

HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE

BULLETIN

SCHWARTZ / REISMAN ATRIUM



5786 Year in Review

HIGH HOLY DAYS 5787

at Holy Blossom Temple

SELICHOT

Saturday, September 5, 2026

Selichot marks the spiritual beginning of the High Holy Day season. This intimate and moving service invites us to pause, take stock of the year behind us, and enter the New Year with openness, honesty, and intention.

KEVER AVOT

Sunday, September 6, 2026 *(registration required)*

Honour and remember loved ones at the graveside, as we reflect on the lives, values, and memories that continue to shape us.

EREV ROSH HASHANAH*

Friday, September 11, 2026

As the sun sets, we gather in joy, gratitude, and hope. Through inspiring music, prayer, and the warmth of community, we welcome the New Year together and begin the sacred journey of renewal.

FIRST DAY ROSH HASHANAH*

Saturday, September 12, 2026

The sound of the shofar reminds us to listen deeply to ourselves, to one another, and to the world around us.

SECOND DAY ROSH HASHANAH*

Sunday, September 13, 2026

Together, through prayer, Torah, music, and reflection, we celebrate creation, community, and the opportunity for transformation.

TASHLICH*

Sunday, September 13, 2026

We gather by flowing water for Tashlich, a beloved ritual of release and renewal.

KOL NIDRE*

Sunday, September 20, 2026

The haunting melody fills our sanctuaries, as this sacred evening invites us to let go of the promises and expectations that weigh on us and to welcome in forgiveness, healing, and transformation.

YOM KIPPUR*

Monday, September 21, 2026

Together, we engage in sacred worship, music, community, study, and moments of quiet introspection as we seek forgiveness and recommit ourselves to living with greater compassion and purpose. With the powerful final call of the shofar, we enter into the New Year renewed in spirit and strengthened by community.

NEW THIS YEAR! Included in your membership renewal package is the 5787 High Holy Day Service Schedule, thoughtfully organized into worship “streams” to help you choose the experience that best reflects your rhythms of worship and connection throughout the sacred journey of the High Holy Days. We look forward to welcoming you.

*Includes service options that are especially designed for families with children



Jewish education blossoms here!
 We are thrilled to introduce an exciting new chapter in Jewish Education this Fall



THE HONOURABLE IRWIN COTLER SCHOOL
 of Holy Blossom Temple

HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE **Bulletin**
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On the cover: *Bravo Bellissimo!* North of Broadway was an unforgettable evening of music, storytelling, and community in celebration of 170 years of Holy Blossom Temple and in support of Excellence in Education. From the opening number to the final standing ovation, the evening reflected the spirit, connection, and joy of our congregation. Thank you to everyone who made this remarkable night possible.
 Photo credit: Shay Markowitz Photography (www.shaymarkowitz.com)

RABBINIC REFLECTION



Jewish Education is the Key to the Jewish Future

Rabbi Yael Splansky,
Senior Rabbi, Baskin-Garson
Senior Rabbinic Chair

For 170 years, our very namesake, “*Pirchei Kodesh* – Blossoms of Holiness” insists that we cast our gaze on the horizon and commit ourselves to the next generation, because *Pirchei Kodesh* were the young kohanim (priests) in training when Jerusalem’s Temple stood. Our congregational focus on training up and lifting up the next generation through Excellence in Jewish Education is now well underway. We see it already in four ways.

1. Under the leadership of our Youth Education Principal, Lisa Isen Baumal, part-time learning options for our children are expanding to six days a week next fall. Under the leadership of Wendy Himmel, our Early Childhood Centre has expanded to offer full-day child care and now has a waiting list.
2. As you read this message, many classrooms and offices are being renovated in the David Feldman Jewish Education Centre. Construction will be complete by summer’s end, so we can greet our own students – ages 2-18 – as well as six JK classes of Bialik Hebrew Day School students this fall. I am forever grateful to our Executive Director, Rachel Malach, for steering this project to success.
3. After a year-long search, chaired by Carly Steinman, we will be welcoming our first Director of Lifelong Learning this July. Dr. Cindy Kozierok will help us to expand our reach and deepen our educational offerings for every stage of life.
4. At our 170th Anniversary celebration, *North of Broadway*, Wendy Eisen had the distinct pleasure of announcing that our Youth Education Centre will now carry the *shem tov*, the good name, of her lifelong friend, The Honourable Irwin Cotler.

Why The Cotler School?

As former Member of Parliament and Minister of Justice and Attorney General, who championed women and Indigenous justices, who crafted the Civil Marriage Act for LGBTQ+ marriage equality, who led the National Justice Initiative Against Racism and Hate, he is a great Canadian. As a beloved professor of law at McGill University, as an internationally recognized authority in human rights law, as the international chair of The Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, and as a recipient of Holy Blossom Temple’s Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut Humanitarian Award, he is a rare example of how one person can indeed serve all humanity and help to mend the world. As Wendy Eisen’s fellow activist in the movement to liberate Soviet Jewry, as Past President of The Canadian Jewish Congress, as a lifelong and outspoken Zionist, who holds Israel to the standards set by its own Declaration of Independence, he is a shining example of how to live by Jewish values in service of the Jewish People everywhere. Dr. Kozierok is already sketching out new curricula, which will draw from Irwin Cotler’s admirable character and impressive life’s work in order to inspire our children and teens to walk in his footsteps.

