



## A Message from Rabbi Rachel

*Highlights of our new relationship*



Well, it's official: January IS the best time for a new rabbi-congregation relationship to begin. As I've been here almost exactly six months, let me tell you some highlights, as I see them, of what we've accomplished together, and some things I'm looking forward to.

### On connecting:

- I've met with about 80 percent of the membership, and have gotten to know you. This has been my number one goal: to get to know the individuals of the CBTBI community. (If you and I haven't gotten to know each other and you're in that 20 percent, please let me know when I can come visit and/or take you out for coffee!)
- We've celebrated one installation (Wow! My bubbe is still kvelling!), one confirmation, two *aufrufs*, and four *b'nai mitzvoth*, and have mourned losses.
- I've connected with local clergy, including the Tri-County Board of Rabbis, and the new area Interfaith Ministerium, which I'm hosting here on July 16.
- We have had two joint events with Congregation Bethel to get to know each other, and are partnering together on Peter's Pantry and Family Promise.

### On policy and practice:

- We've started a new "Green Committee" and are working to make CBTBI more environmentally friendly, and already have composting and recycling in place, and a "Green Shabbat" planned for July 12.
- We've had, and are planning, some different kinds of services this summer, including one focused on BI/Rabbi Geela Raphael, and one with a shorter Torah reading. (Let me know if you'd potentially like to plan one together.)
- We've clarified the existing Kashrut policy, and are working concretely towards a new one. (I am now the contact person for questions/comments on the policy.)

- I am working with ritual, outreach, adult education, publicity, strategic planning, and social action committees, and have additionally met with the Men's Club, PTO, Sisterhood, and the education, resolution, and kitchen committees.

### On looking ahead:

- High Holidays are going to be AMAZING. What a privilege it will be to celebrate with CBTBI. I'm planning away with Debbi (ritual committee), Norma (choir) and Wendy (youth services and participation). New highlights include a youth choir, a drama performance of Jonah on Yom Kippur, and a meaningful evening of High Holiday preparation on September 21 at Selichot.
- We're planning monthly Friday evening rabbi-led Kinder Shabbats, and monthly Saturday morning Shabbat B'Yachad celebrations
- We've added a rabbi-led Torah study to the first Shabbat morning of each month from 9 to 10 AM, and a lay-led meditation to the third Shabbat of each month
- Around the holidays next year, we'll be holding an adult education "Deeper Dive" series, where we take a deep look at each holiday.

The summer is also a wonderful time for Shabbat services both Friday evening and Saturday morning, as they are smaller and more intimate. Please do plan to join us; it's a lovely space to connect, rest, and be part of the community.

With blessings,  
Rabbi Rachel

## Upcoming Events

- Friday, July 12: Green Shabbat
- Friday, August 16: Pizza & Open House
- Sunday, August 25: Annual Picnic

See inside for more details.

## From the President's Desk by Joshua Meyer

### *Building Bridges*



How fortunate for all of us at Congregation B'nai Tikvah Beth Israel that our staff and volunteer members treat our congregation as if it were their own personal property — more than that — their prized possession. They take ownership of it, because it is the place we all meet

to build bridges that connect us and connect our children with our Jewish identity.

Our rabbi, Executive Director Steve Blocher, Principal Wendy Marder, Administrative Assistant Judy Finneran, our board, and all of our committee chairs work hard and are extremely dedicated, as are the many members who serve on committees.

One committee after the other makes valuable contributions for the enrichment of our synagogue and school. One after the other brings us special talents and experience to enhance everything that is good about what we are and what we can become.

We build bridges to connect one side to another. Where do you want to go? Where do you want us as a synagogue to go? What can we do to meet both the needs of CBTBI and your vision for your congregation? How do you want to customize your Jewish place of worship, learning, fundraising, socializing, and making new connections?

Share your thoughts with our rabbi, executive director, principal, administrative assistant, board member, committee chair, or committee member as you choose. Let us know your thoughts. We will bring you into the conversation. This is your personal property. This is your synagogue.

Together we can build bridges.

