

HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE

Bulletin

SACRED CONNECTIONS 5781



Holy Days and Festivals 5782*

Selichot | August 28, 2021

Rosh Hashanah | September 6-8, 2021

Yom Kippur | September 15-16, 2021

Sukkot | September 20-27, 2021

Shemini Atzeret | September 27-28, 2021

Simchat Torah | September 28-29, 2021

Chanukah | November 28-December 6, 2021

Tu BiShvat | January 16-17, 2022

Purim | March 16-17, 2022

Pesach | April 15-22, 2022

Yom HaShoah | April 27-28, 2022

Yom HaZikaron & Yom HaAtzmaut | May 3-5, 2022

Lag BaOmer | May 18-19, 2022

Yom Yerushalayim | May 28-29, 2022

Shavuot | June 4-5, 2022

Tisha B'Av | August 6-7, 2022

**Holidays begin at sundown on the first date listed above*



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On the cover: Though not the way they dreamed their wedding would be, Zach and Marla Fleming stood beneath their chuppah in an outdoor ceremony held at Holy Blossom Temple in the midst of an international pandemic.

RABBINIC REFLECTION



Start with Why

*Rabbi Yael Splansky,
Senior Rabbi*

Last night was the culminating session of our Emerging Jewish Leadership course for congregants in their 20s and 30s, who are bringing Jewish wisdom to strengthen their professional and volunteer leadership. The course is supported by contributions lovingly made in memory of our Past President Barry Silver z"l. Josh Silver, Barry's son, came to speak of his father's leadership and devotion to Holy Blossom Temple. And then we turned to Simon Sinek's influential teaching, "Start with Why." His famous TED talk makes the point that most businesses and organizations start with "What" then move to "How" and conclude with "Why," but it ought to be the inverse.

Holy Blossom's Why remains steady and true as always. In the Aleinu prayer we find the phrase: "L'Taken Olam b'Malchut Shaddai," "To Mend the World under Divine Rule." If Holy Blossom Temple were a factory, our product would be Jewish souls, but our Why is not simply to grow the world's Jewish population. Our Why is not even to create more knowledgeable Jews, more prayerful Jews, more passionate and compassionate Jews. Continuity for continuity's sake is not lofty enough of a goal for us. The real Why, the ultimate Why is for the knowledgeable, prayerful, passionate and compassionate Jews of Holy Blossom Temple to dedicate themselves -- together and "out there" wherever we go -- to the sacred task of repairing and mending the world so it more closely resembles God's wish for the world. Here is where we teach one another what such a world could be. Here we inspire and energize one another to be more ready, willing, and able to each do our part in the work of Tikun.

The Hows of Temple life changed dramatically during the pandemic. Livestreaming had been on the wish list of our Worship Committee for years. Had we made it a priority, it may have taken eighteen months of research, committee deliberation, fundraising.

But thanks to COVID and our extraordinary Director of Communications, Deanna Levy, a rudimentary solution was found in eighteen hours, so we didn't miss one Shabbat together. Our Early Childhood Centre teachers, under the leadership of Wendy Himmel, have been extraordinary in shifting the "How," so that the warm embrace our nursery school is known for could continue in healthy ways and remain open throughout the pandemic. The How for just about everything from lifecycle events to prayer services to budgeting changed again and again with each wave.

The Whats of Jewish life endured throughout the pandemic. Wedding couples still needed to meet under the chuppah. Babies still need to be welcomed into the world and given Hebrew names. Children still needed a Jewish education. Teens still needed social connection; mourners still needed to be comforted. The Jewish calendar still needed to be sanctified and celebrated. And voices for justice and righteousness still needed to be heard.

The months of lockdown also gave rise to many innovations, too. Our daily L'Chayim, skillfully led by Jack Kugelmass, became a lifeline for many. new Chavurot were formed. The Anti-Racism Group and Women's Advocacy Group were established. Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work was expanded and our Luke Sklar Mental Health Initiative became more necessary than ever. The many Whats of Temple life intensified, grew more relevant and more relational. We learned a lot through experimentation and we will take these learnings with us into a post-pandemic world.

I continue to be grateful for the sacred partnerships between lay and professional leadership. Together, we have navigated our way through a time of upheaval and strain. We are able to do so, because of our shared commitment to the Why. From our security guard at the front door to our unstoppable Temple President, Avra Rosen -- we each have our role to play in mending this weary world of ours. I look forward to our joyful reunion, so I can better witness first-hand Holy Blossom Temple's intricate web of connections in full motion.

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Connecting to our Faith, Ourselves, and Each other

*Avra Rosen, President,
Holy Blossom Board of
Directors*

As I write this article, we continue to be restricted from gathering together in Holy Blossom Temple or even with another household. These restrictions and continued lockdown have made me think about what it means to belong to the Holy Blossom community of almost 2,000 households.

We are more than a year into this pandemic, and I still marvel at all the meaningful connections we have made since March 2020. The list is endless, starting with all the services we now stream each day, including twice daily services, Kabbalat Shabbat, Shabbat morning, Havdallah with our teens, as well as the High Holiday Services and other Chagim. Our professional staff and lay leadership continue to connect with our members, and connect our members with each other. We welcome new members and regular guests to our services, support each other in times of mourning and celebrate each other's simchas.

Since October, our Bnei Mitzvah families have been able to honour their special days in-person in the Main Sanctuary or Mishkan. We have more Chavurot than ever before through HBTogether, we have a daily L'Chaim, lectures, book clubs, archival programs, Israel tours, health and wellness programs, board meetings, committee meetings, staff meetings etc. All of these -- and many more -- online offerings connect congregants from different backgrounds and interests with each other and weave the tapestry of temple life which embodies the meaning of belonging.

