

Temple B'nai Abraham

Temple B'nai Abraham
President Charlie Weiss

The Temple Shofar
Rabbi Julie Pfau

Sarah Seidel Sisterhood
President Randye Bloom

RABBI'S MESSAGE

The narratives in the Torah and Haftarah readings for the first day of Rosh Hashanah powerfully convey the brokenness that can consume human lives. But in the midst of all the struggles and fractured relationships that are described, we also encounter powerful moments of prayer. Hannah's prayer in particular becomes something of a model for Jewish prayer more broadly, and exploring this is in keeping with this year's newsletter theme of the Amidah.

The Haftarah passage tells us: "As she continued to pray before the Lord, Eli watched her mouth. For Hannah was speaking to herself: her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard." This is the passage that is referenced in later rabbinic discussions of the proper way to pray the Amidah – one of the central prayers of our liturgy. The 12th century Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, more famously known as Maimonides or Rambam, addresses the proper manner of prayer in his *Mishneh Torah* – an early codification of Jewish law. In the volume on *Tefillah*, prayer, Rambam begins Chapter 5 by stating:

A person who prays must be careful to tend to [the following] eight matters. [However,] if he is pressured, confronted by circumstances beyond his control or transgresses and does not attend to one them, they are not of absolute necessity. They are:

1. standing;
2. facing the Temple;
3. preparation of the body;
4. proper clothing;
5. proper place;
6. control of the voice;
7. bowing and
8. prostration.

The chapter goes on to explicate in detail the meaning of each of these eight items. It is the ninth halachah of the chapter that addresses the question of voice:

Control of one's voice: What is implied?

A person should not raise his voice during his Amidah, nor should he pray silently. Rather, he should pronounce the words with his lips, whispering in a tone that he can hear.

He should not make his voice audible unless he is sick or cannot concentrate otherwise. In such a case, it is permitted except when in a congregation, lest the others be disturbed by his voice.

The description presented by Rambam is remarkably like the description we have of Hannah's prayer – movement of the lips but no audible sound. The commentaries to this halachah make the connection explicit:

Control of one's voice: What is implied? A person should not raise his voice during his Amidah - Berachot 31a explains that these laws are derived from the description of Hannah's prayer

(I Samuel 1:13): "Hannah spoke unto her heart, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard,"

nor should he pray silently - i.e., merely contemplating on the words of prayer in his heart. The Jerusalem Talmud, *Berachot* 4:1, states that the phrase, "only her lips moved," implies that she was speaking, not only thinking to herself.

Temple B'nai Abraham is affiliated with the Jewish Reconstruction Federation. www.jrf.org



Temple B'nai Abraham Officers

Officers:

President	Charlie Weiss
Executive Vice President	Linda Osman
Religious Vice President	Sid Morginstin
Financial Vice President	Mike Rosen
Recording Secretary	Susan Giachetti
Past President	Betsy Ramos

Trustees:

Religious School Chair	Robin Affrime
Membership Chair	Kim Aubry
Building Chair	Neil Nissim
Adult Education Chair	Brian Epstein

October 2012

Thus, the halachah begins with Hannah's prayer as *the* model to emulate for proper prayer of the Amidah. I should point out that these passages are specifically addressing the situation of someone praying during the silent Amidah – there is an entirely different set of rules for the repetition, some of which I will address later.

So, what do we learn from Hannah? When praying the silent Amidah, we are to be mindful that we can hear ourselves praying, but we should also be mindful that our vocalization is not loud enough to disturb the prayers of those around us. The Amidah is considered so important that it is actually forbidden to interrupt it, and many of the halachot about proper behavior during the Amidah seem concerned with preventing one's own distraction and with avoiding disruption to anyone else's recitation of the prayer.