We look forward to welcoming our students – JK through Grade 12 – to The Cotler School this fall. The new name for our school, with its multiple part-time educational programs – both traditional and experiential – will galvanize the next chapter of our 170-year commitment to Excellence in Jewish Education. Sadly, there are hundreds of children and teens in Toronto, who do not yet receive any formal Jewish education. This weighs on me. I know it is *Aleinu*, “upon us” to provide for them, to be trustworthy partners to hardworking parents who want to strengthen the Jewish identity in their kids. If you know of a child or teen who needs the kind of Jewish education that will provide skills and knowledge, friendships and memories to last a lifetime, please introduce us to their parents and together, we will provide them with the joyful and enriching Jewish learning experience they deserve.

The stars are aligning around this vision. The challenges of our time demand nothing less.



***In Memoriam: Temple President,
Eric Roher ז"ל***

From “Eric M. Roher was legal pioneer, beloved temple leader” published May 3, 2026, by Dave Gordon for The National Post

If Bay Street was his professional stage, Holy Blossom Temple was where Eric Roher’s Jewish life unfolded. He attended religious school there, was married there, and remained an active lay leader for decades.

He served for years on the board before being elected president in November 2024, a role he often described as among the greatest honours of his life. Rabbi Yael Splansky called his leadership a “sacred partnership,” describing him as the congregation’s “greatest cheerleader,” leading with warmth, humour, and encouragement. As president, he made a habit of walking through the building to greet staff members by name.

In his role as a *gabbai* on Shabbat mornings, Rabbi Splansky remembered Roher becoming so swept up in the melodies that he occasionally missed a cue — moments she said revealed his deeply “prayerful spirit.”

In 2026, as his illness became known, Holy Blossom dedicated a concert medley in his honour and described him as a “beloved president” whose life was “woven into the very fabric” of the congregation.

From Jessica, Rebecca, and Sophie Roher, Eric’s daughters’ eulogy:

For our broader family, our dad was the keeper of traditions. On Shabbat, he led prayers at our Bubby and Allan’s house, commemorating the generations before us and marking the sanctity of our Friday nights together.

The most important blessing he recited each week was the blessing over the children. He named every child around the table so each of us felt seen and blessed. He would then plant a kiss on the head of the closest child and end with a joyful rendition of *Hamotzi* and *Bim Bam*.

Since his diagnosis less than six months ago, his community wrapped itself tightly around him. He was deeply touched by the outpouring of support and by the many people who told him he was a true *mensch* and a bright light in their lives.

From Eric’s brother, Kevin Roher:

Eric led by example. He showed me how to live a full life governed by the Jewish principle of *Tikkun Olam* — repairing the world. Every day, through his actions and deeds, he worked to make our community and our world better.

He was so proud to become president of Holy Blossom Temple. His installation was one of the proudest days of his life. He loved meeting new families and helping grow the

congregation. Of all the things he accomplished, I think being president of Holy Blossom was his ultimate calling.

From Eric’s dear friend, Vernon Shaw:

Holy Blossom was Eric’s second home and spiritual home. He was so proud to be elected president and spoke often about all he hoped to accomplish. It is a tragedy that he did not get to finish what he so eagerly began.

The week after Eric’s passing magnificently honoured his life and contributions. From the funeral to each shiva gathering, family, friends, and congregants spoke movingly about the impact he had on their lives.

MP Leslie Church, in Parliament, May 4, 2026:

Eric Roher was a remarkable Canadian, infinitely generous, warm, and deeply committed to community. It was this love of community that drove him to serve as president of Holy Blossom Temple, where five generations of his family continue to gather.

Eric knew that by bringing people together, we could make the world better. This is *Tikkun Olam*, the Jewish commandment to leave the world better than you found it. And in that, Eric, you were successful.

MPP Stephanie Smyth, in Provincial Parliament, May 5, 2026:

Eric led with kindness, generosity, and genuine care for others. Through his leadership at Holy Blossom Temple and in the way he lived every day, he brought people together and made them feel welcome, valued, and supported.

He believed deeply in the good in people and carried that belief into everything he did. He will be missed by an entire community made stronger because of him.

From Rabbi Splansky’s eulogy:

Eric’s impact on our congregation is impossible to measure, but easy to feel. During Eric’s Presidency, Holy Blossom Temple has been blessed by a time of rapid growth. We are growing larger and younger. One third of the congregation is new in the last 5 years. And Eric was delighted by our significant baby boom!

וַיִּצְדַּקְתָּם עוֹמְדָה לְעַד. “His righteousness will endure.” There is no doubt. Holy Blossom leadership pledges to carry forward his legacy here at Holy Blossom Temple. Eric made sure of that by mentoring a deep bench, including Eric Klein, Richard Toker, a strong Executive, a strong Board, and many esteemed Past Presidents, who stood on guard for him today and will continue to support our congregation as we navigate our way without him.

Now you can rest, *Arieh ben David v’Lailah*. Your work is done. Be at peace.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Rachel Malach,
Executive Director

As we reflect on all that we have experienced together at Holy Blossom, I am filled with gratitude and admiration for all of you that make up this extraordinary congregation. We have celebrated and experienced meaningful moments together, and strengthened the bonds that sustain our sacred community. Through worship, learning, social connection, and acts of caring and service, Holy Blossom has remained a place of warmth, resilience, and Jewish purpose in a challenging world.