## Pizza & Open House



Friday, August 16  
Starting at 5:30 PM



Join us for free pizza and salad in the oneg room, followed by Shabbat services at 7 PM. Have a friend or co-worker who might be interested in learning more about us?

This is the perfect time to invite them along!  
Watch for an Evite to RSVP.

# Getting to Know Rabbi Rachel

*Rabbi Rachel has spent most of 2019 getting to know the congregation. Now it's time to learn a little about Rabbi Rachel. She sat down with Shofar editor Lisa Parker in May and talked about her first five months here, her family, and many other things.*

***When did you decide to become a rabbi?***

I knew it was an option from when I was little. Luckily, I was born into a Jewishly-involved feminist household. I didn't know women rabbis personally, but I knew of women rabbis and I met my first woman rabbi when I was about seven, and it was always in the back of my head that this is something that I could possibly do.

***One of the biggest challenges to a new leader in any organization is finding a way to distinguish oneself and making a mark. What would you like your mark to be?***

I see myself as a community builder. So, I don't want it to be about me. I'd like to be able to enhance the community. So to be able to enhance the community in terms of involvement, participation, enthusiasm, kindness, *tzedakah*, *tikkun olam*, education — both for kids and adults — and the enjoyment we have by being around each other and the gratefulness we have for this world.

***What goals would you like to accomplish during this upcoming year?***

I've been here five months and I still feel so new. Like I feel like in some ways I've been here a long time, and in some ways I feel like I have so much to learn. And as a new rabbi, I still feel like so much of it is about community formation, and communication, and figuring out how I can be useful here.

***You moved several hundred miles from where you were living. That must have been a jolt to your family. How have they responded?***

I've been surprised. I expected to get some pushback from my kids...[but] my four-year-old has been telling me on a regular basis "Mommy, I like this house better than our old place." I think they just like living in a bigger house. They like having a yard. Those are the things that are important to

them. They are loving their school here. They do miss their friends. But I'm admiring my Fay and Nora. They've done great. And Dan — he's been holding down the home fort and taking care of everything. From shopping, to registering the kids for new things, to figuring out how to transfer all of our bills, to figuring out how to connect our family to dentists, and then to apply for the bar, and figure out what it means to start looking for work and start thinking about his next move here.



*Rabbi Rachel presiding at the annual dinner-dance in May.*

***Where were you living prior to moving here?***

I was living in Boston proper. I've always lived in a city before this. [Before Boston] I was living in Baltimore, and before that, Jerusalem, and before that, Montreal, and in Toronto. So this is the first time I've lived in a town.

***And how is Collingswood?***

It's suiting us. It feels like home. And it feels like we are not too far at all from CBTBI and it's nice to get to know the greater South Jersey area.

***When you were living in Boston, did you feel like you were a part of that community? And do you feel the same now?***

*Continued on Page 4*

## Rabbi Rachel *Continued from Page 3*

I've always been a community person. In Boston I delved into the community. I was that mom who organized the mom block party, and got to know the other moms, and I have a feeling that in Collingswood it will be the same. I like connecting with community if you haven't noticed already. And I like doing that in my personal life as well as at synagogue.

***Is there anything about our congregation that surprised you at first?***

Well, last night [at the annual end-of-the-year dinner/dance], I was surprised at how funny people are. That was the most fun tribute dinner I've ever been to...I've been surprised at how willing people are to open up, and grow and change and learn. That has made my job here so much easier.

***What one thing about our building would you like to change if money were no object?***

Wow! I want a play set outside and a picnic set outside. I want to have meetings outside! We're sitting outside doing this interview. I would also love to have movable chairs in the sanctuary so that we could have a bigger circle, so when we sometimes have smaller Shabbos services we could make a circle and space wouldn't be a barrier.

***Do you have a favorite book or author?***

I really like N.K. Jemisin. She is a science fiction/fantasy writer, and she creates worlds. I also really like Neil Gaiman's work. He does a lot of science fiction/fantasy and he talks about gods, and I love reading about how different people imagine how gods can work in different universes.