Of course, one person's distraction is another person's tool for focusing. As someone with ADHD, I have strange needs for studying. I cannot work in a quiet library – I get distracted by people turning pages, moving papers, setting down pens, walking across the room, opening doors and apparently even by the sound of someone breathing! I need familiar music playing loudly on my iPod to drown out extraneous sounds and create a focused mental flow, but most people would find it impossible to focus with such noise. The Jewish practice of “shuckling” is another example of a practice with mixed reactions. Shuckling is the swaying or rocking motion of the body during prayer – some rock rhythmically and quickly forward and backwards in rhythm with their words, others sway gently from side to side, and still others twist from the waist back and forth between the right and left. Some Jews find that such movements aid in their concentration – either people with ADHD like me, or perhaps folks who are kinesthetic learners and engage best with the material and spiritual realms through the body. But for some, the movements of others in space may be a distraction.

For example, Halachah 6 in Chapter 5 of the *Mishneh Torah* does not prohibit shuckling but *is* careful to note that “It is forbidden to sit down next to someone in the midst of the Amidah or to pass in front of him, except at a distance of four cubits.” (A cubit is the distance from elbow to fingertips.) This presents some challenges when we are situated in rows of pews and would be lucky to have a distance of four *inches* when trying to get around someone! This is why it is customary to excuse oneself either before or after the Amidah, or at least to wait to come or go until others in the pew have finished their prayer. Saying “excuse me” is considered polite behavior in most contexts, but addressing someone in this way during the Amidah is actually poor form.

But is it really so important nowadays to avoid interruption of the Amidah? Certainly in our congregation the odds that everyone is reciting the traditional prayer are not particularly high. If we aren't reciting the traditional prayer, perhaps we could dispense with some of these expectations about moving the lips or about asking to get by someone?

I am inclined to say no. Prayer isn't only about the particular words in the prayer book as much as it is about moments of holy connection. The rabbis used Hannah as a model for proper use of voice in prayer, but we can also learn from other aspects of her prayer. She was not reciting an Amidah; she was not reading prayers from a book. She was weeping and praying out of her great distress; she was so desperate that she was even trying to bargain with G-d! Hagar, too, engaged in this kind of prayer when she sat in the desert opposite her potentially dying son – Hagar raised her voice and offered up the wordless prayer of weeping. I imagine these prayers were not recited standing motionless with feet together.

I am actually put in mind of an experience I had as a chaplain at a children's hospital in Atlanta, Georgia. On the 4th of July, a child was brought in to the ER after a three-wheeler accident. I vividly remember sitting on the floor of the chapel with his grandmother as she prayed – the intensity of her prayer was almost frightening – she had seized my hands and was rocking violently as she wept and cried out to G-d. As a chaplain, I was not in control of that prayer experience! I had the choice to join with her in her visceral prayer or to interrupt her prayer by detaching myself from her grasp and suggesting a more dignified location and manner of expression. But of course I didn't do that – sometimes the need for prayer is so immediate and unplanned that it must be allowed to flow.

This is why I hesitate to interrupt anyone's prayers, whether or not they are reciting the traditional Amidah. In the context of services, prior to the Amidah I ask people to be seated when they have finished their prayers, and I wait until all are seated before moving on to another section. I think it is safest to assume, as with Hannah, that the prayers of the people around us are the pouring out of their souls. I wouldn't want to be a blunderer like Eli and insensitively intrude on someone's prayer, but would rather leave space for everyone to express their joys and pains, even if it means being a little uncomfortable with waiting in silence until all are finished.

Intruding upon someone else's pouring out of the heart is a serious matter – it can disturb the flow of words and so interfere with their ability to receive solace through the act of prayer. But according to Mishnah Brachot 5:5, the stakes may be even higher:

One who prays and errs – it is a bad sign for him. And if it is the *shaliach tzibbur*, the one who prays on behalf of the whole congregation – it is a bad sign for those that appointed him....

So, interrupting someone's prayer and causing a mistake might actually be a harbinger of doom. The Mishnah goes on to give the example of Rabbi Chaninah ben Dosa who reportedly could predict if someone would live or die based on the fluency of his prayers for healing for the sick individual. According to Talmud Berachot 34b, Rabbi Chaninah ben Dosa saw a direct correlation between the fluency of his prayers and the divine response, saying:

If my words flow smoothly and my mind is concentrated and clear, I am sure that my prayer was accepted. But if I

Temple B'Nai Abraham, 58 Crosswicks, PO Box 245, Bordentown, NJ 08505, (609) 298-1527, www.bnai-abraham.org

October 2012

stumble over my words and my mind is distracted, I know that my prayer was unacceptable.