At the same time, our building has quite literally been evolving around us. Renovations are well underway, and I want to thank our clergy, educators, administrative and facilities staff, and members for their patience and adaptability throughout the many transitions taking place. Our team is starting to settle into offices in the Rabbinic Suite, Cantorial Suite, and in June, the Education Suite. Come September, our 6 new classrooms on the 3rd floor will welcome both the JK cohort of Bialik Hebrew Day School, as well as our own students after school, on evenings, and weekends. We look forward to sharing more location details and welcoming you to all of our spaces as renovations are completed.

Security Update

Holy Blossom Temple continues to work closely with the Jewish Security Network (JSN), Toronto Police Service, elected officials, and security experts within our congregation to regularly assess and strengthen the safety of our community. This work includes ongoing reviews of both operational procedures and physical infrastructure, as well as pursuing all available funding opportunities through government grants, the JSN, and the generosity of our congregation.

Current Security Enhancements

Several infrastructure enhancements have already been completed, are currently underway, or are scheduled to begin in the near future. Many of these measures are intentionally not highly visible.

Current projects include: window armour security film, expanded internal access controls in strategic areas, including the creation of additional spaces that can function as safe rooms, increased access controls around

entrances and exits, building-wide PA system with separate zone capabilities, parking arms/gates, additional perimeter protection through landscaping barriers, including rocks and/or bollards, upgraded CCTV systems and additional security cameras.

Funding & Support

Safety and security are supported through multiple funding sources. We are applying for federal funding through the Communities at Risk: Security Infrastructure Program (CCSP), as well as funding provided by the JSN. We have also applied for municipal funding through the Hostile Vehicle Mitigation Grant and continue to receive provincial support through the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant.

While this support is meaningful, additional resources are still needed to sustain security operations, staffing, and future enhancements as needs evolve. These improvements build upon the extensive systems and protocols already in place, and we will continue strengthening our measures as needed.

We encourage members to review security updates on our website, which include practical ways to help contribute to the safety and well-being of our community.

Welcome to the Team!

We are thrilled to welcome **Calvin Wong** to the HBT Professional Team as our Simcha & Venue Manager. Calvin brings experience in catering and event coordination. He is passionate about event and venue management, most recently having served as the Facility Rentals Event Coordinator at the Royal Conservatory of Music. Calvin can be reached at cwong@holyblossom.org, at extension 255.

We are also delighted to welcome **Kate Wootton** back at the end of June. After her parental leave, Kate will return to Temple in the new role of Education Assistant, a critical position to help our Education Team welcome 80+ students to our Early Childhood Centre, students at The Cotler School, including a 5-day-per-week afterschool program, and as we also welcome our incoming Director of Lifelong Learning, **Dr. Cindy Kozierok**, in July.

I want to express my sincere appreciation to our members, volunteers, lay leaders, and dedicated professionals whose expertise, flexibility, and care make so much of what happens at Holy Blossom possible each and every day.

A YEAR OF MUSIC, MEMORY, AND MEANING

Cantor David Rosen, Senior Cantor and Music Director



The past year has certainly brought both challenges and moments of profound connection. In a time marked by uncertainty and concern for the values and institutions we hold most sacred, we have increasingly turned toward one another seeking comfort, stability, and strength through community.

Without question, our *North of Broadway* celebration marking 170 years of Holy Blossom as a congregation was an extraordinary evening filled with joy, hope, and inspiration. Bringing such an ambitious event to life required the dedication and hard work of countless staff members and volunteers, and every effort was worthwhile. It was truly a first-class evening; one that reflected the spirit, creativity, and resilience of our community. All of us should take pride in what we accomplished together and look forward with excitement to all that lies ahead.

This year, we also celebrated the 20th anniversary of our Cantorial Soloist, Lindi Rivers, with a beautiful weekend of tribute, music, and prayer. As part of that celebration, we hosted *Musical Gems of the Canadian Reform Synagogue*, a collaboration featuring Reform cantors and cantorial soloists from across Canada. Joined by choirs, clergy, and special guests, we shared beloved music that has shaped synagogue life for generations. One of our featured guests, Josh Breitzer, offered a moving sermon-in-song on Shabbat and deepened our appreciation for the rich tradition of the American Jewish Songbook.

With the tragic passing of our President, Eric Roher, I would be remiss not to mention this year's collaboration with Eric's family member, Douglas Century, whose new biography of Hannah Senesh, *Crash of the Heavens*, was launched at Holy Blossom. Eric was instrumental in bringing this event to our congregation. Through music, storytelling, and reflection, we created a moving evening that honoured Hannah Senesh's remarkable legacy of courage, poetry, faith, and hope.

It was also a banner year for Temple Singers, which continues to welcome new voices into our choir family. Our trip to Atlanta was a tremendous success, and we eagerly look forward to future musical adventures in the coming year.

Welcoming Student Cantor Will Brockman



In the fall of 2023, I often noticed a young man sitting quietly toward the back of the sanctuary on Shabbat. He was a Masters Student at the University of Toronto and attended services and programs with great enthusiasm, and through conversations with him and others,

I soon learned of his musical gifts, his love of Jewish music, and his desire to deepen his Jewish identity. During a conversation one day at Holy Grounds, Will Brockman shared with me that he was considering the cantorate as a possible path for his future.

Over time, I had the privilege of meeting with Will regularly and helping connect him to different aspects of Jewish life within our community. I also introduced him to several individuals at Hebrew Union College who could support him as he explored the cantorate more seriously.