I am so thankful for the position I have. And not for the reserved parking spot, which has proven less essential than expected. I am fortunate that congregants have reached out to me in response to the meaningful connections we are forging. I have

heard how Holy Blossom has enriched their lives and provided the warmth of a community during the long, cold winter months. We will continue to build on all of these connections, strengthening your ties with each other and Holy Blossom, and providing you with a community to elevate your Jewish identity, your lifelong learning and your pride of belonging.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge our senior staff transitions, and personally pass on my best wishes to Ron Polster and Rabbi Helfman as they enter the next chapter in their professional lives. You can read more about their many contributions to Holy Blossom and their new pursuits on the following pages. Though we will be sad to see them leave us, we will watch their future successes with pride, and will look forward to bringing onboard new, talented people to continue Ron's and Rabbi Helfman's achievements and contributions to Holy Blossom.

It has been over a year of many transitions. We have passed through them together, strengthened by each other. I am hopeful that the next transitions will see Holy Blossom beginning small, safe outdoor gatherings, beginning our next journey in a post-pandemic world. I have truly missed seeing you in-person and I look forward to connecting in that way soon.

TWO IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM TEMPLE PRESIDENT AVRA ROSEN AND RABBI Yael SPLANSKY



It is with mixed emotions that we share the news that Rabbi Helfman is preparing for the next stage of his rabbinate in England. Our sister congregation in Essex was wise to seek him out to be their solo rabbi. After what will be more than eight years of devoted leadership, Rabbi Helfman and his family have become a beloved part of the Holy Blossom community. They will be with us throughout the fall semester, 2021. There will be time, and an opportunity, in early winter to collectively express our gratitude and praise for how they have shaped our lives as individuals, families, and as a congregation. There will also be time for a fulsome search for our next Associate Rabbi, who will likely join us by July 1, 2022. Adjunct Rabbinic support will be secured to help serve and lead the congregation for the six-month interim. For now, however, we simply say to Rabbi Helfman with great pride and deep affection, “Yasher Koach! Mazel Tov! And B’Hatzlachah!”

FROM OUR ASSOCIATE RABBI JORDAN HELFMAN

Dear Friends,

It is with excitement and sadness that I share my family's plans to move some time after the High Holy Days to one of Rabbi Dow Marmur's former congregations, South West Essex and Settlement Reform Synagogue (SWESRS). We are still in the process of telling our many friends in this community, and I apologise for any that I didn't reach before this announcement reaches your in-boxes and mailboxes. Since we are here through the High Holy Days, there will be time for phone calls and hopefully in-person gatherings in the days ahead.

In my time at Holy Blossom, I have had the opportunity to learn under one of the most empathetic and articulate mentors in the world, our Rabbi Yael Splansky. I have sung (off-key) with our Cantors and learned from our Assistant, Associate and Interim Rabbis and Educators. My children have learned to love Judaism with our Early Childhood Centre, Tot Shabbats and the Family Services.

I have taught some and learned much.

I know at this moment in its history, the Holy Blossom Temple community is in great hands. We have fantastic professional leadership in all areas, including where I work most closely, in education and membership/community engagement. We have extraordinary lay leadership and committee chairs, bringing deep interfaith connections, anti-racism activism and education, and nudging us towards environmental sustainability.

As our family begins this transition, we look forward to continuing the many relationships we have made here. We will be back many summers and look forward to worshipping at HBT when we are in town. In these next seven months, I know there will be many moments of connection, and I thank you for letting me and my family into your lives.

Rabbi Jordan Helfman



With heavy hearts and much gratitude for his true partnership, we share that Ron Polster has chosen to return to the classroom. A strong triad of President, Senior Rabbi, and Executive Director is essential for a congregation like Holy Blossom to flourish. Throughout the last two very important years, we found a truly professional partner in Ron Polster. The way we have successfully navigated the many challenges of the pandemic is in large measure thanks to Ron's wisdom and strength. While we are saddened that Ron will not have the satisfaction of standing at our open doors to welcome the congregation back to Holy Blossom Temple, we will know that his students at TanenbaumCHAT will be enriched by his teaching and his model of one who is fully devoted to the Jewish People. Ron will be with us until the end of July. We wish him and his family every blessing for their future.

A search committee has already been struck and a call for applications will be going out. If you have recommendations to share, please contact our Executive Director Search Committee Chair, Marla Spiegel at edsearch@holyblossom.org. The finest candidate will enjoy collaboration with an excellent professional team and experienced lay leadership, building upon the strength of Ron's many contributions, and seeing the joyful reunion of the Holy Blossom community in the year ahead.

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RON POLSTER

Dear Congregants,

When I notified Temple President Avra Rosen that I would be leaving my position as Executive Director to pursue teaching fulltime, it was a bittersweet moment. I miss working with youth -- teaching them, guiding them, and impacting the next generation. And I very much look forward to joining the faculty at TanenbaumCHAT, where I will be teaching Jewish history and Jewish thought, enabling high school students to, among other things, find their place along the timeline of Jewish history and create an identity for themselves within the community.

At the same time, it was difficult imagining leaving such a remarkable Congregation. I feel blessed in having had the opportunity to work with Rabbi Splansky and a team of wonderfully creative and resilient lay and professional leaders who work tirelessly on behalf of the congregation. I am proud of all that we have accomplished over the past few years, not the least of which was confronting and successfully meeting many of the challenges posed by the pandemic.

I look forward to working with Temple leadership over the next few months to ensure a smooth transition, as we carefully plan for our gradual reopening and our safe return to in-person services and programs.

