Rabbi’s Corner: Understanding the Omer through Pesach and Shabbat

By: Rabbi David Finkelstein

According to Rabbi Menachem Nachum Twersky of Chernobyl, Ukraine (1730-1787), an early Hasidic thinker and preacher known as the Me’or Einayim, Shabbat is a hard-earned day of rest, and more. It is also an invitation to imagine that all of our work is done, yes, all of our work. When we succeed in this, Shabbat really is a profound disconnection from the world of work. I’ve been dwelling on this teaching because it has the potential to shift the meaning of Shabbat, away from the accomplishments and rest that we earn, towards the blessings that are given to all of us unearned: our birth, and the world, and our freedom.

What I have to say here is, I think, an implication of that teaching. We need the Omer to help us link the mystical freedom of Pesach to our daily lives.

On Shabbat, we celebrate the world and our freedom (the Friday night Kiddush calls Shabbat a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt); on Passover, as is well known, we focus on freedom. If we apply the Me’or Einayim’s teaching to Pesach, the seders become centered on imagining that all of (Continued on page 3)

Fresh from the Bakery: Board Business

By: Dina Wolfman Baker

In early April, the Temple Beth Israel board of directors held its last regularly scheduled meeting of the 2021-2022 year. This seems like a good time to catch everyone up on what TBI’s leadership has been doing. Our schedule for the year was to meet in August, October, December, February and April, and then host the annual meeting in June (see information for the annual meeting on page 4). However, we also have a special meeting of the board scheduled for May. We call special meetings when we must discuss and vote on an issue between regular meetings, and we need to complete our review of the bylaws committee’s recommendations.

Here's what we’ve been doing this year:

At our August meeting, we spent some time getting to know each other as (Continued on page 2)
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By: Dina Wolfman Baker

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colleagues and agreeing on some rules of the road for working together. We identified these priorities: communicating well with each other and with the congregation; continuing to address TBI’s response to COVID-19; and increasing our membership and our member engagement.

We voted to extend Rabbi David’s contract another three years, and I am excited to share that at the end of February I signed the new contract with him for the period of August 1, 2022 through July 31, 2025.

The synagogue had reopened for services shortly before the board year began, and in the course of the year has closed and reopened again. We established a TBI Community Health Task Force, authorized to make decisions on TBI’s protocols for responding to COVID-19 and for determining the metrics we use to trigger our responses.

With a desire to encourage groups to pursue interests while maintaining the visibility to allow the board to meet its obligation of oversight, we discussed ensuring that every club or ad hoc committee is aligned to a standing committee or officer.

As occurs each year, in October the board reviewed, discussed and adopted the annual budget. If any new expense is proposed beyond the approved budget, the board must vote whether to add it to the budget. We regularly review our profit-and-loss statement and receive a report on the congregation’s investments.

Our board committees and their many wonderful volunteers from across the congregation—most often in collaboration with Rabbi David—have been enriching our community with religious, social, social justice, membership and chesed activities; bringing in grant funding to strengthen our NextGen programming and engage in outreach to and programming for teens; and managing significant work to strengthen our infrastructure—from replacing the heating system, to evaluating vendors for building maintenance and office management software. Andrea Baron, in her role as office manager, has supported every aspect of this work, with the help of Marilyn Racette who assisted in the office while Andrea was working remotely from Florida during the winter.

We’ve discussed security at TBI, as we try to balance two compelling responsibilities from our tradition: to protect the lives of our members and guests (“Ye shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you do not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone should fall from it.” -Deuteronomy 22:8) and to live within our practice of welcoming (“The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens…” -Leviticus 19:34). As an immediate result, we are

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Rabbi’s Corner: Understanding the Omer through Pesach and Shabbat

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our justice work is done, on imagining that all oppression has ceased from the world. For one day (or two), we have a religious reason to distract ourselves from thinking about war, conflicts, and persecution. For one day, we can pass on the concern that we might be complicit in the suffering of other people. True, the seder does begin with the memory of slavery, but only as a kind of on-ramp from the world as it is into the celebration of unalloyed freedom, which is the true focus of Pesach. As twenty-first century American Jews, we enjoy a kind of freedom that is unprecedented in Jewish history. We have more freedom to celebrate than many of our ancestors had. We have so much to celebrate on Pesach.