The question of causality is not entirely clear from these texts – it may be that the distraction and stumbling was a result of the prayers not being accepted, or it may be that the prayers weren't accepted because of the distraction and stumbling.

I don't believe that interrupting that grandmother's prayer would have caused her grandson to die in the ER, but I do believe that it might have *felt* that way to her! Times of extreme distress are times when it can be especially common to slide into a kind of magical thinking. And, if I am honest, I must admit to holding a bit of superstition even when everything is perfectly ordinary. I definitely worry about making mistakes when leading prayer in this community and in other contexts. Sometimes that is more about perfectionism, wanting to look good and a certain kind of ego that it might be better not to indulge. But sometimes I do wonder about the larger implications if I make mistakes in prayer. Aside from personal embarrassment, might my mistake create the kind of distraction that interferes with a congregant's spiritual connection in that moment? Even that question might be an indication of excessive pride – as if my fluency would be the sole determining factor in someone else's spiritual experience. But given that I do believe that prayer is important and profoundly transformative, I do feel a corresponding responsibility to get it right as much as possible.

My own fear of errors in prayer is mitigated by a special prayer in the High Holy Days liturgy that I find absolutely crucial as the *shaliach tzibbur* of this community – the Hineni prayer. In this prayer, I have the opportunity to acknowledge my deficiencies, and to express the longing that these deficiencies will not detract from any of our reaching out to G-d. It expresses the hope that G-d will hear all of our prayers and respond with love, despite all of our imperfections:

Here I stand, deficient in good deeds,
Overcome by awe and trembling,
In the presence of One who abides
Amid the praises of Israel....
Accept my prayer as though I were
Supremely qualified for this task,
Imposing in appearance, pleasant of voice,
And acceptable to all.
Help me to overcome every obstacle;
Cover all our faults with Your veil of love.
Turn our afflictions to joy, life and peace;
May truth and peace be precious to us;
And may I offer my prayer without faltering....
For You mercifully hear the prayers of Your people Israel;
Praised are You who hears prayer.

(excerpted from p.609 of *Machzor Hadash*)

Ultimately, none of us can ever pray perfectly. Sometimes we blunder in our own words or manage to disturb the prayers of others. The tradition does not call any of us to perfection, but only to mindfulness and intentionality – we are asked not to falter over potential mistakes – but to do the best that we can, to strive to notice the impact upon others of our actions and to change our behavior when we fall short. The Hineni prayer expresses these intentions. It asks G-d to consider us *as though* we had indeed offered the most perfect of prayers, even though such perfection is ultimately an impossibility.

In the coming year, whenever we turn to the Amidah, I invite all of us to bring the intention of the Hineni prayer, and to pour out our hearts with the authenticity of Hannah – to move our lips with quiet but passionate whispers, and to hear the sound of our own hearts as we hear our voices praying. May we all offer fervent prayers without faltering, and may we strive for the kind of mindfulness of others that will insure that they are able to do the same.

Shalom,
Rabbi Pfau

Welcome!

Please welcome new members **Eric and Kristi Schwartz**
of Columbus, New Jersey.

Their daughter **Haley** will be attending Hebrew School.

October 2012

Temple Donations

In Honor of:

Jay and Elaine Trackman in honor of the marriage of their son **Mark** to **Sharon** from Michael Scolaro and Randy Bloom

Sisterhood Donations

Rejoicing with:

Elaine and Jay Trackman on their son's marriage from Renee Harrison, Phoebe and Jeff Nissim, and Marcy Schwartz and Rick Shain

In Memory of:

David Pincus from Phoebe and Jeff Nissim

Philip Scharf from Barbara and Jeff Streisfeld, Robin and Tony Zak, and Neil and Karen Nissim

Norman Stetson from Elaine and Jay Trackman, Eileen Gale, Randy Bloom and Mike Scolaro, Marcy Schwartz and Rick Shain, and Rita Nissim

Yom Kippur Community Booklet

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Yom Kippur Community Booklet. The project was a huge success, raising just under \$1200!

