

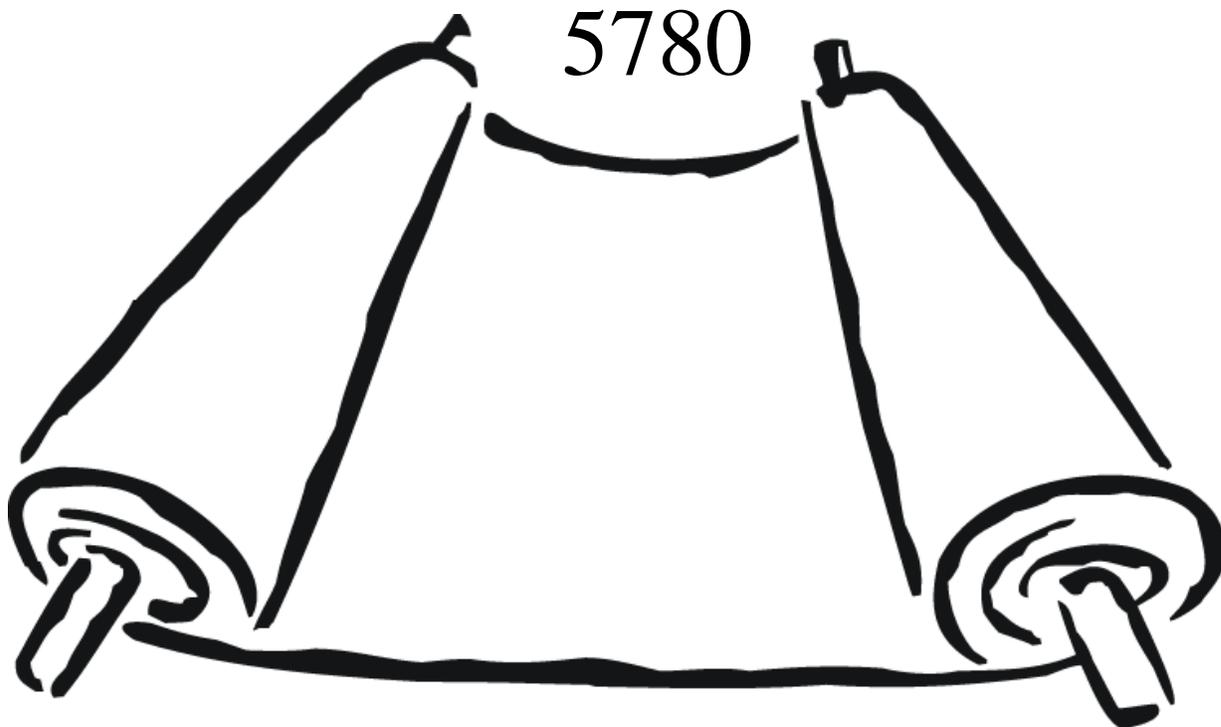


HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE

ק"ק פרחי קדש

# Confirmation Celebration

5780



Family Celebration and Blessings:

**May 15, 2020**

**21 Iyar 5780, 5pm**

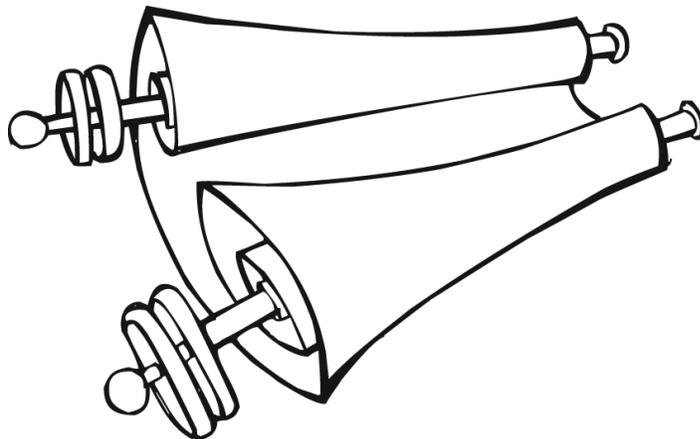
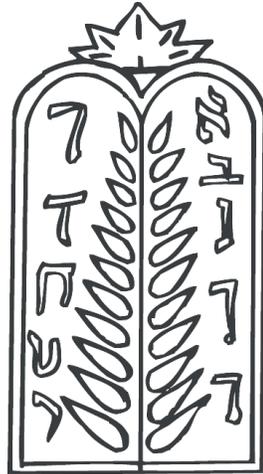
Congregational Blessings:

**May 23, 2020**

**29 Iyar 5780, 10:30am**

# Our Confirmands

Sam Baldachin  
Nathaniel Beutel  
Benjamin Davidson  
Elliott Friedland  
Seth Kirsh  
Lilah Peterseil  
Eli Shuber Malis  
Eli Sol  
Zoey Wallhouse



## Sam Baldachin

Throughout most of my life, I have been going to Hebrew school. I have made many great friends and memories there, whether it's just chatting with the security guard or making a stop-motion animation movie with my friends. I would have to say that my greatest positive memory at Holy Blossom was my becoming Bar Mitzvah. I never actually thought about why being Jewish was so great. I just thought it was just my religion and I never was actually proud nor upset about it.

When it was my Bar Mitzvah, I remember walking up to the Torah getting ready to read. I looked across the room and I remember seeing everyone wave at me. I was so happy and at that moment, I felt proud to be Jewish. I just kept on thinking about how everyone was here to see me become a man in Judaism. When I first got the date for my Bar Mitzvah a year before I actually had to do it, I was so afraid that I would mess up in front of everyone. I thought to myself that if I mess up I will let everyone down and that I wouldn't be able to get a second chance. When I started to practice a few times a week I started to understand what to say and how to sing it. I started to get excited and I kept on thinking that I'm finally going to do what my entire family did.

Once I finished my Bar Mitzvah and I had my party and even more of my friends were there. So many of them were congratulating me on becoming a man, this was another reason why I felt so proud to be Jewish because by being Jewish I started a new chapter in my life, adulthood.

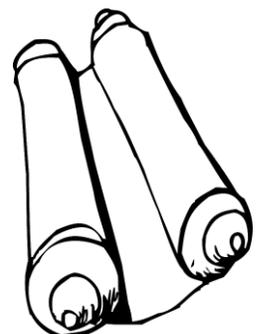
There was also another reason. Whenever I practice something or attempt to learn a new skill or math equation, the second I get it I feel proud that I accomplished it. These are just small things that make me feel proud. To practice something for over a year and then perform what I've learned in front of a lot of my friends and my parent's friends is just an amazing feeling. Especially when it goes so well and everyone is so proud of me when the Bar Mitzvah is finished. Hebrew school has been a great experience for me and I have made many great memories from it.

# Nathaniel Beutel

Last winter I had the opportunity to volunteer at Holy Blossom one night to help serve food to people who would have otherwise had a difficult time providing for themselves, I was able to do this through the help of both Holy Blossom and Out of the Cold. Serving food for that one night meant a lot to me to be able to help someone in need more than just giving money. I was able to serve them food, have a conversation and for many provide company. This opportunity meant a lot to me for the first time I was able to see first hand who I was helping.

Out of the Cold is not particularly Jewish although some of the core teachings of it have Jewish roots and equivalents. Judaism stresses the importance of giving back and supporting all those in the community. Helping with Out of the Cold accomplishes both of those things while also providing a connection and opportunity to connect with people you may not have otherwise met. Tikkun Olam is another important Jewish teaching and reminds us to repair the world, helping those in need regardless of religion. Out of the Cold encapsulates many of the core Jewish values and mirrors many of my own.

Before writing this reflection I had a discussion with my parents, I felt that volunteering for Out of the Cold doesn't reflect only Jewish values, because Out of the Cold isn't a Jewish organization and doesn't help only Jews. I was reminded that I was looking at it from a very zoomed out, one directional angle and instead tried looking at it another way. I saw things as black or white between Jewish values or my own innate core values and it being the right thing to do with religion being its own separate thing, but when I zoomed in I was able to make the connection between the two and I saw how my own core values stemmed from Jewish values that I saw in my house and community. In doing so I realized that just because something is shared between different things it doesn't mean that it can't be an important part to all.



