



חזק חזק ונתחזק

Together

MAY WE BE **STRENGTHENED**

September 2020 Board Meeting In Brief

Temple Beth El's Board of Directors met on Tuesday, September 8. Kate and Rabbi gave an update on High Holiday planning (including website, Zoom link distribution, Rabbi Shoshana) as well as the edible garden that is being installed near the courtyard. Josh Filler gave a financial update (things are still on track). The majority of the meeting was spent discussing the Board making a statement on racial justice. Please find those detailed notes included in the minutes.

[Click Here to View Minutes](#)

TBE Statement on Racial Justice

Temple Beth El Joins More Than 600 Jewish Organizations in Affirming, Unequivocally, Black Lives Matter

*"Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."
Amos (5:24)*

More than 600 Jewish denominations, organization, and synagogues, including the Rabbinical Assembly, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and the Anti-Defamation League, recently signed on to a joint letter stating, "unequivocally, Black lives matter." These organizations, representing more than half of America's Jewish population, took out a full-page ad in the New York Times on Friday, August 26, to share its letter, a symbolic and well-timed sounding of the shofar.

On September 8, 2020, by a majority vote, the Board of Directors of Temple Beth El joined our fellow Jewish organizations in recognizing that there can be no neutrality on racism and stating unequivocally: Black lives matter. The joint statement, in part, reads:

"We know that freedom and safety for any of us depends on the freedom and safety of all of us. When Jewish people join together with our neighbors across racial and religious differences, as we have in the past, we can protect each other and build the future of freedom and safety we all deserve. Jewish tradition teaches us that justice is not something that will be bestowed upon us, it is something that we need to pursue, and that the pursuit is itself sacred work. We'll show up for each other every time one of us is targeted because of our differences and reject any effort to use fear to divide us against each other."

While we understand that not all members of Temple Beth El may agree with this public affirmation, the majority of the board of directors agree that not to act in this way would be an abrogation of our responsibility to pursue and speak for justice as leaders of a prominent Jewish organization in Maine.

Accordingly, Temple Beth El recognizes racism as a Jewish religious issue. Temple Beth El recognizes this public affirmation as a form of *chesed*, an act of love. Such an act speaks to shouldering the burden with "the other," as many have done for us before and may be called upon to do so again.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, speaking on *Religion and Race* in 1963, argued that our redeeming quality as humans lies in our ability to sense a kinship with all humans. In the spirit of *teshuvah*, for a society-wide process of repentance and change, Heschel stated: "We have failed to use the avenues open to us to educate the hearts and minds of men, to identify ourselves with those who are underprivileged. But repentance is more than contrition and remorse for sins, for harms done. Repentance means a new insight, a new spirit. It also means a course of action."

As a first course of action, Temple Beth El intends to sponsor several seminars in the coming year that will engage the board and congregational members in conversations surrounding: Torah and racism; the threat that white supremacy poses to Jews and non-Jews, alike; Jewish values in the contemporary world; and the history of Jews in social justice movements. The seminars will be planned and executed by a committee of the board in concert with TBE staff.

If you have any questions or comments about the above statement, please feel free to contact Jon Gelchinsky (president@tbemaine.org), Eli Mellen (eli.mellen@gmail.com), Josh Rosen (jrosen.me@gmail.com), or any other representative of TBE's Board of Directors.

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