Yahrzeits for October 2012

October 5

Nissim Nissim, father of Martin Nissim

October 12

Paul Goldfarb, step-father of Charyl Morginstin

Mervin Groveman, husband of Seena Groveman

Howard Sheldon Sacks, father of Faith Hupfl

Elsie Sternfeld, mother of Mildred Josephson

October 26

Walter Harrison, husband of Renee Harrison

Gertrude Herzog, mother of Madge Rosen

Myrna Morris, wife of Ron Morris

November 2

Selma Densky, mother of Sharon Coleman

Save the Date

2012-2013 Tot Shabbat Program

October 19

November 2

December 14: Hanukkah celebration

January 11

February 22: Purim theme

March 15: Passover theme

April 12

May 31

June 21

2012-2013 Oneg/Event Hosts: If you are unable to host on your date, please switch with someone else and notify Randy Bloom. You are responsible for finding a replacement. Thank you.

October 5: Erev Shabbat Oneg, Mitchell/Erickson

October 13: Shabbat morning lunch, Affrime/Margulies

November 9: Erev Shabbat Oneg, Berson/Fink

November 17: Shabbat morning lunch,

Morginstin/Coleman

November 19: Sisterhood meeting and Thanksgiving Centerpieces, Trackman/Schimmel

December 8: Shabbat morning lunch, K and N

Nissim/Lamonsoff

December 14: Erev Shabbat Oneg, Caldwell/Rosenthal

December TBA: Sisterhood meeting, Light-Tolomeo/Glanz

January: TBA

February 8: Erev Shabbat Oneg to Honor Sisterhood, Chudoff/Gale

February 16: Shabbat morning lunch, Aubry/Mitchell

March 6: Sisterhood meeting, Book discussion ,

Ramos/Hupfl

March 8: Erev Shabbat Oneg, Zeichner/Roth

March 23: Shabbat morning lunch, Stupak-

Jasielewski/Weiskott

April 20: Shabbat morning lunch, Rosen/Rosen

April 26: Erev Shabbat Oneg, B. Goldman/R. Goldman

May 22: Sisterhood meeting with Rabbi Julie,

Giachetti/Osman

June 10: Sisterhood meeting and covered dish dinner,

Dowshen/Bloom

June 15: Shabbat morning lunch, Volunteers TBD

June 28: Erev Shabbat Oneg for Member of the Year,

Schwartz-Shain/Bloom

2012-2013 Morning Services

October 13

November 10

December 8

January 19: Jaden Weiss Bar Mitzvah

February 16

March 23

April 20

May 18: Josh and Lily Grabenstein B'Nei Mitzvah

June 15

October 2012

Sisterhood News

We had a well-attended meeting in September and made some plans for the rest of the year. The Sisterhood approved giving the Temple up to \$3000 for the new camera, screen, etc., that Brian Epstein is installing for use for services, Hebrew school and community events—a terrific system that will bring us into the 21st century.

Thank you to Eileen Gale and Elaine Trackman for providing honey cake and challah after services the first day of Rosh Hashanah. Thank you to Debby Weiss and Marcy Schwartz for hosting the Rabbi and Cantor for dinner Erev Rosh Hashanah. Thank you to Marcia Rosen for chairing Break-the-Fast—it was just what was needed after so much repenting! All of you made a difference in our community during this High Holiday season and we appreciate your efforts.

In lieu of a meeting in October, we encourage everyone to attend the Interfaith Dialogue on Wednesday, October 10 at 7 P.M. at the Dorothea Dix Unitarian Universalist Community at 39 Park Street, Bordentown. Rabbi Julie will participate in the discussion of Social Justice from a Faith Perspective. It would be wonderful if our community attended to support Rabbi Julie and this effort generally. See you there!

