

Miriam Bauman

February 11

Lillian Narotsky
Florence Levinson

February 13

Herman Miller

February 14

Peter Carl Abrams

February 16

Elynor Vine

February 18

Fanny Simon Passer
Frank Sherman

February 19

Werner Schaffer

February 22

Minnie Blumkin
Shirley Shapiro

February 25

Daniel Nussbaum

February 26

Lillian Abelson
Ian Berke

February 27

Norman Klein

February 27

Sara Brodsky

February 27

Alan Herman

March 2

Bluma Schonbrun

March 3

Faye Goldin

March 6

Max Palagyi

March 7

Samuel Markus

March 7

Morris Herman

March 11

Abraham Rothberg
Helen Langmann

March 12

Louis Klein

March 15

Les Ambush

March 15

Mollie Roth

March 16

Molly Cohen
Harry Cohen

March 17

Stephen Sigelow
Harry Herman

March 18

Bessie Klein

March 18

Betty Segelin

March 19

Samuel Katzman

March 21

Martin Robert Feldman
Florence Sanow Rappaport

March 22

Michael Stoler

March 23

Alex Perlman

March 25

Barbara Berger

March 26

Minetta Klein

March 30

Solomon Gordon
Lester Rappaport



YOUR NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR VIBRANT LIVING

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Contact us today! Let's talk about making your move. Now accepting deposits. For more information call (585) 341-2306 or visit JewishHomeRoc.org/LilacGrove.



JANUARY

Bruce Goldin	January 8
David Langmann	January 18
Elaine Schaffer	January 24
Linda Servetnick	January 25
Dr. Barbara Weber	January 29

FEBRUARY

Bonnie Abrams	February 3
Philippa Jacobson	February 8
Marc Lande	February 9
Dr. Steven Meyers	February 13
Susan Langmann	February 14
Arthur Stoler	February 18
Thomas Wolbert	February 18
Helen Kashtan	February 23
Rabbi Michael* Silbert	February 24
Sanford Toole	February 25

MARCH

Mark Greenstein	March 11
Joyce Towber	March 11
Lilly Sherman	March 13
Michelle Gross	March 21
Anne Goldin	March 24
Mobeen Shirazi	March 26
Kellie Hyman	March 28
Roberta Kinel	March 29

MARCH

Phillip & Susan Lederer	March 4
36th Anniversary	

Celebrating a special event?

Submit details to TBD's office for inclusion in our *Weekly News* email or the printed *Bulletin*. Photos must be original files and good quality.

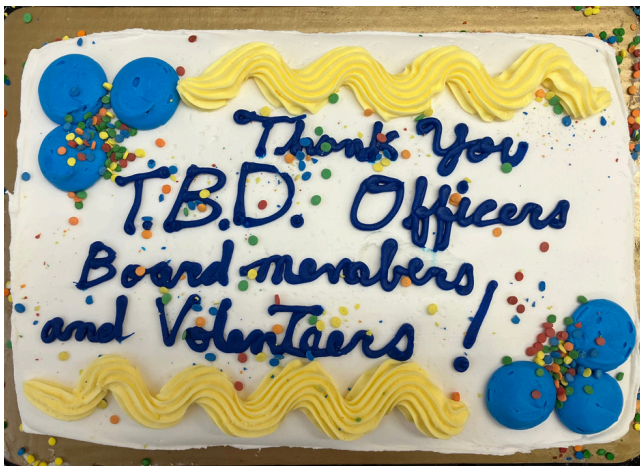
Email us at: office@tbdrochester.org.

Mitzvah Kiddush

Who knows why, but this fall and winter an unusual number of our TBD congregants have experienced mishaps and health problems and need food, rides, and support. The TBD sisterhood knew how to help each other in these situations, and thankfully we have been able to adopt some of their ideas, including the Mitzvah Kiddush.

For example, we made extra food for our November and December kiddushim and delivered full or partial kiddush lunches to congregants who were at home and needed some TLC. We also made and delivered soup and lemon bars at Thanksgiving to those who needed a boost. Our Chanukah Party was sponsored through the Mitzvah Kiddush fund. We prepared more than enough latkes, salad, pita and hummus and made sure that congregants who missed the party received Chanukah care packages, visits, and phone calls.

Our December TBD kiddush honored our officers, board members and all the volunteers that helped with projects and activities this year. Thanks again, everyone, and keep in touch!



Chanukah 2025



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