

Temple Israel of Highlands County
1305 Temple Israel Drive
Sebring, Florida 33870
863-382-7744 *January 2026 / 5786*



Temple Israel's Web Page www.templeisraelofhcfl.org

Temple Israel is a Reform Temple that promotes the enduring and fundamental principles of Judaism.

Through prayer, study and friendship we strive to enrich our lives and insure Jewish continuity in Highlands County.



Congregational Board

Officers:

President:

Julia Ruden

Vice President:

Sara Rosenbaum

Treasurer:

Cathy Blumenthal

Secretary:

Mary Ann Romer

Trustees:

Phyllis Behrens

Karen DelValle

Lois Lewis

Seanna Makepeace

Pamela Paralikis

Rolph Rosenberg

Donna Ruden

Herb Weiss

Alan Wildstein

Officiating Cantor:

Cantor Riselle Bain

voiceofgladness@aol.com

Cell: 813-600-8013

*American Conference of Cantors

Clergy Committed to Judaism and

Jewish Music

Rabbi Emerita:

Lorraine Rudenberg

Newsletter Staff:

Mary Ann Romer



On December 31st, we will be celebrating the beginning of the New Year 2026 in our Gregorian calendar. I found myself wondering what is the difference for us Jews between celebrating the secular New Year and our Spiritual New Year – Rosh Hashanah? I also asked myself, “What is in store for us at Temple Israel in this New Year?”

The secular new year, which follows the modern Gregorian calendar, is celebrated on the first day of January. [Rosh HaShanah](#), literally meaning the “head” of the year, follows the Hebrew calendar, a lunar-solar calendar. Its celebration begins on the first day of the Hebrew month of [Tishrei](#) (which usually falls in September or October).

Our secular New Year’s Eve celebration will be filled with merriment, feasting, fireworks, and making resolutions.

Our Rosh HaShanah holy day has a more serious and solemn tone. The noise for us is the blowing of the [shofar](#) in temple to mark the beginning of the Ten Days of Awe, that period of soul-searching reflection which concludes on [Yom Kippur](#), our Day of Atonement, and a day of fasting (maybe!). The Talmud teaches that God determines who will live and who will die in the year to come on Yom Kippur. May we all live and be healthy.

On December 31st, we will say to each other “Happy New Year!” On Rosh HaShanah, we greet one another with "Shanah tovah" (a good year) or "Shana tovah umetukah" (a good and sweet year). Then we add the greeting from Rosh HaShanah through Yom Kippur, "g'mar chatimah tovah", “May you have a good final sealing in the Book of Life.”



How many of us know the words to the popular secular New Year's Eve song is "Auld Lang Syne," based on a poem written in 1788 by the national poet of Scotland, Robert Burns? Some of us will be singing it at the stroke of midnight to bid farewell to the old year.

Perhaps the most recognizable prayer melody sung in synagogues on Rosh HaShanah is "Avinu Malkeinu," a plea to God for compassion, forgiveness, and blessing. On the eve of Yom Kippur, we sing "Kol Nidrei".

Whether we talk about New Year's resolutions or t'shuvah, returning to the path of righteousness, we can all benefit from taking a pause to consider where we have been in our lives, where we want to go, and how we plan to get from here to there.

At Temple Israel, we will continue to build the warmth of community and friendship as we celebrate, Shabbat, enjoy a yearly concert, laugh ourselves silly at Purim, gather together for Passover, Yom Hashoah and Yom Haatzmaut. Never a dull moment always filled with goodness and caring.

Happy New Year to one and all!

Cantor Riselle Bain





Message From the President

Dear Friends and Family;

Julia Ruden

We had the BEST Hanukkah service and Hanukkah party yet!

Thanks, xoxoxo Cantor Riselle for bringing Staci Naroditsky's musically talented soul to us again in order to make our traditional Hanukkah services supported with brilliant guitar accompaniment! Thanks to all who so selflessly give of themselves during the liturgy. OUR Temple works so well because of ALL OF YOU!

Thankxoxoxox Seanna Makepeace for installing the sound and video system that are working so well and make our online services and in-person services much better. We even sang our Hannukah songs from the new electronic monitors on the walls . How I **Love** progress!! Everyone was singing and looking forward instead of into the books.

Thankxoxoxox Donna Ruden and Rolph & George Rosenberg for setting up the outdoor Hanukkah from Lois Lewis... just gorgeous with the candles and blue lights.