The November Sisterhood meeting on November 19th will feature Karen Nissim working with you to make Thanksgiving centerpieces. This annual event is always popular, so be sure to RSVP early when details come out.

We will have a fundraiser this year called “Cooking with the Nissims.” Lee Nissim’s children, Jeff and Barbara, with help from Karen Nissim, will lead a cooking demonstration of Sephardic recipes from Lee’s kitchen. The program will be held on a Sunday afternoon at the Temple. More information will follow when a date is set. Lee was a fabulous cook and this event will be a real treat. Don’t miss it!

I am looking for book suggestions for the March book discussion. So far the suggestions are *Everything is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer, *The Columbus Affair* by Steve Barry, and *The Bookseller’s Sonnets* by Andi Rosenthal. Get your two cents in and let me know what you think we should read.

Sarah Seidel Sisterhood Officers

President	Randye Bloom
Vice President	Debby Weiss
Treasurer	Marcy Schwartz
Financial Secretary	Marcy Schwartz
Record. Secretary	Ellen Wehrman
Corres. Secretary	Patrica Light-Tolomeo
Trustees:	Phyllis Chudoff
	Eileen Galle
	Susan Giachetti
	Elaine Trackman

We have had a suggestion that we have a Pretty in Paint Party at the Sisterhood. It does look like fun! Check it out at www.prettysinpaintparties.com and let me know what you think.

The list of host families for services and Sisterhood meetings is in this newsletter. Please look for your name and be sure to note the date. Try to switch with someone if the assigned date is a problem for you. Just let me know so that the information in the newsletter will be correct.

Have a good month.

Randye

Supermarket Gift Card Program

Autumn is great time for sharing and giving. Please share yourselves with the Temple by purchasing your gift cards from Acme or ShopRite for your celebration. Please send a check to Dowshen, 502 Farnsworth Avenue, Bordentown, NJ 08505 or call (609) 298-5306. Your cards will be sent to you the same day.

Tot Shabbat News

The next Tot Shabbat will be on Friday, October 19th at 6:00 p.m. and will include candle lighting, potluck dinner, story time, a theme-related craft and songs. If you need any additional information, or would like to volunteer to help clean up or set up, please contact Kami Knapp at kami.knapp@googledoc.com.



October 2012

Supermarket Gift Card Program Thank You and Challenge

As the New Year begins, we would like to sincerely thank our members who have supported Temple B'nai Abraham through the **Supermarket Gift Card Program**. Their efforts add about \$1,500 a year to the Temple's income, benefiting all of us greatly. In the order of contribution, thanks to:

Morginstin (**Special kudos to Sid and Charyl for being this year's top contributors**)

Ramos
Coleman
Chudoff
Steele
SchwartzBird
Dowshen
Goldman (Rhea)
Rosen (Madge)
Gale
Glanz
Goldman (Jeffrey)
Rosen (Mike and Marsha)
Weiss
Wehrman
Trackman
Affrime

Kosher food is expensive! We hereby challenge any one to beat us in donations this coming year. We will buy dinner for the family (up to 4 people from the same address) who beats us by the most by next Rosh Hashanah!

Sid and Charyl Morginstin

Memorial Plaques

Plaques are available for \$250. To order a plaque, send the following to Sid Morginstin, Plaque Chairman, PO Box 8101, Trenton, NJ 08650 or sidmorgy@verizon.net: English name of loved one, Hebrew name of loved one, secular date of death, English names of loved one's parents and Hebrew names of loved one's parents. If you have the Jewish date of death for your loved one, please send it as well. If not, Sid can get it for you. If you do not have the Hebrew names, please supply the English names and Sid will consult with the Rabbi. You will be billed once the plaque has been installed—please do not send payment before then. Sid generally waits until he has at least three plaques before placing the order. *Plaques will not be moved from one board to the other.*

Siddur and Tallit Donations

A new siddur (prayer book) can be purchased in honor of or in memory of someone for \$35; a tallis (prayer shawl) can be purchased for \$60. Please contact Sid Morginstin at sidmorgy@verizon.net.