# Benjamin Davidson

*What are you Confirming today?*

1. I am confirming my loyalty for G-d and my respect for the Jewish people. I plan on continuing the rest of my Jewish life by celebrating Shabbat every Friday night, going to synagogue every Jewish holiday, and teaching my children and my grandchildren all of my Jewish traditions.

*What Jewish volunteer commitments have you made this past year?*

2. This past year I volunteered at the Ve'ahavta van. This means a lot to me because these people can't get help for themselves, it is important to give back to the community. This is part of Judaism because in the Torah it says in many ways that we should help others when in need.

*What does Israel mean to you as a Reform Jew?*

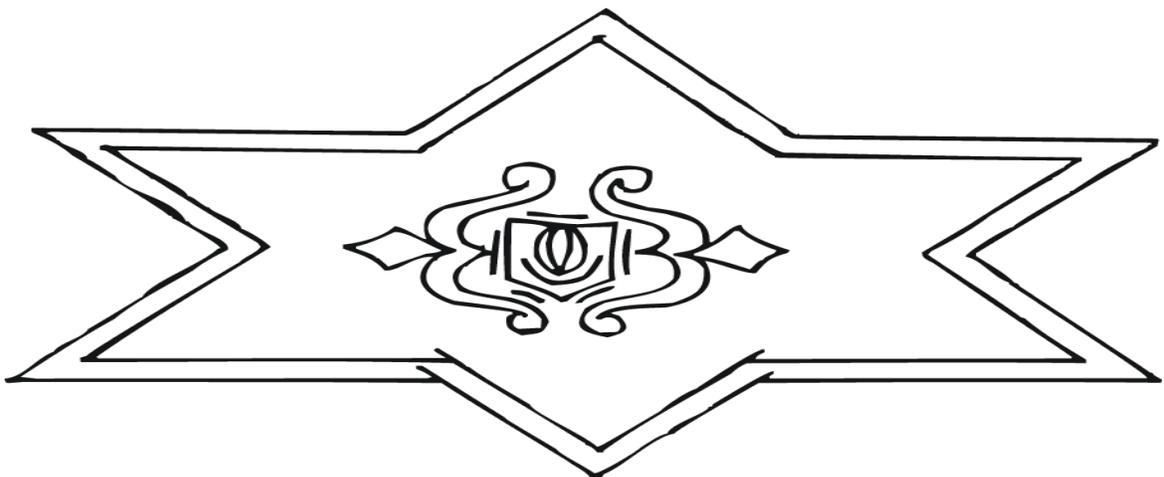
3. Israel is a special place that is our promised land. When we arrived, I felt like I have fulfilled G-d's commands. I would say to a peer to go and experience the lovely wonders of our promised land because you only live once.

*What event in your life at Temple has most impacted your Jewish Identity?*

4. The most important moment in the Temple for me as when I became a Bar Mitzvah, because it made me feel as though I was involved in my community and I felt like I was becoming part of something bigger. The events effect upon me was showing me that I was doing this for something more than just myself.

*Pick a topic you would like to study more about:*

5. I believe that the after life is a type of reincarnation where we are born again into another body.



# Elliott Friedland

I confirm that I will strive to live a fulsome Jewish life. The three pillars that support my Jewish identity are tradition, community, and volunteerism. I believe that as long as I prioritize these three values, I will be a committed Jew no matter where I am - in terms of stage of life or physical location.

Adhering to traditions is an important part of my Jewish identity because of how traditions transcend time. For example, we have a tradition in my family of altering the way we sing the *hamotzi*, which was started by my great grandfather (my dad's maternal grandfather Mike). Traditions have helped me learn about relatives that I never had the opportunity to know and help keep their spirit alive. Other important traditions include my family's converting the basement into a desert for second night Passover seder, building a sukkah in our backyard with my mom, and celebrating Hanukkah with my Toronto extended family. I especially hope to continue the second night seder traditions.

Community is a large part of my Jewish identity and includes family (immediate and extended), friends, and the larger world-wide Jewish community. The bonds with my confirmation classmates and my Jewish overnight camp friends have had a significant positive influence on me. I have especially learned the value of community during these early weeks of the COVID-19 crisis as my family has hosted weekly Zoom Shabbat as well as Seders where we had people join from 13 different locations. The interactions during these Zoom calls showed me the importance of being active in the communities created by friends and family.