Chazak Chazak V'Nit'Chazak – May we go from strength to strength!

Ron Polster
Executive Director

A YEAR OF VIRTUAL MUSIC AND TRANSITIONS

Cantor David Rosen, Senior Cantor



It is hard to believe that it has been over a year since it was permissible for spiritual communities to be together in unlimited numbers, singing and praying together in harmony. I remember walking into Holy Blossom last January for my interview.

The Atrium was bustling with activity and life was “normal” as we knew it.

As the pandemic began, I was optimistic that by the time I began my position as Senior Cantor at Holy Blossom Temple, life would be back to normal. Transitions can be difficult at the best of times, and during a Pandemic, there have been many other challenges which none of us could have predicted. I thought that I would have the opportunity to meet all of you in person, to schmooze with you at the Shabbat Kiddush, to sing songs with our Early Childhood students and to harmonize with our wonderful and dedicated Temple Singers. As part of our Senior Staff retreat, I developed a robust list of goals for the coming year, including some wonderful concerts, a composer-in-residence for Shabbat Shira, adult education courses and other in person musical gatherings.

None of it happened...or did it?

As we seem to finally be getting a handle on the Pandemic, there are plans to re-open (slowly and with precautions) and we began to plan for a new year, I have come to realize that many of the things that I hoped for in the past year, actually did take place. And while none of these events took place in person with more than 10 people, we found a way to make them work, to engage each other in a meaningful way and even to get to know each other, albeit in a virtual world. Wow...

We managed to create High Holidays services that were meaningful and while you could not be in our beautiful sanctuary or Mishkan, you had many of the ingredients that you have become accustomed, this time from the comfort of your living room. You heard our glorious Temple choir along with the artful and lyric music of our services. You watched our skilled Torah chanters, heard

words of wisdom from our Rabbis and cried for your loved one during Yizkor. All of it still happened.

And while there has not been an in-person rehearsal of our Temple Singers in over 15 months, somehow, they have appeared at Shabbat and Festival services, signing in harmony, side-by-side throughout the year through the magic of virtual choir videos.

We enjoyed the incredible talent of our interfaith “Gifts of Light,” concert featuring world renowned artists like Stephen Page and Richard Margison. We welcomed members of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra to our building and raised significant funds for the United Way. We had over 2500 households “attend” this event.

We listened to the beautiful sounds of Israeli Philharmonic and watched the angelic talent of “Musicians of Tomorrow” for Yom Ha’atzmaut, while touring a vineyard and enjoying other sounds and sights of Eretz Yisrael.

We have sung Shehecheyanu, marking many special milestones during the year and celebrated with many B’nei Mitzvah as well our Confirmands.

We have learned new melodies, including several from our Progressive communities in Israel, enhancing our Shabbat and holiday experience, while never having sung them together in the same space.

The list goes on...

It is at least once a week when our Musician-in-Residence, Jason Jestadt will look at me at during a service, rehearsal or recording and say to me something along the lines of “Wait until they hear this in person.” We then have a good chuckle and acknowledge the power of what he is saying. That is, despite our ability to express ourselves musically in a virtual environment, nothing can take the place of live music enjoyed in a single space in real time.

I know that we can all finally see that light at the end of the tunnel. That time to be together is near and the time to hear and sing together in harmony in real time is palpable. And while we can’t yet say exactly when, one thing I can promise you is that It will be absolutely glorious!!!

NO SILENCE ON RACE

No Silence on Race is born out of the necessity for racial equity and inclusivity in Jewish spaces in Canada. Many of the No Silence on Race leaders have shared their stories in Jewish spaces about being Black Jews and Jews of colour. They have written articles and participated in conferences and panels. While No Silence on Race believes that conversation, listening and self-reflection are important first steps to creating anti-racist, inclusive and equitable Jewish spaces, No Silence on Race looks to the entire Jewish community in Canada to challenge ourselves to do more and to envision the path forward. Learn more at <https://www.nosilenceonrace.ca/>.

The Holy Blossom Temple Board of Directors unanimously voted in favor of the following statement on April 29, 2021.

Holy Blossom Temple Statement of Support for No Silence on Race

Holy Blossom Temple supports the work of No Silence on Race and is committed to being actively anti-racist and working to create a more just and equitable congregation and world. We do so as Toronto's first synagogue with a rich history of tradition and modernity in our religious and spiritual expression.

In order to honour, respect and embrace diversity and the breadth of Klal Yisrael – the Jewish people – synagogues must seek ways to meaningfully connect with those amongst us who have felt unwelcome and excluded. We are strengthened when people from diverse Jewish identities and backgrounds are actively included in Temple life.

Holy Blossom commits to cultivating the leadership of Jews from diverse backgrounds. We support programs that address a full range of Jewish diasporas and histories and we will encourage and facilitate partnerships and solicit personnel to assist us in making this objective a reality.

The next steps of our plan to enact this include:

- Training for staff, lay leaders, and the entire congregation on becoming more actively anti-racist, combating microaggressions, and creating a more inclusive Temple community.
- Ensuring that Temple education programs, curriculum, teachers, and speakers reflect the diversity of the Jewish community, including Jews of Color.
- Enacting the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as they relate to religious institutions.
- Supporting the Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (which was as initiated as part of the Union for Reform Judaism's JewVNation Fellowship) and the Anti-Racism Group at Holy Blossom to continue our audit of the Temple's inclusion practices and formulate a multi-year plan to increase inclusion, equity, and anti-racism practices at Temple.
- Ensuring hiring practices align with our inclusion goals and commitments.
- Incorporating a diversity lens in our leadership development and nominating processes.