But then comes the second day of Pesach. It is difficult to sustain the mental exercise of seeing the world as redeemed, and maybe that’s because it is not good to sustain it. That vision can be very nourishing and refreshing, but every second we spend searching for it is a second in which we ignore the real world as it is. After celebrating the first seder’s newness with a Sheheheyanu blessing, we count the first day of the Omer at the second seder, and in doing so we set foot on a forty-nine day walk through Pesach and beyond, into a world with six days of responsibility and one day of mystical freedom per week. No matter what kind of person you are, the task of harnessing the radical freedom of Pesach to serve a grounded vision for the future is challenging, and so very necessary. That’s why the Torah gives us seven weeks every year in which to harness our freedom and get it working in the world. In order to help us manage this great task, the Zohar offers seven markers to remind us how far we’ve come, how much further we have to go, and what spiritual work might help us along the way.

Those markers are 1) Hesed - receptivity or celebrating the gift of our birth (for the week of Pesach), 2) Gevurah - strength of boundaries or acknowledging the inevitability of death, 3) Tiferet - investment in a vision or dream for how the world could be, 4) Netzach - using the tool of perseverance to remain faithful to our vision, 5) Hod - using the tool of acceptance/humility to allow us to adjust the vision when new insight arrives, 6) Yesod - centering our sense of purpose on justice and doing what is right, and 7) Malkhut - knowing our power, our expertise, our gifts, and using them with confidence and dignity.

Perhaps it will be helpful to point out that, unlike Pesach and Shavuot, the Omer is not a holy time, not a holiday. Apart from the Omer’s seven Shabbats, its forty-two other days are almost all regular workdays (the modern holiday of Israeli Independence Day being the only exception). The Omer connects one holiness to another. Unlike the holiness of Shabbat - a time during which the Me’or Einayim counsels that we refrain even from working on the improvement of our character - the mundane nature of the Omer is a perfect time for journaling, for self-reflection, and for values clarification. We need the Omer because it gives meaning and shape to the freedom we celebrate on Pesach. The Omer is when we ask ourselves what freedom and responsibility look like for us during this third year of the COVID pandemic, while war continues in Ukraine, given where we are in our individual and communal lives, taking into account as much of the world as it is as we can hold.

So harness your freedom to reality, and let me know how it goes!

May the counting of the Omer be a blessing to you.

Rabbi David
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keeping the front door always locked and staffing the door with volunteer greeters for admittance during services and events. We plan to provide training to these greeters, and we will continue to consider future enhancements.

We have two ad hoc committees currently in action. The nominating committee is preparing a slate of nominees for election for Membership Director and Recording Secretary, and the bylaws committee is preparing recommended revisions to our bylaw. The work of both committees will come before the membership for vote at the annual meeting on June 12.

It is my privilege and pleasure to work with the people who make this happen. Do you have questions or comments about the board’s work? Would you like to find out how you can get involved? Reach out to me or to any of us (board members are listed on page 2), or contact us using this form: https://forms.gle/dhkUit8j52CXYgFwS8

The annual meeting of the membership will take place on Sunday, June 12, 10:00 am to Noon, and we encourage you to attend. We intend that it will be a multi-access meeting, both in-person at Temple Beth Israel at 25 Harvard Street in Waltham, and online using Zoom. If the public health situation requires, we will move to fully online.

To attend online, use this Zoom link:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81679406472?pwd=bng2bVdCVVNSYkwxVnRZOWJ5OU9RUT09
Meeting ID: 816 7940 6472
Passcode: 516321

TBI Bookshelf
by Marilyn Racette

A while ago Rabbi David shared the words of Judy Heumann, a disability rights advocate, with us. We now have a copy of her memoir, Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist, in our library. The book, written with Kristen Joiner, is incredibly moving. In her prologue, Judy writes that she never wished she didn’t have a disability, and that she’s fairly sure her parents didn’t feel that way either. Years later she learned that a doctor suggested to them that when she recovered from polio (she was two years old) she be sent to an institution. That was the thing to do in 1949. Perhaps because they came to the USA as young teens, leaving Hitler’s Germany and it’s cruelty to the disabled behind, Judy’s parents would not do that. Despite the difficult subjects that Judy writes about, the author’s voice is easy to listen to. This is a wonderful read.
Rabbi David’s Discussion Groups