THE FOOD....Thankxoxoxox so much to Susie and Jay Luck for all you brought for the kids and the yummy latkes, and those cupcakes, **OMG!**, Sara Rosenbaum and Emma Sherwood, Cathy Blumenthal for latkes, Donna Ruden those Israeli sufganiyot donuts and Barbara Anis the gluten free brownies were amazing!! Seanna your Challah is always yummy!

Thankxoxoxox to our security guard Richard Robinson for keeping us safe! You give me peace of mind during services.

The hope always lives for World PEACE, Tikkun Olam!
Continued Prayers Mi Shebeirach for all who are recovering and healing!
May we continue to go from strength to strength!
Be thankful for everything, everyone, everyday – I am!!

Wishes for a Healthier, Happier, Safer 2026 for everyone!!
PLEASE MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS FOR OUR ANNUAL CONCERT ON FEBRUARY 15, 2026 AT 3:30PM BY CONTACTING MARY ANN ROMER
Thankxoxoxox you ALL for ALL you Doooooooo!!

Love Always, Julie

TEMPLE ISRAEL OF HIGHLANDS COUNTY
PRESENTS THE ANNUAL CONCERT
“SONGS FROM THE HEART”
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2026 AT 3:30PM
TICKET DONATIONS \$20 per person
Please contact: Mary Ann Romer
matromer@aol.com
352-442-0830



Riselle Bain
Cantor, Religious Leader
Temple Israel of Highlands County



Joy Katzen-Guthrie
Accompanist, Cantorial Soloist, Composer
Temple Ahavat Shalom, Palm Harbor



Janet Nagourney
Cantorial Soloist, Past President
Kol HaNeshama, Sarasota



Kei Sulhi
Cantorial Soloist, Opera singer
Temple Beth Israel, Longboat Key

History of our Czechoslovakian Holocaust Torah

At Temple Israel of Highlands County in Sebring, we are privileged and honored to be guardians of Czech Memorial Scroll #409. It was written in 1890. The tragedy of this extraordinary scroll is that it is the only surviving relic of the Prostejov Jewish community whose members were deported and exterminated in the Nazi death camps during World War II. Every time we read from our Torah #409, we honor the lost lives of our extended mishpacha – our extended Jewish family who lived in Prostejov until the Holocaust wiped them out.

What is the history of our precious Holocaust Torah. Our Temple Israel Torah scroll #409 comes from the town of Prostejov which is right over the border from Vienna in the Czech Republic. This scroll and others like it with its biblical teachings, was used by Jewish communities to guide their conduct and values. It is one of 1564 scrolls which were gathered into an unused synagogue in Prague after World War II. Twenty years later the Communists, who had taken over Czechoslovakia, needing hard cash, sold the scrolls to an art dealer in London who worked with a rabbi to repair them.

What was Prostejov like for the Jews who lived there before it was decimated by the Germans?

Indeed, Prostejov was for centuries home to one of the most significant Jewish communities in the eastern part of the country known as Moravia. The Jewish philosopher Edmund Husserl was born here, and his relatives were buried at the town's Jewish cemetery, as were family members of celebrated author Stefan Zweig.

History of our Czechoslovakian Holocaust Torah, Cont.

The local Jews used the cemetery from 1801 until the beginning of the 20th century. Before the Nazis took over, the Jewish community rejected proposals from City Hall to sell the site. After the transport to the Terezin concentration camp of nearly all the town's 1,442 local Jews, as well as 250 others who came as refugees, the Jewish graveyard was doomed to destruction. Only some 200 of those sent to Nazi camps survived the Holocaust, and most of them left the country to live in Israel and elsewhere. Today, there are less than a dozen Jews living in Prostejov.

Confronting the dark legacy of the Holocaust, in 2015, a small team of researchers began working to reassemble the Jewish cemetery in the eastern city of Protsjov that was destroyed during the Nazi occupation. The Nazi death machine killed 6 million Jews in the Holocaust, wiping out a third of world Jewry - and didn't even let those already dead rest in peace.

The Once Lost Jewish Graveyard in Prostejov, Czech Republic, was finally being reassembled. A small team of researchers began looking for 1,924 tombstones that were destroyed by the Nazis circa 1943.



Cantor Bain reading from the Prostejov Torah

History of our Czechoslovakian Holocaust Torah, Cont.

The renovation project was spearheaded by New York philanthropist Louis Kestenbaum (whose father Rabbi Zvi Kestenbaum was active in lobbying for the creation of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad) and Tomas Jelinek who led the search for "Prostojov's lost graveyard." Louis Kestenbaum first drew attention to the cemetery when he was looking for the tomb of the Prostojov Rabbi Zvi Horowitz, who died in 1816.

