



June 22, 2020
30 Sivan, 5780
Rosh Chodesh Tammuz

Dear Friends,

During this time of continued global pandemic and as mentioned during Rabbi Weinberg's comments during the Congregational Meeting on June 3rd, the leadership of TBI acknowledge that we need to continue to communicate with our community regularly about the current status as it relates to COVID-19. To that point, we want to apprise you of the philosophical approach of the TBI leadership team with respect to Temple matters and to provide an update regarding ongoing **congregational activities** and **communication**.

Philosophical approach

As we imagine what activity for our congregation might look like in months to come, we are guided by the following Jewish Values:

- ***Pikuach nefesh* – saving life.** We will prioritize the safety of staff and congregants, and the safety of those most vulnerable to infection, as well as the general public health, in accordance with this core Jewish value.
- ***B'tzelem Elohim* - each person is created in the image of the Divine.** No single person is any more or less valued than any other.
- ***Hora'at sha'ah* - emergent moments call for unique responses.** We will continue to explore online and virtual connectivity as a primary means of convening our communities, as well as implement creative solutions to never-before-experienced challenges.
- ***Lo titein michshol* - do not place a stumbling block.** We will not do anything that knowingly or willfully puts anyone in our midst at unnecessary risk.
- ***Kol Yisrael arevim zeh l'zeh* – We are all responsible for one another.** This notion of communal responsibility sits at the heart of everything we do, and we will strive to act in accordance with this value always.

Protecting the health of all our members, and especially of our most vulnerable members, and doing our part as citizens to help minimize further spread of COVID-19 are among our highest priorities during this time. **As of this writing it seems most likely that we will need to continue operating primarily on-line for the foreseeable future, and so we are proceeding to plan that way.** We plan on convening in person in small groups only for funerals, weddings, and other life-cycle ceremonies, provided that there are appropriate PPE, physical distancing protocols, and other public health

considerations in place. We are in the process of developing those health and safety protocols for the use of our building in consultation with the Village of Skokie Department of Health. We want you to know that even when restrictions might be lessened and we are legally permitted to gather in slightly larger numbers, our leadership may choose not to do so for health and safety reasons. Please watch for regular eblast notices which will update you about both regular and special programming that we are offering to help keep us all connected to each other and to continue living vibrant Jewish lives as a congregational community.

With our commitment to safety comes an awareness of a real sense of loss. There are things that we used to do that we will not be able to do in the same way. And yet, that loss is accompanied by new challenges and new opportunities.

It now seems very likely that we will not be able to gather in person for the High Holy Days in the way that we have in past years. But rest assured that we will celebrate Rosh Hashana and we will observe Yom Kippur in new, exciting, and inspiring ways. Likewise, Sukkot and Simchat Torah will provide us with a new opportunity to celebrate in a unique way. Even as we continue to learn ways to enhance our collective celebration of Shabbat – so we will strive to be nimble and we will commit to stay connected throughout the coming year.

Communication

Because so much is unknown and subject to change, this year we will not be publishing a paper year-long calendar of events. Instead, we will publish a month to month calendar with each Temple Bulletin. You will receive a July bulletin (usually we combine June and July) that will include a calendar for July and August; and you will receive an August Bulletin that will include a calendar for August and September, and so on throughout the year. Our online calendars (on our website www.tbiskokie.org, and on ShulCloud) will include holidays, b'nai mitzvah and other "fixed" events for the entire year and will be regularly updated with information as to the format of those events and additional events that we are able to add into the calendar, including additional learning opportunities.

Our Temple office is continuing to function and is regularly staffed. We ask that any Temple business that you need to conduct in person be done by appointment only. You may call the Temple office during regular business hours (M-Th 9:00am – 5:00pm, F 9:00 am – 3:00pm) to arrange an appointment. To protect the safety of our staff, they are physically in the office on a rotating basis and working from home the rest of the time. If you need to meet with a particular member of the office staff be sure to specify that when scheduling an appointment. When you do enter the building, you are required to wear a mask.

Congregational Activity

During the months of May and June our congregation has continued to be incredibly busy, albeit outside of our building and outside of our usual way of doing things:

- Our Kabbalat Shabbat and Shabbat morning worship services, on the Zoom platform and FaceBook Live format, are continuing to attract more than 100 households.
- We have continual online learning including Shabbat morning Torah study, Lori's Friday lunch and learn sessions, Wednesday morning Sisterhood study with Rabbi, Sisterhood book club, Stories of Music Summer Series on Monday evenings with Marla Aviva Bentley, Rabbi Weinberg's Summer Study Series on Tuesday evenings, and various special events. Much of that learning will continue into the summer.
- The Zoom format has allowed us to add once a month *Havdalah* to our service offerings.
- The Temple Board, Sisterhood and Brotherhood Boards and many other Temple committees are continuing to do the work of the congregation via Zoom.
- Teams of volunteers have been in phone and/or email contact with every member of the congregation and we continue to follow up and be of help and support wherever and whenever possible.
- Through Zoom's webinar feature we held an incredibly successful Spring Gala online with amazing homegrown TBI talent.
- Also via Zoom webinar we conducted our congregation's business at the annual congregational meeting.

Please also watch your email for information about the following upcoming special programmatic events in the life of our congregation:

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| • Mondays in June/July | Stories of Songs: Adult Education with Marla |
| • Tuesdays in June/July | Together and Apart: Adult Education with Rabbi Weinberg |
| • Fridays in June/July | Lunch N' Learn with Lori |
| • Wed. July 29 | Erev Tisha B'Av observance |

Community and Support

We want to be able to be supportive to our members during difficult times, but we can only do so if we know about a difficult situation. So, if you are "caught in the crunch" and are having difficulty meeting your TBI financial commitment, please contact one of our financial officers, Michelle Agrest or Adam Stewart, to discuss your situation. Of course, all such conversations are strictly confidential. Our congregation is also ready to help you with emotional and spiritual support.

As always, Rabbi Weinberg is available via phone, text, email, or FaceTime for pastoral needs. In the event of a death or other emergency, or if you need financial assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Rabbi Weinberg by cell phone: 847-275-6759 or at home: 847-673-1987 or by email: rabbi@tbiskokie.org. You may also reach our congregation's President, Helene Levine, by email at skokie31@comcast.net or by cell phone at 224-628-0444

We also urge all of you (and especially those most vulnerable to the virus) to do the following:

- Continue to practice "physical distancing" and good hygiene.
- Call your doctor and avoid in-person contacts with others if you are ill or believe you may have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus.

- Watch for updates on COVID-19 from the [Centers for Disease Control](#), [the Village of Skokie](#), and other responsible authorities.

Lastly, please know that while this year is different than any other year of our long and proud history, we are also already hard at work making plans for the coming year of celebration and transition. More information will follow.

We continue to pray for the health and welfare of all our members and all their loved ones and our greater community. May God protect all of us during this difficult time.

Shalom,

Helene Levine, President

Neal Gussis, President Elect

Rabbi Michael A. Weinberg

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