Today, Will has completed his third year as a Cantorial Student at the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. He serves as a student Cantor at the prestigious Congregation Rodeph Sholom on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. On June 8, he will join the Holy Blossom clergy team as a Student Cantor.

Will is thrilled to be returning to our community, and I believe he will quickly become an integral part of our congregational life. From leading worship services and teaching adult education classes to participating in lifecycle events and musical programming, Will brings tremendous warmth, talent, and creativity. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to mentor him and for the many gifts he will share with our congregation.

Will also has a strong passion for theatre and drama, and during his time with us he will help create opportunities for our community to engage, create, and celebrate through the arts.

Will's first Shabbat with us will be Pride Shabbat on Friday, June 12. I know our entire community will welcome him with warmth, encouragement, and enthusiasm as he joins us for the summer months.

A YEAR OF JUSTICE, ADVOCACY, AND JEWISH UNITY

Rabbi Samuel Kaye, Associate Rabbi



Despite the unreasonably cold May we are experiencing here in Toronto; I hope that by the time you are reading this the golden light of Ontario summer has arrived. Looking back on this last year, I am personally struck by the incredible things that we have accomplished in the realms of Tikkun

Olam and Israel. It is my pleasure to share where we have done, and where we are going, with you!

Our Out of the Cold program continues to grow and is now serving nearly 100 people every Thursday night from November until Pesach. An exciting development, soup is now back on the menu! It may not sound like much, but for our guests no flavour is more enriching than that warm bowl of goodness. Thank you to our friends at United Dairy Bakers and Ve'ahavta! This season there will be more opportunities for our members to volunteer and reserve evenings at OOTC with all our small groups, auxiliaries and chavurot. If your Holy Blossom friend circle would like to volunteer as a cohort, please let me know!



The Tiny Pantries on Dewborne and Bathurst continue to serve our neighborhood, bringing daily aid to those who suffer from food insecurity. We are grateful to leadership both new and old as Kathy Tripper and Janet Ryval have taken over from Melissa Hylton. Over the winter semester our teens at the YEC (now the Cotler School!) took a Monday evening to

go to No Frills to shop for the Pantries. They learned about how hard it is to stretch \$100 worth of groceries. This year, as always, your tzedakah will make all the difference for this program.

Our Advocacy Committee continues to work hard in the fight against antisemitism and anti-Zionism across the GTA. Beyond emails and action items, that included providing a CIJA training for those who wanted to visit City Hall and speak to our City Councillors. The Advocacy Committee hosted both our elected MP, Leslie Church, and our elected MPP, Stephanie Smyth, for informal townhalls. Further, the Advocacy Committee was instrumental in an important meeting with the Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Public Safety. Looking ahead, the Advocacy Committee is bringing Warren Kinsella to Holy Blossom on June 29th to discuss his new book *"The Hidden Hand: The Information War and the Rise of Antisemitic Propaganda."* More programming,

training, and opportunities to engage with elected officials are in the works.

In the realm of Israel Engagement, among many other programs, Holy Blossom hosted an incredible session with Dr. Barak-Gorodetsky of the University of Haifa on the intersection between AI and antisemitism, brought in Yehuda Kurtzer of the Hartman Institute to discuss aspirational Zionism, and joined our local Israeli community for a meaningful Yom Ha'Zikaron/Yom Ha'Atzmaut with the World Zionist Organization, Department of Irgun and Israelis Abroad. We danced, sang, learned and remembered; an echad b' lev echad- one people with one heart.

After 5 years, our incomparable Israel Dialogues program has come to an end. As mentioned in other communications, we are grateful for the leadership of David DeWitt, Mark S. Anshan, and Howard Adelman z'l who invited our congregation, and people across the world, into their conversations on Israel at the highest level. May we go from strength to strength, as our expanded Israel Engagement Committee comes together in the coming months.



The Interfaith Committee has relaunched here at Holy Blossom, and we are excited to continue to bring faith groups from many backgrounds to join us for Shabbat as we forge new relationships across the GTA. Our existing interfaith relationships continued to strengthen this last year with our 7th graders visiting the BAPS Mandir to learn about Hinduism, the sold out interfaith teaching seder with the Christian Jewish Dialogue of Toronto, our 2nd annual Iftar with the Intercultural Dialogue Institute, and our continued deep friendship with Timothy Eaton Memorial Church.

As summer arrives, I am praying that this small window of ceasefire open and grow into a time of lasting peace. For when I am asked to look to the future, my eyes naturally go to the end of the year and our Multigenerational Journey to Israel. Rabbi Baruchel and I have scheduled this congregational adventure for Winter Break 2026, December 20th-30th. Please check the website for more details, as it would be such a pleasure for your family to join our family in Israel for the trip of a lifetime.

FROM CURIOSITY TO CONNECTION

Rabbi Eliza McCarroll, Assistant Rabbi



As I write this article, we find ourselves in the Omer, that spiritual stretch of 49 days from Pesach until Shavuot, which counts the time from our redemption from Egypt, to our pinnacle of revelation at Mt. Sinai as we received the Torah.

Throughout the Omer, we teach a piece of Pirkei Avot, the Ethics of our Ancestors, as we absorb their wisdom and come to our own revelations.

Pirkei Avot 4:1 famously teaches, in the name of Ben Zoma:

Who is wise? The one who learns from all humans, as it says in the Psalms, "From all of my teachers I have gained understanding."

Since November, we have had a beautiful cohort of students on their own journey, one of creative and intensive learning as they sought to deepen their own understandings of Jewish life.