Through active outreach and self-reflection we can ensure we are living up to our core values and secure our congregation's vitality and ongoing role in the larger community. We acknowledge there is still much work to be done, and we are committed to it.

Interested in getting involved in our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work or joining our Anti-Racism Group? Email Abigail Carpenter-Winch at awinch@holyblossom.org

EMERGING JEWISH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Tabitha Grove



Like many other congregation members throughout this past year, the primary tether I have to the Jewish community has been virtual; through online services, programming and classes. So when I was nominated for Holy Blossom's Emerging Jewish Leadership Institute, I was excited to be part of something that is both so personal and has such far-reaching implications. I was honoured that the Holy Blossom clergy nominated me to take part in this program, although I would not describe myself as having loudest voice in the room. I was curious and interested in developing my own style of leadership.

During the very first session, I realized that a lot of my beliefs about the nature of leadership were not necessarily accurate and that this program was indeed going to shake up and re-form my thoughts and approach to this topic.

Among many other learning outcomes, the EJLI program has helped in naming my assumptions of "the great men theory"; the idealized theory of leadership that makes for great inspiration but is lacking in instruction. I have come to realize that being a good leader does not mean squeezing and stretching myself into taking on personality traits and behaviours that are not my own, but rather, approaching situations with my skills and an attitude of agency. I have come to better understand myself through the tools utilized in the program. This new understanding has given me clarity on how I work in a system, with other people, and how different situations elicit responses, or better yet, cultivating anticipation.

In getting to know the other young professionals in the program, it became very clear that we span various behaviour styles and characteristics that range in personality as well as practice. We are an interesting bunch of characters and have much in common! It has been a unique experience getting to know each other while we collectively challenging certain assumptions about ourselves with the intention of spiritual and intellectual growth. While on the surface, some of us appear to have similar communication styles, but interestingly, many of our motivators are quite different. For nearly all of us, our Jewish identity and sense of belonging to Holy Blossom appears to be a part of our internalized value system that serves as a driving force in our lives.

I would like to conclude with a word of gratitude and mention the impactful legacy of our past president, Barry Silver (z"l). To invest time, energy and funds in the future generation of Jewish leaders is a sacred task, and that is something that the memorial fund of Barry Silver (z"l) has made possible. The meaningful contribution to this program is something that I am not only personally grateful for, but am also touched by the ethos of what it represents. Building upon hopes and wishes, this is leadership in action.

I, like many Jews, love diving into the big questions of Jewish ethics and Torah study. In many ways, this is what I was expecting from EJLI, but I have been surprised by how quickly this program has delved past hypotheticals. Rather, we have been challenged to examine ourselves from within and utilize tools to better understand ourselves; how we handle situations and cultivate our leadership style from the core of who we are. I have found these lessons, distilled through the clarity of this program, have already impacted the way I see my work and offer a different lens to my professional relationships. I am excited about how this program will grow, how my leadership skills will improve, and look forward to rising to the occasion in whatever way I can serve in the future.

BIRTHDAY CALLS TO HOLY BLOSSOM

Nancy Gold



Birthdays in 2020 and 2021 have not allowed any of us to connect and celebrate socially. Like everything else over the past year, birthdays have been vastly different from the usual joyous and celebratory times we have been accustomed to. This year, our birthdays have given us time to reflect on our lives. Collectively, as a community, we have found new ways to reconnect and celebrate the milestones for family members. We've gathered in masks, in backyards, in parks, and on zoom with friends and family near and far.

I have felt the need to continue to find meaningful ways to connect with our Holy Blossom community even though I cannot attend services or events in person I decided to volunteer in a way that allowed me to maintain this connection and what better way than to remind our community members that someone cares on their birthdays! For the past four months I have been privileged to make Birthday calls to Holy Blossom members. This has been an inspiring and heartfelt experience.

I have spoken to grandparents who have lamented missing time now with grandchildren and great grandchildren, and yet still being positive that “this too will pass.” This mindset is grounding and a calm and sober outlook about our collective predicament.

I have called young people and old people and reactions vary from delight to surprise. I have had people call me back in the evening, after having received my voice message to thank me, and like all good curious yentas, we morph into “do you know” and “I remember you from” discussions. I have experienced calling someone who died 2 days earlier, only to be told by the family how amazing Holy B was in helping them with the challenges of arranging a meaningful COVID funeral.

I have spoken to people who like me, originally from Montreal, have reminisced about when we migrated to Toronto and how we felt initially. I have spoken to people who have been managing their COVID isolation with grace and patience. The sense that we are all in the same boat is affirming, and let's face it, it is always nice to receive a phone call allowing you to describe how you and how your families have been coping.

Little did I realize how inspiring these calls would be, and how much I benefit from speaking to so many Temple members.

So, who knows, you could be on my next ‘call list,’ or another one of the Holy B's call team, so when your birthday arrives, expect your call!



CONNECTION THROUGH LEARNING

Lisa Isen Baumal, Principal of Youth Education and Family Engagement



This spring, I completed my Masters in Jewish Educational Leadership, through Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion. Since my studies were designed to be a combination of online classes and some in person gatherings, when the pandemic hit and the world moved online, my studies was the one thing in my life that didn't change. My classmates, professors, and I were well versed in connecting online.

Over the 2 ½ years of my studies, not only did I gain valuable knowledge, and grow as an educator, I developed strong ties and connections with my fellow classmates and others in the Jewish Educational world. Sharing the experience of learning, challenging ourselves, and juggling school with work and life during a pandemic, really brought us together as a group. We supported one another working on assignments, learning in chevruta, sharing ideas as well as sharing challenges, helping and supporting one another, developing friendships, and constantly learning from each other.