Bloom
Goldman (Bonnie and Steve)
Aubry
Schwartz
Osman
Cantor

As you can see, these contributors amount to less than half our congregation. ***We need you, too!*** Please consider becoming part of this simple and very effective fund-raising program. ***It costs you nothing!*** You purchase your cards simply by contacting Marsha or Joel, and then use the cards just like debit cards as you shop at ShopRite or the Acme. You get face value for your money and the Temple gets 5% of all you spend in return.

The cards come in \$50 and \$100 denominations. **Call (609) 298-5306 or email marsha@thedowshens.net NOW to get started!**

The "Ultimate" Fundraiser...the "Ultimate" Mitzvah for the New Year.

Marsha and Joel Dowshen

In case a loved one dies, the following information will be helpful in thinking through what steps to take:

1. As soon as possible, please contact the Rabbi, the Temple President and the Sisterhood President.
2. If you would like the Rabbi to officiate at the funeral, please ask the Funeral Director to contact the Rabbi when exploring possible dates and times.
3. There are many traditional Jewish practices that may offer guidance about the handling of the body, the funeral and the burial. Please ask the Funeral Director to explore these options.
4. Resources about mourning, death and dying are available from the Rabbi. There is also a synagogue document containing information about Jewish funeral procedures.

We hope this information will be needed as infrequently as possible!

InterFaith Dialogue

Wednesday, October 10, 2012 at 7PM

“Social Justice from a Faith Perspective”

*Come and share your ideas
on social justice.*

Refreshments will be served.

Hosted by the
Dorothea Dix
Unitarian Universalist
Community at 39 Park Street,
Bordentown City

*A panel discussion with
religious and lay leaders*

Mr. Rocky Balsamo

Dir. Center for Faith/Justice, Lawrenceville

Mrs. Lorraine Fortune

Dir. Jasper Daniels, Summer Youth Program

Dr. Monzoor Hussain

College of NJ, Chemistry, H.S. Islamic Studies

Mrs. Jana Hussain

Rev. John Morrison

Titusville, NJ United Methodist

Rabbi Julie Pfau

Temple B’Nai Abraham, Bordentown

All are welcome.

*For further information,
call: (609-298-1299)*

Shabbat morning services begin at 10:00 a.m. (when there are B'nai Mitzvah, services begin at 9:30 a.m.)

October 2012 ~ Tishrei/Cheshvan 5773

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 <i>Erev Sukkot</i>	1 Sukkot	2 Sukkot	3 Sukkot	4 Sukkot 4:30 p.m. Hebrew	5 Sukkot 6:30 p.m. Erev Shabbat and Hebrew School Potluck and Service 7:30 p.m. Shabbat	6 Sukkot
7 Sukkot 9 a.m. Sunday 10 a.m. Hebrew	8 Shemini Atzeret	9 Simchat Torah	10 7:00 p.m. Interfaith Program, Dorothy Dix Universal Unitarian Church	11 4:30 p.m. Hebrew	12 4:24 p.m. Candle Lighting	13 10 a.m. Simchat Torah Celebration Morning Service 5:35 p.m. Havdalah
14 9 a.m. Sunday 10 a.m. Hebrew	15	16 Rosh Chodesh	17 Rosh Chodesh	18 4:30 p.m. Hebrew	19 4:18 p.m. Candle Lighting 6 p.m. Tot Shabbat 7:30 p.m. Shabbat	20 5:29 p.m. Havdalah
21 9 a.m. Sunday 10 a.m. Hebrew	22	23	24	25 4:30 p.m. Hebrew	26 4:13 p.m. Candle Lighting 7:30 p.m. Shabbat	27 5:25 p.m. Havdalah
28 9 a.m. Sunday 10 a.m. Hebrew	29	30	31	1 4:30 p.m. Hebrew	2 4:11 p.m. Candle Lighting 7:30 p.m. Shabbat	3 5:22 p.m. Havdalah