This was through our Alef-Bets program, which had many components from which participants could craft their own meaningful experiences.

There was a Beit Midrash for those who simply wanted to learn *"l'shem shamayim"* (for the sake of heaven). There was Hebrew for those who wanted to improve their language, and Trope for those who wanted to learn to chant Torah. Finally, for those who elected, they could pursue an "Adult B'nei Mitzvah", combining all these skills in order to be called to the Torah with confidence, and to commemorate this special life-cycle moment with our congregation.

As a rabbi, it has been an honour to witness our learners' passion for Jewish education and ritual, and to see them form genuine friendships and connections.

As rewarding as it was to watch our students learn, I learned just as much from them in turn.

As this cohort comes to a close, we share these testimonials below from members of the class, and all are welcome to join as they begin to celebrate their s'machot over the Summer and Fall. We wish them mazal tov, and yasher koach!

It has been a privilege to enhance my Jewish learning with expert teachings and support from our Rabbi's, Cantors, and Hebrew/Torah chanting Teacher.

This Alef-Bets class has been a very humbling experience. It has taken my Judaism to a new level and also enabled me to build some wonderful friendships along the way.

—Jill Glazer

Whilst I enjoyed the lectures and Hebrew and tropes refresher. I was really impressed that many of the women to decided become bnei mitzvah. I would like to add that it is truly an amazing journey and I congratulate those who will stand at the bimah during the coming months.

—Frances Dvorchik

It has been a joy and pleasure to study with fellow congregants; making new friends and learning in a supportive environment. Kudos to our talented teachers and our inspiring clergy. Learning has never been so sweet!

—Denise Gordon

In every Aleph Bet class, our teachers kindled a lifelong love of learning and enlightened us through the beauty of our Jewish heritage. Their passion for imparting knowledge and revealing wisdom was felt throughout the program, filling us with curiosity and wanting more.

—Deborah Tepper

I joined the alef bet class because I was curious. I have studied with many rabbis across the denominations for a good chunk of my life. I love to learn.

But in this program I got more than I bargained for.

I discovered an extraordinary community, and learned profound things about living a richer Jewish life.

—Lesley Simpson

THE SACRED WORK OF BUILDING A VILLAGE

Rabbi Taylor Baruchel, Director of Outreach and Next Gen Engagement



There is a particular kind of holiness that arrives not with a sermon, but with a stroller. It's not glamorous, it's not particularly well-rested, and it is something quietly beautiful to witness at Holy Blossom Temple.

What makes it all the more meaningful is that it didn't begin as a formal program. It began with our new parents themselves, who were already finding one another in parks and living rooms and group chats, and who came forward with a simple, deeply resonant ask: we're already gathering... could we do this here?

And so, we opened the doors.

What has emerged is **The Village: Holy Blossom Temple's New Parent Circle**, and it is taking off in the most organic, life-giving way.

It is a space where parents in those early, disorienting, beautiful days of new life can show up exactly as they are. A space where no one apologizes for being tired. Where feeding schedules and sleep regressions are discussed with the same seriousness as Torah. Where someone is always holding a baby that isn't theirs, and where a five-minute adult conversation can feel like a small but meaningful win.

But more than that, it is a space where connection is taking root in real time.

We often speak about "the village" as if it were a lost art, something harder to access in the pace and fragmentation of contemporary life. And yet, one of the quiet strengths of a sacred community like ours is that it makes that kind of connection possible. Here, week by week, relationship by relationship, something enduring is being built. Parents who were strangers not long ago are now showing up for one another in ways that matter. They are checking in, sharing resources, celebrating milestones, and carrying one another through the harder moments. They are modelling, in the most tangible way, what it means to belong.

And the babies, these extraordinary, curious, entirely present little humans, are not just the future of our community. They are very much a part of its present. Their presence shifts the feeling of this place. It softens it. It grounds it. It reminds all of us why we invest in community at all.

Because raising a child was never meant to be done alone.

Our tradition has always understood this. When the Torah describes the building of the Mishkan, it does not begin with a command to construct, but with an invitation: "*V'yikchu li terumah*" — "Let them bring Me gifts." Not imposed, not extracted, but offered from the heart. A community formed not by obligation alone, but by willingness, by presence, by each person bringing what they can.

That is how sacred space is built. Not all at once, and not by one set of hands, but through the steady offering of many.

The Village is not a new idea so much as a return to something essential. It is what happens when people bring themselves, their time, their care, their vulnerability, and begin, together, to shape a space that can hold them.

At Holy Blossom Temple, we are continuing to think carefully about how we create accessible, welcoming pathways for families to step into community, especially in these early years when connection matters so deeply. One of those pathways is our Terumah Membership.

Designed for families whose eldest child is eight years old or younger, Terumah Membership invites you to determine a membership contribution amount that is meaningful to you. No questions asked, and received with our genuine gratitude. It is one way we are lowering barriers and opening doors, so that more families can find their place within this community and begin to build their own relationships here.

Because what we are seeing in The Village is a powerful reminder that when space is made, people step in. And when they do, something real begins to take shape.

THE CALL OF COMMUNITY

Abigail Nemzer, Director of Membership & Community Engagement



If you are one of our households who sees membership renewal as a High Holy Day ritual in its own right—renewing just before Rosh Hashanah—you may have received a call from a member of Holy Blossom’s Board of Directors wishing you a *Shanah Tovah*, a good new year, along with a gentle nudge that it was time to renew your membership.