***Tell me something about yourself that the congregation doesn't know.***

I love to climb on roofs. So if anyone has a roof they like to climb on, invite me over! I like getting different viewpoints, and it's a very practical and strange way of getting a different viewpoint.

***So, would you just hang out on a roof and read?***

Yes, or just have a good conversation. Or just think.

***And can you do that at your house in Collingswood?***

I have not tried to get on my roof yet.

***My last question: dogs or cats?***

Cats!

***Do you have any?***

I don't have a cat. We've been thinking about adopting a cat for far too long. We just need to get to it. Maybe by the time this goes to publication we will have one. Who knows?

.....  
*Update: Rabbi Rachel is looking into adopting two of the eight kittens currently being fostered by Pastor Kathy Morgan of Pitman. The kitties will be ready to go to their forever homes next month. If you are interested in adopting a feline friend, please call Kathy at (856) 889-6172.*

### Join Us for a Green Shabbat!

CBTBI will host a Green Shabbat on Friday, July 12 at 7 PM. Rabbi Rachel's D'var Torah will focus on Judaism and environmentalism, and members of the Green Committee will talk about new initiatives to make our synagogue more environmentally friendly. Wear something green to show your support!

For more information about the Go Green program, see Page 5.



### *The Shofar*

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## CBTBI Launches Green Initiative

CBTBI is going green! With Rabbi Rachel's assistance, we have created a new committee, the Green Team, to reduce waste and make CBTBI more environmentally friendly. Below are some of the projects we are working on. Check our website for updates.

Effective immediately, we are eliminating plastic water bottles. We will be using pitchers filled with tap water for all onegs and special events. The tap water at the synagogue is tested frequently and has been certified good to drink.

Also, effective immediately, we will be moving to reusable tablecloths and eliminating the use of plastic ones. Thanks to our generous members, we have received donated tablecloths and we have volunteers to take them home and wash them after events.

We will have the recycling and trash cans more accessible and clearly marked as to what can go in each. As per Washington Township, we can recycle #1 and #2 plastic, glass, metal cans, and clean paper or cardboard.

In addition to the recyclable items above, we will also be separating out compostable food scraps (anything that is not meat or dairy). We will have plastic buckets with covers to

collect compost. Some of our members will be taking the buckets home to use the compost in their gardens. If you would like to take home compost, please let us know. For now, anything that is not recyclable or compostable is trash.

Other initiatives we are looking into include purchasing compostable and/or recyclable paper goods and acquiring a soda stream to make our own soda on demand, rather than buying dozens of plastic bottles of soda, much of which ends up being poured down the drain anyway. And yes, we can make our own diet soda. We are looking forward to engaging our congregation in all of our environmental projects. We have established a Green Fund to help make all of this possible. If you are interested in making a donation, please make checks payable to

CBTBI and put "Green Fund" on the memo line. Thank you!

We welcome your questions, concerns, and ideas.

### The Green Team

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### Bob's Garage

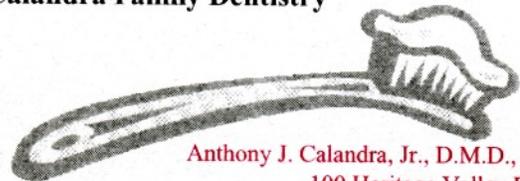


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Join us for the annual

# CBTBI Picnic

Sunday, August 25

11 AM to 3 PM

at Greenwood Park Bells Lake

50 Bells Lake Drive, Blackwood



Spend the day noshing, swimming, and socializing  
with your CBTBI friends!

This event is open to synagogue members as well as non-members  
who are interested in becoming part of our CBTBI family.

Those bringing picnic items need to arrive at 11 AM. A fee of \$6/person  
includes entrance to the club, barbecue, and access to the lake and pool.  
There is no charge for children under 4. The picnic ends at 3 PM but all are  
invited to stay at the club until closing (8 PM).

**Look for an Evite to RSVP and to sign up for items to bring.**

Be prepared to have fun!