One of the most rewarding parts of my learning, was being able to connect it to my work at Holy Blossom. As I learned about educational philosophies, Jewish leadership, strategies and tools, it was exciting to make the links to my experience and work directly. Not only was I able to see where the connections between my learning and my work could be found, but also where my studies could help enhance my work.

In Pirkei Avot 4:1, Ben Zoma says Who is wise? He who learns from every person. As it is said “from all who have taught me, I have gained understanding”. I have come to learn and appreciate through this experience, that there is learning and understanding to be gained all around us, and from every encounter we have with others. And learning from one another is a wonderful and rewarding way of connecting.



*Executive Masters in Jewish Educational Leadership
Class of 2021! Mazel Tov, Lisa Isen Baumal!*



THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE

Curiosity blossoms at the ECC

SPECIAL THIS SUMMER! Summer Camp for children ages 2-5, 9:00-1:00 pm (catered lunch included)

SEPTEMBER OFFERINGS

- Pre-nursery for ages 18 months by September 1-2 years by December 31 9:00-11:30 am
- Nursery for children age 3 years by December 31, 9:00-11:45 am
- Lunch Bunch option for pre nursery – must be 2 years old, 11:30-1:00 pm (catered lunch included)
- Extended day option for nursery, 11:45-2:55 pm (catered lunch included)

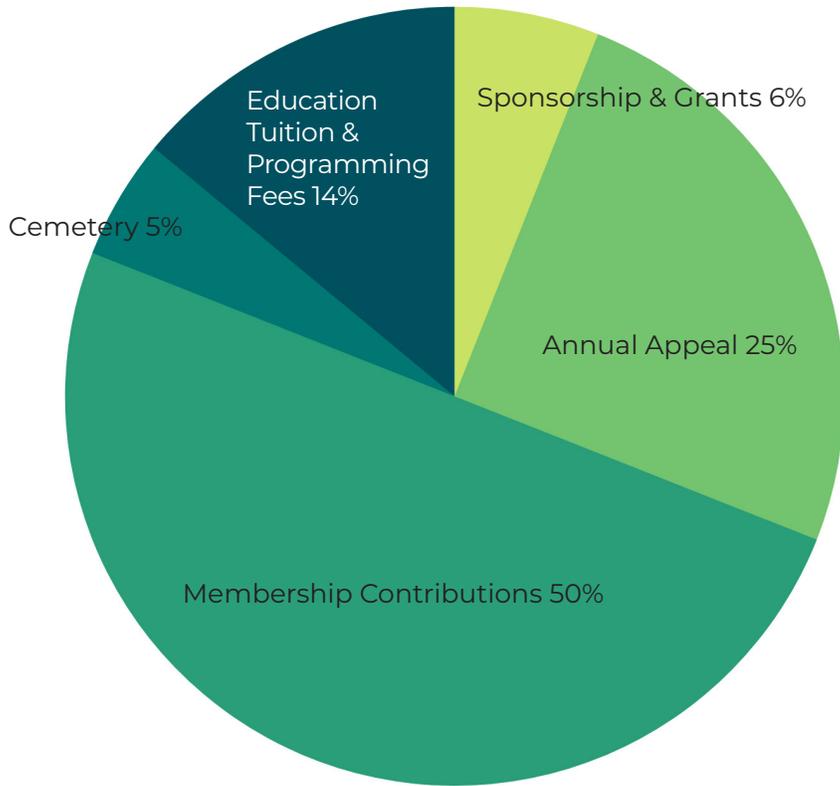
Contact: Wendy Steinberg Himmel, Director of the Early Childhood Centre email whimmel@holyblossom.org or call 416.789.3291 ext. 240



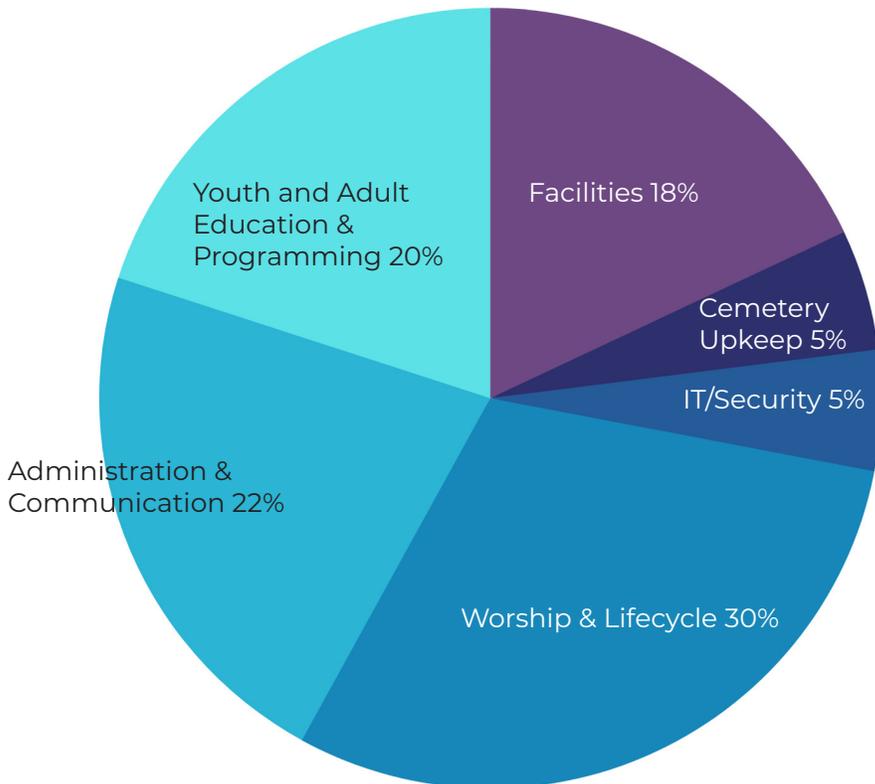
ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL APPEAL

BY THE NUMBERS

PROJECTED CONGREGATIONAL REVENUE



PROJECTED EXPENSES



Did you know?