Eric Roher z”l, Past President of Holy Blossom Temple, was the most enthusiastic maker of these calls that I had the pleasure to work with. Year after year, I would give him a list of members to call, and he would eagerly go down the list, pronouncing that he knew so-and-so from when he was a child, or he worked with this person professionally, or he knew this person because their grandchildren went to religious school together. Eric’s connections went on and on, and his love of the Temple community was evident in each joyful call he made. His warmth, generosity, and boundless devotion to this congregation will be deeply missed.

It has been a momentous year for the Holy Blossom community: we once again surpassed 2,000 member households!

This milestone is the result of the dedication and love by so many people at Holy Blossom. While 2,000 households is a quantitative marker, it represents something qualitative: the expanding connections, special moments, and strengthening relationships at Holy Blossom Temple.

As we look ahead to accommodate our growing community, we have expanded our High Holy Day service offerings. There will be plenty of seats for everyone across all services, and, if attendance at a particular service is important to you, I encourage you to not wait for a *Shanah Tovah* call to renew your membership, but to renew when you receive your membership package and register for your chosen High Holy Day service stream.

As we make the *Shanah Tovah* reminder calls this year, I’ll be thinking of Eric, with appreciation for all that he did to strengthen the fabric of Holy Blossom and nurture a sense of belonging that continues to define our community.

HBT BY THE NUMBERS!



232

New Households joined in 5786!



2009

Total Member Households!

509

YAD households
(one adult is ages 19-40)



244

Terumah Households
(whose oldest child is age 8 or younger)



702

Households renewed their membership online through the members portal



32

Households in the Introduction to Jewish Living Program
(a course for deepening Jewish learning and conversion to Judaism)

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Shira Lester, Director of Development and Donor Engagement



Looking Back, Looking Forward: Becoming a Community of Belonging

At Holy Blossom Temple, community can mean many different things, depending on where you find yourself. For some, it is the steady rhythm of Shabbat services and familiar melodies that feel like home. For others, it may be a first visit, a child's first class, or a moment of quiet connection that hints at something they are still discovering.

Belonging is not always immediate. Sometimes it grows over time, through shared experiences and small moments of connection. It can be found in celebrations such as baby namings, b'nei mitzvah, and weddings. It can begin with a conversation over coffee, a seat at a holiday table, or simply the feeling of being welcomed.

For young families, it may start with the joy and energy of children learning and playing together. For others, it may come through finding support during a difficult time, or through the opportunity to give back and care for someone else. Whether deeply rooted or just beginning to take shape, each person's experience of community here is valid and evolving.

Looking back, we can be proud of the many ways Holy Blossom has created space for connection across generations. Looking forward, we have the opportunity and responsibility to continue building a community where more people can find their place, at their own pace.

Everything that makes this possible depends on collective support. The services, the learning, the celebrations, the moments of gathering and care all require resources. Membership contributions are an essential part of that foundation, but they do not fully sustain the breadth and depth of what we offer.

At this time, we are also especially mindful that security remains top of mind. We are committed to

ensuring that Holy Blossom continues to be a safe and welcoming space for all. That important work is being addressed. At the same time, the day-to-day life of our community, including clergy leadership, education, programming, and pastoral care, still depends on the generosity of our members.

This is where the Annual Campaign plays a vital role.

With more than 2,000 member households, Holy Blossom is a large and diverse community. Yet only about 500 households currently participate in the Annual Campaign. Increasing participation is not only about meeting financial needs. It is about strengthening the shared investment that allows this community to grow and become more welcoming, more accessible, and more responsive to all who walk through our doors, whether they already feel they belong or are still finding their way.

As we enter membership renewal season, there is an invitation for each of us to reflect. What has Holy Blossom offered you, or what might it offer in the future? How might you help create that sense of connection for someone else?

A gift to the Annual Campaign is one way to help sustain what already exists and to make space for what is still possible.

Holy Blossom Temple's 2026 Annual Campaign Committee:

Daniel Wilson, VP Development HBT Board of Directors

Ellen T. Cole

Joan Garson, President HBT Foundation

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To make a gift to the Annual Campaign 2026, visit holyblossom.org/ways-to-give/, call Shira Lester, Director of Development & Donor Engagement at 416-789-3291 x 261, or indicate your gift on your membership renewal form.

FROM HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE FOUNDATION

Joan Garson, President, Holy Blossom Temple Foundation



The Ever-Blossoming Temple

What an exciting time at Holy Blossom Temple! From our 170th celebration, North of Broadway to The Cotler School, from adult B'not Mitzvot to parents and babies in the Schwartz/Reisman

Atrium, our congregation is finding joy and meaning at Temple. And through their generosity, Temple members are ensuring that Holy Blossom Temple will continue to blossom, Today, Tomorrow and Forever.

The commitment to the future demonstrated by Holy Blossom Temple Foundation's visionary fundraising plan, The Ever-Blossoming Initiative, is even more significant today than when it was first announced over the High Holy Days, 9 months ago. As daily reality feels more uncertain beyond the walls of 1950 Bathurst Street, the Temple community continues to demonstrate engagement in the future and commitment to the generations to come. We come together at Temple.

Through personal generosity our community funds the activities which engage, educate, and inspire us. Without this support, we would simply be unable to undertake and maintain the bold and creative programming, the meaningful worship, the acts of *tikkun olam*, the advocacy and interfaith activities, which comprise our daily program.

