

FROM THE OCTOBER 2017 ISSUE OF *TEMPLE TALK*

Letter from the Rabbi

When my Year-In-Israel class arrived in Jerusalem for our year of study at Hebrew Union College, we received orientation materials that included cultural information about Israeli society. One of the many things that surprised me was the notice that we should expect many stores, offices, and schools to be closed during the week of Sukkot.

I expected everything to be closed on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, of course. And the Torah instructs us not to work at our occupations and to have a day of solemn rest on the first day of Sukkot just as we do on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. But why was everything open between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the holiest time of year, but closed during *chol hamo'ed*, the intermediate days of the festival of Sukkot? After all, the Torah allows work during *chol hamo'ed*, and Orthodox Jews in the United States do not ordinarily take off from work during that week.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and the days between them are at once somber and hopeful; the tone is one of reflection. On Sukkot, the Torah commands us to rejoice before God for seven days (Lev 23:40). It is possible to rejoice while at work, perhaps, but as we know, for most of us it is easier to rejoice when not in the office. We are to dwell in booths – and in Israel, the weather at Sukkot is perfect for being outdoors. The cities are quiet as many Israelis head out to go camping for the week.

In the Ozarks, we have plenty of reason to rejoice during this season. We look forward to building and decorating our Sukkah on Sunday, October 1. Contact Kevin Sweckard if you are interested in helping to build; all are invited to a party to decorate the Sukkah at 10:30 a.m. On Saturday, October 7 we will celebrate Sukkot with a potluck lunch in our Sukkah (if the weather is as good as it typically is in Israel; otherwise, we'll eat inside) following our 10:30 a.m. Shabbat and Sukkot service. Bring food to share; drinks will be provided by our Holiday Committee.

Then on Wednesday, October 11 we will rejoice with our Torah on the holiday of Simchat Torah. We will begin with a meal at 6 p.m. provided by our fabulous Holiday Committee. Please RSVP to committee chair Mara Cohen Ioannides, maraiouannides@missouristate.edu or 417-827-7793 no later than October 8. At 7 o'clock we will qvell as we celebrate the consecration of our two kindergarten students, Mason Tuckness and Gabriel Vaughn. They and we will dance with the Torah, marking the end of another cycle of reading the Torah and the beginning of another. How many reasons we have to rejoice!

Wishing everyone a shanah tovah, a good New Year!

L'shalom,

Rabbi Barbara L. Block

Letter from the President

To recap my Rosh Hashanah address, I promised that I wouldn't give the big guilt plea for money, nor would I make the "sky is falling" speech, and that I would keep it brief.

During the past three weeks I have had a big dose of family. My mom and her 7 siblings produced 29 children between them, and I've lost track of how many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, all of whom call me auntie. We recently celebrated a long-planned wedding and an unexpected funeral. When we said goodbye to my aunt, when we welcomed my cousin's husband to our family, nobody talked politics or religion. We talked memories and shared experiences. We bragged about our kids and our hopes for them. And a few of us just realized that WE are now the wise women the kids come to for advice, and look to for examples. My visits with my family aren't as frequent as they were when I was a kid, but I feel at home among them, even the ones who exasperate me.

Harvey. Irma. Record drought in the West leading to out-of-control wildfires. Earthquakes in Mexico and California, and more named storms on their way. When we learn of natural disasters, we don't ask who's to blame. We don't ask if those affected are Jews, or Muslim, or Christian. We don't pledge our dollars to relief agencies with the stipulation that they only be used to help people of a particular political party. We don't even ask them whether they hate Jews. We respond without conditions because we are all united as humans trying to live our lives and take care of our families.

For the past 12 years we have considered Temple Israel our Jewish family in the same way that many of you do, because a congregation is a kind of extended family. I take comfort in the presence of all of you who have become my friends since we arrived in August of 2005. I especially appreciate Ken Burstin and the Temple Israel choir who gave me a place to feel I belonged from the beginning of my time as a member. Here is where we all come together to celebrate our shared Jewish heritage and traditions, and to be reminded that we are not alone in a part of the country that sometimes does make us feel isolated.

How is all this related: Birth family, the family of humanity, and our Temple family? I suppose you could say that families have been on my mind a lot lately. And in conclusion I want to say that it warms my heart to see you all, to welcome you all, and to sincerely invite you to join us more often. Because there is comfort and strength to be found in family.

June Weiss President