Holy Blossom Temple Membership contributions currently support only 50% of the Temple's operating costs.

The importance of philanthropy to meet the financial challenges of our recovery from Covid and moving forward together is clear.

Your gift is essential to ensure that Holy Blossom Temple can fulfill our mission as Toronto's first synagogue and a leading congregation of the Reform Movement.

Together, we have successfully met the challenges of the past. Together, we can have a positive and lasting impact on the aspirational future of our beloved Temple.

Please give as generously as you can. Every donation is important. Together, our support will make all the difference.

To give online:

Holyblossom.org/donate/

To give by phone:

416-789-3291 ext. 227

To give with your membership contribution please complete the pledge in your membership renewal package.

HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE

Annual Campaign Together

A PERSONAL REFLECTION: WHY I DONATED TO THE ANNUAL CAMPAIGN, TOGETHER 2021

Marla Spiegel



Living through this global pandemic has had a tremendous impact on all of our lives. Almost everything has changed, both on a personal and societal level. Yet one thing has remained constant: Holy Blossom Temple has been an unceasing source of light.

I'm not referring only to the building at 1950 Bathurst Street, which stands proud, yet uninhabited, on the Bathurst Street horizon. I am speaking more of all the people who are the heart of the Temple community. Despite the pandemic, they have continued to serve, to connect and to provide hope. There are countless examples; I will briefly touch upon those that were most meaningful to me.

It is thanks to the creativity, perseverance, and commitment exemplified by Temple leaders that the traditional High Holiday Services were transformed into an array of online services. While it wasn't safe to gather in person, members were able to "attend" services virtually, hear the familiar High Holiday prayer service, and participate in small group discussions focused on timely issues.

Over the course of this past year, my family has sung along with Rabbi Helfman and Cantor Rosen

at Shabbat services through Zoom. We shared a Passover Seder table with Rabbi Splansky and her family - and hundreds of others - from the safety of our respective homes. I toured a winery in the Golan and a spice farm in Northern Israel led by Rabbi Goodman and our Israeli tour guides. Every week, my son attended Grade 6 Youth Education Center classes from the comfort of his bedroom. I loved being able to hear him contributing ideas to class discussions and singing in Hebrew, practicing the blessing in preparation of becoming a Bar Mitzvah.

Amid the grief of the pandemic, I learned to better appreciate each day. I felt compelled to show appreciation for the blessings in my life. One way to express gratitude is through the Jewish tradition of *tzedakah*.

Recognizing the important role that Holy Blossom plays in our lives, my husband and I recently donated to the Annual Campaign together. It feels good to give back to an organization that unflinchingly supports its members and the Jewish community at large. Holy Blossom Temple is an organization that spreads hope when things seem hopeless, gives steady comfort when things seem lost, and commemorates significant moments and life-cycle events. My spirit is lifted knowing that our financial contribution will be used to strengthen the Temple as it carries out its sacred mission.



TOT SHABBAT

Every few weeks four generations of my family come together to sing and dance and participate in Tot Shabbat. My grandkids, my kids and my 95 year old mother/grandmother/great grandmother. It is a fun way to welcome Shabbat with ourselves and other families. Especially now, this is a great way to keep the little ones and big ones connected to their family, to the Holy Blossom community and to practice some Shabbat rituals and to share joy.

We sing favourite Shabbat songs, share and celebrate milestone “Mazel moments”, sing some prayers, and hear some stories related to the week’s Torah portion. We bless the candles and each other. We bless the wine and bless the challah. Rabbi Helfman, Cantor Rosen and Mark Weinstock take turns providing the leadership and music.

For now, it’s on Zoom which means you can attend from anywhere and have fun with your backgrounds. We get to see each other’s shabbat candlesticks, kiddush cups and challahs and dance moves. The kids and participants range in age. We have parents, grandparents, great grandparents and some aunts and uncles too.

We welcome you to join us. Check the Holy Blossom website for upcoming dates and to register.

“Franma” Fran Suran

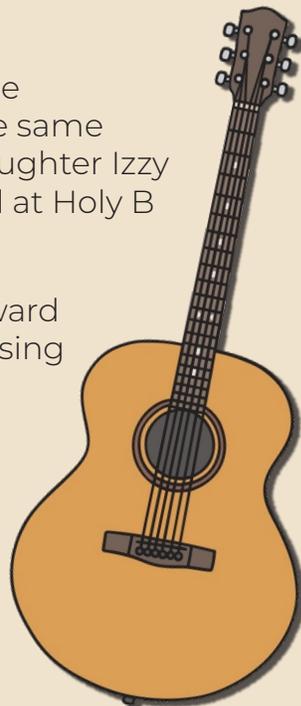
LITTLE BLOSSOMS

My son Jared will turn one at the end of May, a true pandemic baby. Although he still has yet to physically visit Holy Blossom he's attended services and our favourite, Little Blossoms, virtually.

To be able to connect to our temple community, to hear Marky sing the same songs I sang in person with my daughter Izzy and that I learned myself as a child at Holy B has been very special.

Especially at this time we look forward to in person classes where we can sing together again, one day.