The ongoing outreach to Temple members is directed toward three time frames.

Today This fundraising enables the ongoing activities of our Temple every single day. Foremost among the fundraising activities for Today is the Annual Campaign.

Tomorrow is the funding for the development and expansion of special projects so key to our future. Following on the thrilling evening of North of Broadway, there will be continuing outreach to enable Excellence in Education. We have much more to do together to fund and achieve our transformative educational goals.

Forever This represents the commitment to the future of our community. Legacy generosity lasts beyond a lifetime, and continues to support the generations of Holy Blossom Temple. Many congregants have already pledged a legacy gift. Together these gifts will secure the long term future of Temple.

Over the coming months you will hear more about fundraising in all of these areas. **Today, Tomorrow and Forever** capture the commitment of our *Kehillah Kedoshah*. Together we will ensure that Holy Blossom Temple continues to grow and inspire.

We know that we are stronger when we act together. I hope you will join your fellow congregants in supporting the Ever-Blossoming Temple. And if you are already a supporter of Temple: **thank you!**

A photograph of a stone plaque mounted on a wall. The plaque is rectangular and made of light-colored stone. It features the text 'HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE' in large, bold, black letters, and '5698 - 1937' in smaller, bold, black letters below it. The background shows a blurred green landscape.

FROM THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Lisa Isen Baumal, Principal of Youth Education and Family Engagement



A year of belonging

This past year at the Youth Education Centre (YEC) at Holy Blossom Temple was a year of learning about Jewish holidays, practicing and gaining Hebrew reading skills, discovering new ideas and interpretations, listening to stories, singing t'fillot and songs, and of course, making Jewish memories. It was also a year of growth and belonging for all our students from the youngest in kindergarten to our Confirmands in Grade 10. YEC classrooms became small communities where students formed friendships, found their voices, practiced Jewish values, and deepened their sense of Jewish identity.

That sense of identity was seen in many ways throughout the year. During the Grade 2 *Siyum Shem Tov*, celebrating the completion of Aleph Bet learning, students shared reflections on their Hebrew names and what being Jewish means to them. Their words showed that even at a young age, they are connecting Jewish values to their identity: "I am proud to be Jewish because it is different from my friends," and "Being Jewish means being kind and standing up for my friends." Others expressed belonging and connection: "My favourite thing about being Jewish is spending time with family."

The Grade 4 Israel projects gave students an opportunity to create personal connections to Israel. By researching topics of their choosing and creatively presenting to peers and families, students took ownership of their learning while strengthening

their understanding of how Israel is part of their Jewish identity. Rooted in Jewish values like curiosity, responsibility, and sharing knowledge, the projects helped students grow in confidence and feel more connected to community.

In Grade 7, learning extended beyond the walls of our temple building through rich experiential opportunities that encouraged students to explore identity, ask good questions, think critically, and build community. The Grade 7 retreat fostered connection and belonging through celebrating Shabbat together, group bonding, and focusing on the journey toward becoming B'nei Mitzvah. Visits to the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir and Timothy Eaton Memorial Church deepened students' understanding of both others and themselves while highlighting the importance of relationships built on mutual respect and shared values.

Our teens experienced belonging through leadership, connection, and growth. HABSTY teens continued to build community through lounge nights and NFTY regional events, while many stepped into leadership roles as madrichim in the Youth Education Centre. We also have a growing group of songleaders adding music, leadership, and ruach to our community. Our Confirmation students confidently led the congregation on Erev Shavuot, sharing personal reflections on their evolving connections to Jewish life and community as they transition into adulthood.

YEC students didn't just learn about Jewish identity this year, they lived it, building friendships, confidence, and a lasting sense of connection. As the YEC begins a bold new chapter as The Cotler School, our students carry these experiences forward into the year ahead with pride and purpose.





From September to May, our students grow not only in size, but in confidence, curiosity, independence, and Jewish joy!

BLOSSOMING TOGETHER: 2025-2026 AT OUR ECC

Wendy Steinberg Himmel, Director, Early Childhood Centre



The 2025–2026 school year has been a truly remarkable time of growth and achievement for our community. From exceptional programming to meaningful intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development, our classrooms have been filled with joyful learning rooted in the rich values and traditions of Reform Judaism.

We began the year with 29 toddler children and 21 preschool children, operating three toddler classrooms and two preschool classrooms. Over the course of the school year, our community flourished, welcoming an additional 15 toddlers.

Looking ahead, we are thrilled to continue this momentum into the 2026–2027 school year. With 45 toddler children and 34 preschool children already enrolled, our program continues to expand in exciting ways. To support this growth, we are also delighted to be adding an additional preschool classroom and four new educators to our dedicated team.

The newly renovated Education Office Suite will be a wonderful addition to our space, enhancing our visibility of families and guests as they enter and exit the ECC, while creating a warm and welcoming point of connection for all who walk through our doors.

Amidst all these exciting and positive changes, we have continued to prioritize meaningful engagement with our Holy Blossom Temple Rabbis and Cantors. Parents, grandparents, and other family members of our ECC students remain an integral part of our community, enriching our program through thoughtful and special shared experiences.

We are so proud of all that we have accomplished together and look forward to another year of learning, connection, and community.

WELCOME TO OUR CONGREGATIONAL FAMILY

WELCOME TO OUR NEW AND REJOINING MEMBERS!