Volunteerism is also integral to my Jewish identity. Performing acts of *tikkun olam* have contributed to some memorable moments in my life. One of the most influential volunteer activities I have taken part in was helping a Syrian refugee family with three young boys settle in Toronto during 2016/2017. Even though the family struggled in the beginning, it is clearly evident how happy they are to be in Canada. My relationship with this family, which continues today, helped me understand how lucky I am to live in Canada.

I hope that in my adult life I prioritize giving back to the community and help people less fortunate than me. Finally, I want to thank all my teachers from all my years at HBT's religious school. It's been a great journey!

## Seth Kirsh

This year I have learned what confirmation really means and why it is so important. It is about affirming one's connection to Judaism by embracing Jewish study into their lives. By learning with my confirmation class, I now understand the importance of my Jewish education. Over the years I have been able to learn and grow, and in this past year in confirmation class I have been able to confirm my Jewish identity for myself. I have done this by learning that there is no right way to be Jewish and you have to decide for yourself what values you share and how you want to be an active member of the Jewish community.

One way I have lived my Jewish identity is through volunteerism or *gemilut chasadim*. I have done some volunteering through Holy Blossom. This includes student teaching, Temple retreats, and mitzvah baking. Volunteering is an important Jewish value to me because it gives me the chance to help out in the community and also meet new people. Through these experiences, I have been able to build friendships and not only help other people, but learn from them.

One way I hope to continue to live my Jewish identity is by continuing to learn and grow as a person and as a Jew. Even though my formal Jewish education is finished, there is still so much for me to learn and pursue. I hope to continue to live my Jewish identity by one day passing down what I've learned to my kids and give them the opportunity to learn about Judaism just like I did through religious school.

Confirmation is about the journey of learning how you want to live your life and how that is connected to Judaism. This can be done in many ways. These include, volunteering, studying Torah, going to services, and many more possibilities. I feel that it is important to confirm so you can learn about your Jewish identity and discover what values are important to you. I am so thankful to be able to confirm, as it has been a very significant and important step in my Jewish journey.

# Lilah Peterseil

In the past 4 years I have participated in a variety of temple programming and youth-focused activities. Perhaps the most impactful of these activities for me has been my participation in L'Taken - a social justice focused weekend retreat that is run by the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism (RAC).

L'Taken brings together teens from Reform communities across North America for a weekend of learning and connecting which culminates in an opportunity to use or knowledge advocating before elected officials (or in our case the Canadian embassy).

I have participated in L'Taken twice, once with a HBT only group and the second time with a combined Toronto Reform teen group.

During the weekend, we are provided many opportunities to meet new people from all over the USA. This weekend combines sightseeing, learning, and advocacy in ways I could have never dreamed of.

I also have created close bonds with the other teens in my group through shared experiences and passions. For example I have had the opportunity to explore issues regarding access to mental health services which is an important issue for me.

During these weekends, I have learned many skills that I now am transferring to my local advocacy efforts, for example, how to give better presentations and advocate for things that are important to me. I plan to continue to do this in the area of access to mental health services in the coming years.

# Eli Sol

## ANGELS

In Judaism, God is an unstoppable singular force. So why would god need angels (“malach Adonai”) if God is all-powerful?

Angels have been a part of the Jewish religion before the Torah was written. Kabbalists and rabbinic scholars have been trying to understand the concept of a “divine messenger” for generations. Obviously the idea of God running God’s own errands would be demeaning to God’s power, so the idea of angelic servants would be more attractive to the authors of the Torah. This is partially why God Godself appearing in the burning bush has such magnitude.

The most well known appearance of angels occurs in Bereshit when three angels enter Abraham’s tent to inform him that Sarah will give birth. Later, an angel stops Abraham from sacrificing his son, Isaac. Decades after this, a supposed angel wrestles with Jacob in his tent and gives him his new name, Israel.