MONTHLY KABBALAT SHABBAT with MAARIV
** Online Only **
Time: 5:30-6:30pm on 1st Friday of the month
Place: In-house at TBI and on Zoom
Date: Fridays May 6, June 3
Description: This monthly service with spirited singing in the round is held in person (when the building is open) as well as online. Rabbi David and/or a lay leader leads the evening service after Kabbalat Shabbat once a month. All participants are encouraged to share a few sentences about a good thing from their week (a tov me’od) to catch up with friends and help everyone enter the restful spirit of Shabbat.
Zoom Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86094088277

LUNCHEETIME TORAH STUDY (monthly—online only)
Time: 12:00-1:30pm on 2nd Thursdays, on Zoom
Date: Thursdays May 12, June 9
Description: On May 12, we will continue studying Chapter 27 of Genesis, in which Jacob dresses up as his twin brother Esau on their mother Rebekah’s instructions and feeds his father Isaac meat in order to deceive Isaac into giving Jacob the blessing that Isaac had planned to bestow upon Esau. This scene is a Scriptural smorgasbord for the senses, jam-packed with complex characters, drama, and food for thought about whether God gives the covenant to outstanding human beings or to lesser evils. English is the primary language of study; the original Hebrew is also provided. All are welcome.
Zoom Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87353443111?pwd=b0hQYXcvekVXWVBqMnpvRlISMSs2QT09

EVENING TALMUD STUDY (monthly—online only)
Time: 7:00-8:30pm on 3rd Tuesdays, on Zoom
Date: Tuesdays May 17, June 21
Description: We continue studying in Tractate Taanit the non-legal, ethical and inspirational teachings. We limit our study to one or two short texts per session, exploring whenever possible the strong Biblical current flowing under the surface of so many of these teachings. English is the primary language of study; Hebrew/Aramaic also provided. All are welcome.
Zoom Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83365026963?pwd=SytiQ0tqK3hraGFRdzdlc1NJQVFnQT09

Hashmiini: Let Me Hear Shabbat
DATES: May 21, June 18

DESCRIPTION: Once each month, Rabbi David delivers a d’var Torah that lifts up one or more voices from a marginalized group within the Jewish community. Come hear and celebrate the voices of some Jews whose lived experience enables them to make a special contribution to Jewish life and to Torah.
Thank You for Your Generous Donations

- **In Memory of Ellie Handel**
  Merrill Griff and Carol Wilcox

- **In Memory of Bob Macauley**
  Merrill Griff and Carol Wilcox

- **Yellow Candle Contributions**
  Catherine Cantrell
  Arnold and Polly Slavet
  Alan Levine
  Phyllis Werlin
  Merrill Griff and Carol Wilcox
  Dina and Brad Baker
  Jonathan and Cookie Schiff

- **Other Contributions**
  Merrill Griff, sponsoring this year’s Siyyum
  Merrill Griff, honoring Phyllis Werlin’s recovery
  The League of Women’s Voters

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**Rabbi David’s Office Hours:**

**Drop-in:** May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
12:30-1:30pm.
Zoom Meeting ID: 811 0356 9244
Passcode: 157389

**By Appointment Only:** May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
10:30am-12:30pm.

Contact Rabbi David in advance to make an appointment at rabbidavid@tbiwaltham.org or 781.786.8679

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**TBI Community News**

We’re happy to share news from the Temple Beth Israel community. Please reach out to each other!

Share your news here through this form: [https://forms.gle/EYfHmrWpB4JTznGb6](https://forms.gle/EYfHmrWpB4JTznGb6)
# Zoom with Us!

May 2022

We meet by computer, by phone, and in person (though we do close the building temporarily in COVID-19 surges—please check the website).

**To join by phone—no computer needed:** Dial (301)-715-8592. You will hear a prompt to enter a meeting ID. Enter the meeting ID, followed by #. In the listing of events below, we show the meeting ID for each event.