Angie Shiffman



MY TIME AT HOLY BLOSSOM

Lin Feldman-Chow

I love Holy Blossom for so many reasons. For starters, all the people in our community are so nice and caring and they are always willing to help one another. Also because the shul supplies so many fun activities, for example, Camp blossom during the April break, Zoombooks, and even in Hebrew school, they make it fun as you learn :)

In Zoombooks, we've met every other month to talk about the book they had given us to read. During our talk, we discuss the characters, the storyline and even how we feel about the events in the story. So far we have met 3 times and every time was fun, and they even delivered surprise bags to our houses, to make our zoom talk extra special. Next year I hope that maybe we can do it again and that maybe they can do it every month instead of every other month.

During Camp Blossom this April break we met on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday each time with a different theme. The theme on Tuesday was animals, the theme on Wednesday was space and the theme on Thursday was about Yom Ha'atzmaut. Each day was so much fun and we even got to make some snacks together. The snacks we made were Microwave smores on Wednesday and Confetti mug cake on Thursday. The counsellors at camp blossom were Sophie Rivers, Nathan Markle, Lilah Petersiel, Adelaide Bertoia-Dixon, Camille Lisser, Danielle Lester and Remy Abramson, All the counsellors at camp blossom we all so nice and planned such fun activities for our three days together.

Oh and did I mention they also gave us a bag with so many cool things in it including a limited camp blossom shirt 😊?

I go to Hebrew school on Mondays, and my teachers are Sarah and Rebecca. They always make it so much fun, for example we do a bunch of Kahoot and games that are also educational. Some of the things we have learned about were Passover (we even made matzah :), Purim (we also made hamentashen) and Israel's Independence Day. Each week we do something different and they also give us really engaging group projects.

Thursday is Hebrew reading with Tali, she is an amazing teacher and is always helping us improve in so many different ways. Sarah, my Hebrew reading classmate, is very nice and every time I see her she is smiling. I love Hebrew reading and even though sometimes I might be tired whenever I go to Hebrew reading I always feel better after.

I know I've been focusing on all the activities but there is still much more to the shul than that. Like the services every week and the holiday services.

Even during the pandemic, they have made everything so amazing and like we are still all together in the shul. All the people have been so supportive and they are all so kind in all different ways. Everything that we do at Holy Blossom is always so special and I can't wait till we can go in person to the shul again. I'm so glad to be a part of the Holy Blossom community.



MY HBT CAMP EXPERIENCE

Nathan Markle



During April break I had the opportunity to volunteer at Holy Blossom Camp, and even though it was virtual, we were able to generate genuine enthusiasm amongst the campers and everyone involved. Following the lead of Holy Blossom's Youth Engagement Coordinator: Sophie Rivers, my fellow volunteers and I tried to combine Jewish learning, fun and connection throughout the program. And I think we achieved a "full dozen" bagel rating. That's how Jewish camp is rated, right?

For Yom HaAtzmaut, the campers were asked to draw Israeli flags, but to add to them symbols of pride and independence, according to their own inclination.

Through this volunteer experience I was able to generate pride both in my contribution to the group, and pride in the creative results from the campers. They were great! Just because I'm fifteen years old, doesn't mean I can't learn something from campers nearly half my age.

We also planned our own space expedition - a great imaginative journey in these cooped up times. Sure, we have to stay in our homes, but that's just physically. In our collective minds, we were able to "blast off" for a bit of galactic fun.

This volunteering didn't seem like a chore for me. I felt more like a camper myself, playing and laughing along with the Holy Blossom squad. It was a pleasure to be a part of virtual camp at HB, and enjoy a sense of connection in a disconnected time.



YOUTH EDUCATION CENTRE 2021-2022 REGISTRATION

**With the Summer comes
registration for the YEC!**

We are excited to open registration for this coming school year of 2021-22. Below are links to YEC registration for children in JK-Grade 7, and a link to our JTEM program for teens in grades 8 and up.

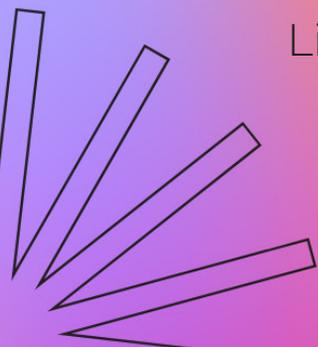
As we are still living with much uncertainty, we are still figuring out exactly what the YEC will look like for the coming school year. The registration form offers an option both for in-person and virtual options for students so that families can choose what works best for them. We will continue to share updates as the landscape changes, and things become clearer. The one thing that is guaranteed is that our teachers remain committed to providing quality learning experiences for our children, whether online or in person. Holy Blossom is so fortunate to have a group of caring and passionate educators in our midst!

Please feel free to reach out with any questions or thoughts about your children and the coming year.

Lisa Isen Baumal

Principal of Youth Education and Family Engagement

lbaumal@holyblossom.org



WELCOME TO OUR CONGREGATIONAL FAMILY

A Very Warm Welcome to New Members, Returning Members, and New Young Adult Independent Members:

Joel and Sheila Slater

Leslie and Jay Hershfield and children
Nathan, Hannah, and Ellie

Barbara Wiseman

Giselle and Leslie Firestone

Jarryd Firestone

Jordan Rosenfield and Emma Wootton

Marisa Wyse and Peter Hawkings and
children Gabrielle and Samuel

Igor Kurtzman and Ida Osterman

Chloe Gordon-Chow

Dalia Rosen and child Rachel



BIRTHS

Mary-Rose Sutton and Tyler Planeta on the birth of their daughter, Ruth Shane Planeta.