"His (Rabbi Horowitz's) writings are still revered in Jewish communities throughout the world," Kestenbaum told The Associated Press by email. "For Rabbi Horowitz and other great rabbis from the region, Prostojov was known as a major seat of Jewish learning and culture. This makes the cemetery an important monument in both Jewish and Czech history."

Among the project's earliest discoveries is of a Jewish tombstone that was repurposed and used as a hen house doormat in the small village of Žešov. Turned upside down and after a bit of cleaning, the tombstone found at the entrance to the henhouse revealed a Hebrew inscription that was hidden for decades. Bearing the name Juli Rosenthal, it reads: "Here lies a modest and righteous woman, Mrs. Yittel, the wife of our dear teacher Mr. Leib Rosenthal, may he be long alive, who passed away 76 years old."

Another discovery was a whole backyard of a house in Prostojov that was paved with some 50 large tombstone blocs. One Prostojov resident, Anna Holestova, said she moved to her grandmother's home 25 years ago, and was told that her grandfather brought the stones there since they were given out for free during the war.

Using archival material from the Jewish Museum in Prague, the team of tombstone trackers were able to attach identities to some of the stones found. All 1,924 tombstones were desecrated, likely in 1943, and no documents were available to clarify their fate.

History of our Czechoslovakian Holocaust Torah, Cont.

The search for a site that disappeared such a long time ago in the wartime chaos looked like mission impossible at the beginning, said Tomas Jelinek. "At the start, we had no clue, experts knew nothing," he said. "But we thought that it was impossible for such a big number of stones, and some of them were quite big, to completely evaporate without a trace."

That hunch was proven right after they published an announcement about the project in a City Hall newspaper. The team didn't have to wait long for responses from people with information about stones they had in their homes, or tips on where they could be found.

Preserved plans and details of the cemetery, including the inscriptions stored at the archive of Prague's Jewish Museum, make it possible to identify the people they belonged to. Their living relatives now have an unexpected chance to rediscover their family past - previously considered lost forever.

Our Sefer Torah #409 is a permanent memorial to those martyrs – their lives and their legacy were blotted out, just because they were Jewish. Our Torah is filled with their blessed memories.



Cantor Bain reading the Torah



Cantor Bain and Julie Ruden holding the Torah and the certification at the honoring of the Torah at the Memorial Scroll Trust ceremony



Announcements

JANUARY 2026 / 5786



January Onegs are sponsored by:

January 9, 2026 – The Board
January 23, 2026 – The Board

Challah, wine, decaf coffee & fruit are the basics for our onegs. If you would like to sponsor an Oneg contact Karen del Valle 863-260-0325



Happy Anniversary

Jay & Rebecca Clarke	1/14
George & Pearl Zelma	1/18
Judy Albin & Clint Wallbank	1/24
Amy Rose & Mel David	1/24

LUNCH BUNCH

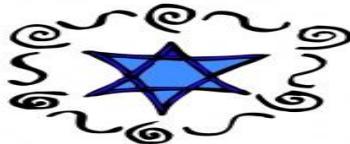
The next
Ladies Lunch Bunch Group
Monday, January 19, 2026
at 12:15PM

Thai House Restaurant
3750 US Hwy 27N
Sebring, FL 33870

Contact Renee Tepper
863-414-8811 or
reneetepper@gmail.com
and let her know you'll be there.

תודה רבה - Thank You **Alan Wildstein** for your continued and generous support for Alan Jay Automotive for our transportation to and from Services! And for ALL YOU Dooo!

Please Contact Cantor Riselle Bain 813-600-8013 if you need assistance to get to services.



We Remember



January Yahrzeits ** Memorial Plaque in our Shul

Miriam E. Amster **	Freda Moscowitz
Elliot Berkowitz **	Milton M. Myers **
Louis Biener	Gertrude Pearl
Mary D. Blumenthal **	Bella Romer
Mariah H. Brenner **	Calman Rosen **
Sam Chinsky	PFC Seymour C. Rosen **
Irving Dorfman	Max Rosenbaum **
Samuel Fishman	Frank Roth
Nora Good **	Simon Ruden
Nathan Gottlieb **	Nate Sadowsky
Jordon Greenberg **	Arthur Schwartz
Ralph Greenberg **	Ida Schwartz
Ralph Jaret	Esther Sewelson
Olivia Johnson	David Sheldon
Marc Randall Kahn	Jennifer Aimee Sherr **
Jacob Kamen	Elmer D. Spence
Bernard Krasner **	Joan Spero
Jack Kravitz**	Nettie Spero
David Levy	Sarah Vinik
Jennie Liss	Charles Wasoff
Judy Mass	Olivia Wortman
Michel Miller **	Gladys Zenchoff