**To join by computer or mobile device**, visit [zoom.us](http://zoom.us) in a web browser, click *Join a Meeting*, and enter the meeting ID and password for the event (or click the direct link to the event posted on our website or in our weekly email update). **The current list of events appears below.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>May</th>
<th>Shabbat Services Online</th>
<th>Meeting ID</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 6</td>
<td><strong>Kabbalat Shabbat with Maariv 5:30pm—6:30 pm In Person and Online</strong></td>
<td>860 9408 8277</td>
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<td>May 13, 20, 27</td>
<td><strong>Shabbat Shalom - 5:30pm—6:00 pm Online only</strong></td>
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<td>May 7, 14, 21, 28</td>
<td><strong>Shabbat Morning In-house (when building is open) and Online</strong></td>
<td>898 2996 2372 pw:204635</td>
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## Thursday Morning Minyan

| May 5, 12, 19, 26 | **Morning Minyan 8:00am** Online only | 860 6404 5288 |

## Rabbi’s Discussion Groups

| May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 | **12:30pm-1:30pm** Rabbi David’s Open Zoom Office Hours | 811 0356 9244 pw: 157389 |
| May 12, June 9 | **12:00pm - 1:30pm Lunchtime Torah Study** See page 5 for details | 873 5344 3111 pw: 922863 |
| May 17, June 21 | **7:00pm - 8:30pm Evening Talmud Study** See page 5 for details | 833 6502 6963 pw: 615895 |
May Yahrzeits

We wish a long life to our members who are observing a Yahrzeit in the coming weeks.

If you would like assistance to arrange a virtual minyan so that you may say kaddish for your loved ones, please contact the Temple office at least one week in advance.

- May 1 - Bruce Trager, in memory of his grandfather, Samuel Trager
- May 2 - Ed Kaufman, in memory of his mother, Freda Kaufman
- May 4 - Celia Shneider, in memory of her son, Nicholas Shneider Fairweather
- May 6 - Phylis Werlin, in memory of her mother, Margaret Werlin
- May 6 - Amy Rothman, in memory of her grandmother, Rebecca Zall
- May 8 - Robert Kaitz in memory of his grandmother, Goldie Stoeger
- May 8 - Bruce Trager, in memory of his mother, Mary Trager
- May 11 - Lillian Etkind, in memory of her mother, Anne Itzkowitz
- May 12 - Gita Hakerem Foster, in memory of her father, Gad Hakerem
- May 12 - Patricia McCue, in memory of Morris Canter
- May 14 - The Lesnicks, in memory of a dear friend, Bessie Silver
- May 16 - Thelma Kennen, in memory of her mother-in-law, Fannie Kennen
- May 16 - Rabbi David Finkelstein, in memory of Lois K. Wynn

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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Goldie Ramler</td>
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<td>Nathan Kaufman</td>
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<td>Freda Kaufman</td>
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<td>Aaron Weiner</td>
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<td>Hyman Weinstein</td>
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- May 20 - Esther Keaney, in memory of her mother, Helen Keaney
- May 22 - Zach Roe, in memory of his mother, Lori Ann Roe
- May 22 - Bruce Trager, in memory of his grandmother, Sophie Trager
- May 25 - Penina Weinberg, in memory of her mother, Carla Bertha Hungerford Weinberg
- May 28 - Carol Master, in memory of her father, Avraham ben Yitzhak Itsik
- May 28 - Zach Roe, in memory of his grandfather, Henry Mefford Roe
- June 1 - Miriam Chernoff, in memory of her uncle, Jack Bloom
- June 4 - Ed Kaufman, in memory of his father, Joseph Kaufman
- June 5 - The Smith Brothers, in memory of their sister Molly Smith
- June 6 - Stanley Goldstein, in memory of his father, Carl Goldstein
- June 7 - Jill Stanton, in memory of her father, Myron Stanton
- June 8 - Robert Braitman, in memory of his father, Irving Braitman
- June 8 - Carol Master, in memory of Zisl ben Nissn Shoteur
- June 9 - Marilyn Racette, in memory of her grandmother, Grete Araten
Social Justice Committee Report

Fighting Antisemitism:
Did you see the flier distributed in Beverly Hills on the first day of Passover? Do you know the name of the white supremacist group started by a resident of Waltham? What committees and organizations at the local, state and national levels address antisemitism? How can you help?

The Social Justice Committee is hosting the second session of Fighting Antisemitism on Tuesday, May 10th at 7:00pm in collaboration with the Social Action Team at First Parish Waltham.