Ira Halpern

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Adam and Sam Levinson and family

Haley Morrison and Pablo Neiman and family

Y.J. Noh and Noah Abracen and family

Michael Rabin

Nicki Weiss and Mike Fox

Barbara Zeller and Simon Strauss and family

As of April 15, 2026

Mazel Tov to...

BIRTHS

Mazel tov to Ruti Prikhoji & Matthew Cohen on the birth of their son Joseph Viktor Cohen. Proud family includes grandparents Yulia & Oleg Prikhoji, and Sheila Keenan & Mark Cohen; and great-grandparents Valeri & Larissa Prikhoji, Tamara z"l & Viktor Zgonik z"l, Margaret z"l & Frank Keenan z"l, and Estelle z"l & Lou Cohen z"l.

Mazel tov to Lyla & Billy Farbstein on the birth of their son Wesley Farbstein. Proud family includes brothers Tyler and Myles; grandparents Karen & Yoel Abells, Jan Schreiber & Joe Battle, and Jeff & Linda Farbstein; and great-grandmothers Mary Seldon and Shirley Farbstein.

Mazel tov to Erica & David Freiman on the birth of their daughter Sophie Freiman. Proud family includes brother Charlie; and grandparents Steven Freiman, Fern Smiley, and Eduardo & Denise Stivelman.

Mazel tov to Ali Rendely & Josh Lewenberg on the birth of their son Brody Aaron Lewenberg. Proud family includes brother Parker; grandparents Jane & Russell Rendely and Florence & Marvin Lewenberg; great-grandparents Joan & Larry Rendely, Adele Sager z"l & Henry Sager z"l, Rivka Lewenberg & Moishe Lewenberg z"l, and Ida Dreksler & David Dreksler z"l.

Mazel Tov to Lauren & Zach Mandel on the birth of their son Will Carter Mandel. Proud family includes big brother Ben, grandparents Lisa Ritchie & David Carroll and Glennie & Dave Mandell, and great grandparents Judy Ritchie & Carl Ritchie z"l and great grandmother Beverly Mandell.

WEDDINGS – ENGAGEMENTS

Mazel tov to Charlotte Axelrod & Nathan Cantor on their marriage. Proud parents are Dr. Heather Shapiro & Dr. Terry Axelrod and Jessica & Kevin Cantor.

OTHER

Mazel tov to Justice Sandra Chapnik on being named as one of 15 Women Who Shaped Reform Jewish Life by the Union for Reform Judaism.

B'nei Mitzvah



Tammy Keren
Saturday, June 6, 2026
Reading Torah for the first time
as a Bat Mitzvah



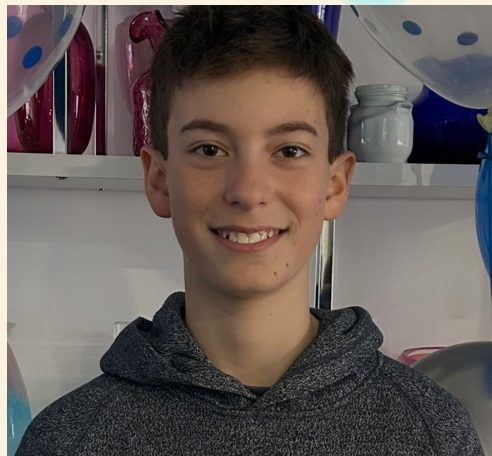
Nancy Pollack
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Reading Torah for the first time
as a Bat Mitzvah



Holden Gans
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Son of Kimberly
& Jeff Gans



Benjamin Drucker
Saturday, June 13, 2026
Son of Nicole
& Aaron Drucker



Benjamin Ornstein
Saturday, June 20, 2026
Son of Candice Ornstein



Ellie Rosler
Saturday, June 20, 2026
Daughter of Tisha Ornstein
and Lloyd Rosler



Ezra Piché
Saturday, June 27, 2026
Son of Sarah Leo Piché & Marc Piché
Grandson of Anne Dublin



Anne Dublin
Saturday, June 27, 2026
Reading Torah for the first time
as a Bat Mitzvah

IN MEMORIAM

Selina Appleby, mother of Lynn Appleby, Shelley Appleby-Ostroff and Lon Appleby

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Gail Silverstein, mother of Jay Silverstein, Danny Silverstein and Lisa Silverstein

February 12, 2026 to May 7, 2026

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In Memory of Beny Maisner

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In Honour of the Yahrzeit of Esther (Danino) Wanono
Ruth Wanono

*Donations from
January 26-April 27, 2026*



THE HONOURABLE IRWIN COTLER SCHOOL
of Holy Blossom Temple

At Holy Blossom Temple, Jewish education is about more than knowledge and skills, it's also about belonging, identity, and connection.

From joyful family programs and creative youth activities, from retreats and hands-on social justice initiatives to leadership development and Israel engagement, here at Holy Blossom, our children and teens discover community and confidence for Jewish life.

This Fall, Holy Blossom Temple's Youth Education Centre enters an exciting new chapter as **The Honourable Irwin Cotler School of Holy Blossom Temple**.

Named in admiration for The Honourable Irwin Cotler, **The Cotler School** reflects our renewed commitment to Excellence in Jewish Education. Under the leadership of **Dr. Cindy Kozierok**, our incoming Director of Lifelong Learning, and **Lisa Isen Baumal**, Principal of Youth Education and Family Engagement, **The Cotler School** includes a number of part-time learning opportunities for growing families to choose from:

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