We Remember

YAHRZEIT DONATIONS



Given By:

Cathy Blumenthal
 Herb Moscowitz
 Julie Ruden
 Jill Liebeck
 Mary Ann Romer
 Jay & Susie Luck
 Sara Rosenbaum
 Rolph Rosenberg
 Gloria Soltes
 Norman & Anna Spero
 Ron & Renee Tepper
 Norman & Anna Spero
 Andrew Haines

In Memory Of:

Mary Blumenthal
 Frieda Moscowitz
 Simon Ruden
 Gertrude Pearl
 Bella Romer
 Judy Mass, David Sheldon
 Max Rosenbaum
 Narola & Fritz Rosenberg
 Frank Roth
 Joan & Nettie Spero
 Ida Mazen
 Joan & Nettie Spero
 Mary Dell Mann & Edward Haines



To plant a tree, email your information of whom
 you're honoring/remembering to
jruden18@gmail.com.

Mail check (\$18.00/tree) to the Temple.
 Write "Tree" in the memo line on check.



Mrs. Blumie's Porcelain Doll Studio

207 N. Ridgewood Dr.
 Sebring, FL 33870

863-402-9190

BOARD CERTIFIED



LAKE PLACID EYE CLINIC
 GARY J. PEARCE, M.D.
 EYE PHYSICIAN & SURGEON

211 US 27 South
 Lake Placid, FL 33852
 (863) 465-1880

Don Elwell

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING
 & PUBLIC RELATIONS
 401 U.S. Hwy 27 S. Sebring, FL 33870
 Email: don.elwell@ALANJAY.COM
 Phone (863) 314-5334

ALAN JAY
 Automotive Network

Board of County Commissioners
 COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 2
 600 S. Commerce Ave. Sebring, FL 33870
 Email: elwell@hcbcc.net Phone: (863) 402-6835
 Cell: (863) 381 - 5622



Stephenson-Nelson Funeral Home & Crematory



Craig M. Nelson
 Licensed Funeral Director

CARDS SENT
(All donations go to Temple Israel.)



To send a birthday, anniversary, get well, sympathy or **mazel tov** card contact Mary Ann Romer at matromer@aol.com.

Write "Temple card" in the email subject box.

Send your minimum \$5.00 donation to temple.

Get Well Greeting Cards Sent

By: *Congregation, Board of Directors & Trustees, Cantor Riselle Bain*

To: Izzy Martin

Donation Thank You Cards Sent

By: *Congregation, Board of Directors & Trustees, Cantor Riselle Bain*

To: Pastor Drew Willard for his Chanukah donation

Condolence Card Sent

By: *Congregation, Board of Directors & Trustees, Cantor Riselle Bain*

To: Michelle Herchick on the passing of her father Howard Hoffman

Mazel Tov Greeting Card Sent

By: *Congregation, Board of Directors & Trustees, Cantor Riselle Bain*

To: Max Sherwood on receiving his Paramedic credentials for the

Highlands County Fire Department;

Bruce Behrens on receiving a certificate of appreciation for his
10 years of volunteering on the Planning and Zoning Boards for the
City of Sebring, Florida

Cantor Bain's Schedule:



Future Erev Shabbat Services

6:30 PM (subject to change)

<https://www.facebook.com/662042600572611/live/>

There is usually a Judaism class at 10:30AM on the Saturday morning after the Friday night service. Come join us at 10AM breakfast and learning.

Friday 1/9/26 -- Torah Portion: Sh'mot

Friday 1/23/26 -- Torah Portion: Bo

Friday 2/6/26 – Torah Portion: Yitro (Revelation at Sinai)

Friday 2/20/26 – Torah Portion: T'rumah

Friday 3/6/26 – **Purim The Scroll of Esther** Torah Portion: Ki Tisa

Friday 3/20/26 – Torah Portion: Vayikra

Passover Seder Wednesday April 1 (first night)

Friday 4/17/26 **Yom Ha Shoah/Yom Ha Atzmaut**
Torah Portion: Tazria/Metzora

Friday 5/1/26 – Torah Portion: Emor

Friday 5/15/26 – **Shavuot** (actual day 5/21-5/23) Torah Portion: Bamidbar