We will be addressing modern tropes, white supremacist groups and allyship. The questions asked above will be answered, along with other pertinent information.

Please pre-register for this free virtual event: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYkceGprjkvG9MLWuVWWvjS0THXrcdK1uYZ
For more information, please contact Linda Ungerleider at ulinda@gmail.com.

Our continuing support through your donations:

The Community Day Center is currently serving 35-45 lunches daily and providing case management services. To help, please consider donating cases of individual size bottles of water, packages of individual juice boxes and single serving snacks. Summer jerseys and shorts for both men and women are also needed. Donations can be dropped off in our lobby or at 16 Felton Street.

More Than Words continues to collect book donations. Please use the collection bin in our lobby or drop off directly at 55 Felton Street.

Please feel free to contact Social Justice Committee chair Linda Ungerleider (ulinda@gmail.com) with any questions or concerns.
Temple Beth Israel Memorial Park

Temple Beth Israel has maintained a cemetery for its members since 1951. Beth Israel Memorial Park is located on South Street, between the Stanley Elementary School and Children's Hospital. Graves are available in Section A (the right side as you enter the cemetery), Section B (the left side as you enter the cemetery) and in Kulanu (the left side, after Section B). The cost to purchase an individual grave in Sections A or B for Temple members is $2,200 ($4,400 for two). The cost for non-members is $3,200 per grave, which includes one year of membership ($600).

Kulanu is dedicated to serving the needs of Jewish Temple members who are married to a non-Jewish spouse. Graves in the Kulanu interfaith section are sold in lots of two, at a total cost of $4,400 for members. The cost for non-members is $7,600 for a lot of two, which includes one year of family membership ($1,200).

If you are interested in purchasing one or more graves, please contact Jay Trilling of Menorah Cemetery Management Corporation at (857) 636-9440.

—Jim Baron, Cemetery Committee Chair

Sign Up for TBI Talk

TBI Talk is Temple Beth Israel’s members’ only discussion list on email. Sign up to send and receive messages from subscribing TBI members on the TBI Talk discussion list by entering your email and contact information in the Subscribe section of this page:
http://listserv.tbiwaltham.org/listinfo.cgi/tbitalk-tbiwaltham.org Please note that since only TBI members may participate, your registration will be processed as soon as we can verify your TBI membership status.

After you have subscribed, you are welcome to communicate with all members of TBI Talk by sending an email message to tbitalk@tbiwaltham.org. By participating, you agree to the terms of use.

Social Media

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Twitter:
twitter.com/tbiwaltham
Instagram:
ingram.com/tbiwaltham/
LinkedIn:
linkedin.com/company/tbiwaltham/

Temple Beth Israel Donation Form

For your convenience, please use this form to make your donations and send to: Temple Beth Israel, 25 Harvard Street, Waltham, MA 02453. You may also donate online at http://tbiwaltham.org/donate. The minimum donation amount is $10. Please add additional information on another sheet.

Attached is my donation check in the amount of $ ______ Please allocate it to the following funds.

___ General Fund  ___ Mark Frydenberg Event Participation Fund  ___ Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund
___ Goldstein Prayerbook Fund  ___ Morris Hollender Torah Fund  ___ Children’s Services
___ Education Fund  ___ Warming Center Fund

This donation is being made ___ in honor of ___ in memory of ____________________________.

This donation is made by: Name: ____________________________ Name: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________ Address: ____________________________
City/State/Zip ____________________________ City/State/Zip ____________________________

Please send acknowledgment to: ____________________________
## Mark Your Calendar! May Highlights

| Friday Night Shabbat Service | Kabbalat Shabbat with Maariv 5:30pm—6:30 pm  
May 6 - Online and In-House  
Welcoming Shabbat Service 5:30pm—6:00 pm  
May 13, 20, 27 - Online Only |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Shabbat Morning              | Shabbat Morning Services - Saturdays at 9:30am  
Online Only  
Hashmiini: Let Me Hear Shabbat— May 21 |
| Rabbi Office Hours           | May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 - 12:30pm-1:30pm  
See page 7 |
| NEXTGEN                      | Dates will be available in our weekly eblast |
| Fighting Antisemitism Program #2 | Tuesday, May 10th at 7:00pm  
See page 10 |