This last one is the most physical interpretation of an angel in all the Torah. Judaism goes to great lengths to explain that God has no form, and therefore God’s angels must not have form either. Maimonides explains that these mystic beings have no form at all, and they simply appear human to anyone viewing them. Maimonides goes further to explain that angles are “intelligences” –bundles of awareness that carry out the divine will. This would mean that this fabled wrestling match between Jacob and the divine occurred simply in Jacob’s mind, perhaps even in his sleep. This would be a consistent hypothesis, because it was not the first time angels appeared before Jacob in a dream. His prophetic dream of angels climbing a ladder occurred years before his encounter with one in the tent.

This idea that angels only appear in the mind’s eye would deflect the Christian-influenced idea of an angel: perfect beings in simple white robes with wings sprouting from their backs. However, the idea of imperfect angels does in fact appear in Judaism. Not quite as dramatic as the Christian idea of Satan, but imperfect all the same. These instances of unjust angels generally appear only in *midrash*, but they are

not hard to find. For example, when the Jews succeeded in crossing the Red Sea, and the waters closed on the pursuing Egyptians, it is said the angels in heaven rejoiced, but God did not. God looked down on the angels and said: “The Jews may have survived, but my children are still drowning in the sea.” This reminds the reader that all humans are God’s creation and are in God’s image. There is another *midrash* that an angel pointed Joseph in the direction of his brothers. This occurred directly before his brothers threw him in a pit and left him for dead. The angel must have known what was going to happen to Joseph, but let it happen anyway.

This is bound to raise questions. Why would an angel, a divine messenger of God, cause harm to those they watch over? Or remain indifferent to hundreds of Egyptians drowning at sea? This actually aids Jewish ideology: Only God is perfect. Not even God’s chosen messengers are truly perfect. Not even the angels can fully understand God. They are perhaps more aware of God than we are, but they are imperfect just like the rest of us. They act as God commands them to act, and they do what they feel is just. In some ways, that is what humanity must look to emulate. Humanity won’t ever fully understand God, but we can try to interpret God’s laws as best we can, and act as justly as we think possible.

I chose to write about angels for my confirmation project because I think it is a fascinating subject. Angelic beings have been showing up in ancient mythology for a really long time, and Judaism is no different. My Bar Mitzvah portion, *Acharei Mot*, not only describes the ancient Yom Kippur ceremony, but also touches on this idea of “Azazel.” The Torah does not actually explain what Azazel is, so the rabbis were forced to speculate. One hypothesis that was interesting to me is that Azazel is the name of a fallen angel, similar to Sama’el. This was a fascinating idea, but I did not have enough time in my bar mitzvah d’var to fully explore the idea of a fallible angel. Naturally, I was interested in learning more, thus this essay! My becoming bar mitzvah did not mark the end of my Jewish learning, and neither will confirmation. I’m looking forward to learning much more about our fascinating religion in the future

Link: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/angels/>

## Zoey Wallhouse

To pinpoint one event at Holy Blossom would be extremely difficult, because there have been many important occasions in the last twelve years; from Consecration, learning how to read Hebrew, my becoming Bat Mitzvah and a few more in between. However, there is a year that stands out to me, and that is grade eight.

I realize that nothing of great significance happened, but that was my first real life decision, to stay for one more year. The rule in my family was to stay until our Bar/Bat Mitzvahs. I could have stopped after grade seven, and got my Mondays and evidently, my Sunday mornings back. I made the decision to stay and I had one of my favourite years at Holy Blossom Temple because of it. I volunteered in kindergarten as a Bat Mitzvah project, and didn't stop the year after.

This experience started as a thing I was told to do, but it turned into one of my favourite and most rewarding experiences I have ever had. I adore the kids and to see the siblings of students three years later brings me so much joy. I still have things the kids gave me three years ago! That year was also the first year of choosing electives. I did Jewish baking the first semester and film making my second.

That year made me realize that my Jewish learning wasn't all about learning to read Hebrew. I learned that I can enjoy learning about Judaism and that a lot of interesting topics are discussed. That was also the year the youth group involved us. I thought it was so cool to stay late and hang out with the older kids. I have always looked up to the teens, ever since the Confirmation service took place during my Bat Mitzvah.

It's hard to believe that I'm now at that point in life, concluding my formal Jewish learning. However, I did not expect it to be over a screen. Oh well! When I was thirteen, I made the biggest life decision I have made, and changed my life for the better. That is why grade eight was the biggest moment I had at Holy Blossom.