Steph Harris and Daniel Winberg welcomed their daughter, Blake Annie on March 31, 2021. Baby sister to Cameron and Mia. Proud grandparents are Jack and Judy Winberg, Gary and Diane Harris. Proud great-grandmother is Adele Rolin.

Lisa Winberg and Zach Fishman welcomed their son, Benjamin Myles on March 20, 2021. Baby brother to Zoe. Proud grandparents are Jack and Judy Winberg, Ruthie and Fred Fishman. Proud great-grandmothers are Rose Fishman and Orah Buck.

Sarah Levitt and Barry Dewitt are thrilled to announce the 25 March 2021 arrival of their daughter, Marigold, after her late paternal great grandmothers, Marian Dewitt and Goldie Davis. Proud grandparents are Susan Davis and David Dewitt, Maureen Shandling

and Sheldon Levitt, and maternal great-grandmothers Becky Shandling and Halina Levitt.

Jaimie and Daniel Carson on the birth of their son, Atlas Reign. Brother to Joey and Sunny. Proud grandparents are Max and Marlene Orenbach and Allan and Lezlie Carson.

Devon and Graham Wolch on the birth of their son, Leo Ryan. Brother to Lily. Proud grandparents are Joni Stossel & Graham Stairs and Cathy & Al Wolch. Proud great grandmothers are Barbara Clarke and Christine Wolch.

Jordana and Michael Little on the birth of their daughter Tali Quinn. Proud grandparents are Ellen & Mel Little and Joni & Boris Ejchental.

OTHER SMACHOT

Mazal Tov to our congregant, Dr. Daniel Drucker, on receiving the Gairdner Award for medical advancement.

B'NEI MITZVAH



Benjamin Cadsby
April 10, 2021
Son of Fei Song &
Charles Bram Cadsby



Lyla Weisstub
April 10, 2021
Daughter of Jennifer Mazin
& Jonathan Weisstub



Carly Tuchner Pollack
April 17, 2021
Daughter of Lori Tuchner
and David Pollack



Julia Gordon
April 24, 2021
Daughter of Hallie Sprackman-Gordon
and Jonathan Gordon



Mila Freedman
April 24, 2021
Daughter of Robyn Blatt
& Jeffrey Freedman

PLAN YOUR SIMCHA

Young people celebrate becoming Bat (female), Bar (male) or Perach (non-binary) Mitzvah and embrace Torah as their own through innovative Jewish learning while building strong Jewish identities. We ensure that the day of celebration is meaningful and memorable, and our holistic approach extends far beyond the simcha on the bima. B'nei Mitzvah is a stop along the journey to Confirmation.

If you are interested in planning a bat/bar/perach mitzvah, please reach out to Iris Spitz at ispitz@holyblossom.org.

IN MEMORIAM

Alain Henri Louis Baudot, husband of Carla Baudot; father of Erica Baudot and Laure Baudot; brother of Patrick Baudot

Marilyn Brown, mother of Marsha Kaplan and Carol Riley; and mother of Fern Lebo and Joyce Eisen

Renee Browne, mother of Elissa Fingold, Celina Campbell, Josh Bien, and Julie; sister of Jack Ladowsky

Stanley Ford, father of William Ford

Morton Hersh, husband of Judith Hersh; father of Robyn Hersh, Susan Hersh, Karen Hersh, and Megan Hersh

Edith Kirzner, mother of Rabbi Robert Kirzner, Judy Skolnick, Susan Lecerf, and Karen-Ann Kutner

Joan Kofman, mother of Bobby Kofman, Wendy Kofman, Peter Kofman, and Tom Kofman

Anne Kosoff, mother of Jack Kosoff

Dr. Peter B. Loebel, husband of Eleanor Loebel; father of Thomas Loebel and Brenda Loebel April; brother of Elizabeth Lesser

Kaylee Miller, mother of Carolyn Berger, Barbara Miller and Jaynie Miller

Zelda Nisker, mother of Susan Dan and Lawrence Nisker

Marcia Rabie, mother of Gail Faclier

Jack Rotstein, husband of Rose Rotstein; father of Jerry Rotstein, Fern Boigon, Elissa Rotstein, and Mark Rotstein; brother of Charlie Rotstein

Beatrice Sidlofsky, mother of Richard Sidlofsky, Paul Sidlofsky and Michael Sidlofsky

Ken Sniderman, husband of Franci Sniderman; father of Adam Sniderman, Robert Sniderman and Michael Sniderman; brother of Barry Sniderman and Nancy Fried

Arlette Wagner, mother of Noah Wagner; sister of Marta Cohen

March 6, 2021 to May 7, 2021

זכרונם לברכה

May their memory be for a blessing

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David Rosen**,

**and my wonderful Holy
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Bess Zalvin, Yahrzeit

Steve Zalvin

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Henry

Judy & Jack Winberg, In
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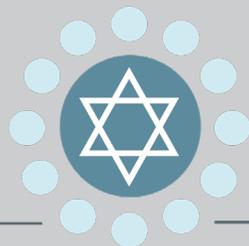
HIGH HOLY DAY PRAYERBOOK MACHZORIM

Holy Blossom has been generously gifted copies of the Reform Movement's Gates of Repentance High Holy Day Prayerbook Machzor to give out to our members. With grateful thanks to the North Shore Congregation Israel in Chicago.

These machzorim will help ensure a meaningful and engaging High Holy Day experiences for those who attend services online.

Would having a hard copy machzor enhance your High Holy Day observance?

Renew your membership and we'll be in touch with details about how to pick one up at Temple!



HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE

ק"ק פרחי קדש