



June 2022

☆ Today...and for Generations ☆

Volume XXXVII, Issue 6



Many of us have found daily distraction in the newest craze — Wordle puzzles. Wordle is a word guessing game created last fall by a Brooklyn software engineer Josh Wardle.

Even if we don't play, our social media feeds are full of other people's daily attempts, depicting a grid of five boxes across, six rows in length, comprised of green, yellow or gray boxes.

Wordle challenges players to guess a five-letter word, giving clues as to letters and placement in six tries. The game has gone viral and has created a global community of players.

The grid initially reminded me of the breastplate of the *Kohan Gadol*, the High Priest in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. The Biblical Priest wore the *Choshen Mishpat*, the breastplate of decision. It was made of twelve precious stones, lined up in four rows, with each stone inscribed with one of the names of the tribes of Israel.

Maimonides, the 12th century biblical commentator explained that when the High Priest had a difficult decision, he would ask God, and the Hebrew letters on the stones of the breastplate would light up with an answer. The only problem is that it was up to the High Priest to unscramble the letters accurately.

I am unsure whether the High Priest was limited to six tries, but sometimes mistakes were made. An 18th-century commentator, the *Vilna Gaon*, ex-



plained the dangers of word puzzles.

The *Gaon* suggested that Eli, the High Priest, lost the first game of Wordle in the Book of Samuel. Once, Eli found the pious and barren Hannah silently mouthing prayers to God at the tabernacle. Unsure what to make of the muttering woman, Eli asked his divine breastplate what to do. The letters ה כ. ה ש. (shin, kaf, resh, hey) lit up.

Eli unscrambled these letters to spell the word: שכרה *shikorah*, "drunk," so he threw Hannah out of the tabernacle. But, according to the *Vilna Gaon*, Eli should have arranged the letters to spell the word כשרה, which could either mean *k'sherah*, "kosher," or *ke-Sarah*, "like Sarah."

Indeed, Hannah was like Sarah, a matriarch in Israel who prayed to God and received the answer to her prayer — a son Samuel, who would ul-

timately replace Eli as High Priest and an early Prophet in Israel. So, Hannah was the ultimate winner.

So, may we learn that the actual puzzles in our lives require more than quick answers and hasty assumptions. Social media gives us only brief sound bites, a few attempts, and 280 character limits. Our day's genuine dilemmas require careful examination of all sides and a careful weighing of data on all sides before reaching hasty conclusions and uninformed solutions.

But while we wrestle with the serious issues of our day, I hope this summer affords us time to relax, successful games of Wordle, and the opportunity to enjoy being a global community of players.

Shalom,
Rabbi Judy Chessin

We Couldn't Do It Without You!

Temple Beth Or could not accomplish anything without teamwork. Thanks to every contribution of prayer, time and funds, we can fulfill our mission of being a warm, welcoming place for ALL.

Financial Donations

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By: Joan and Peter H. Wells

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Temple's many funds provide a meaningful way to mark the life cycle events we all experience. From a birth to a graduation, from the recovery from an illness to a promotion or marriage, we all experience joy and sadness throughout our lives. To express your caring and concern, please send your tribute card and minimum \$10 donation to the Temple office. All donations are tax deductible.

Finding My Moment



About twenty-eight months ago, in late February 2020, I was sitting in the living room of a classmate's house, reminiscing about the five years we had spent at Hebrew Union College and planning our ordination ceremony. We meandered our way through the service for about an hour, creating a meaningful experience for ourselves and those who would be with us to celebrate. We did as much as we could. As we began wrapping up, I said to my classmates, "I think we are ignoring the elephant in the room; I hear more and more about this new covid thing going around. What happens if we can't be at Plum Street Temple? What happens if we can't be together?"

The room fell quiet for a few moments as we realized for the first time in the school's history, ordination, the lights of Plum Street Temple, our *Shabbat* Service, which we had been working towards for five years, could be canceled.

That was the moment that I realized our world was about to change. Two weeks later, schools went virtual, jobs were furloughed, and store shelves were empty. Our society was grappling with a pandemic that we knew very little about. We were in a state of panic. We were lost.

In reality, ordination going virtual was the least of our concerns. I was more worried about the safety of those I love. Rachel, my wife, spent days in the hospital caring for patients; my sister, Annie, delivered groceries to people who couldn't shop for themselves because of the risk of going into a store. Grandparents in nursing homes were



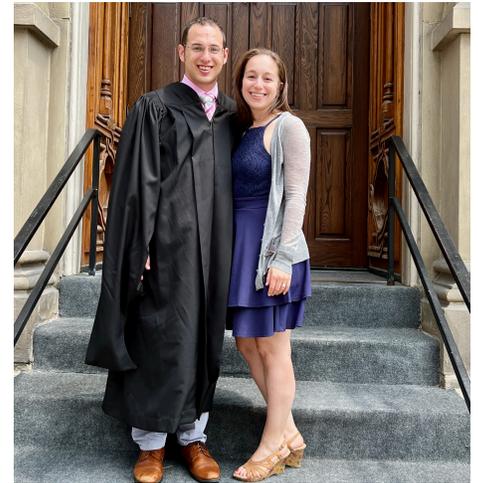
*Provost Rabbi Andrea Weiss, Ph.D., Myself
This is called the "laying of the hands"
moment*

isolated in small rooms. Each of us has stories of those we love who we worried about, and some of us even dealt with the death of a loved one passing away during these past years, grieving in loneliness.

Covid became a part of our lives in ways we never imagined. Ordination was a fleeting thought. So when my classmates asked me to represent the Cincinnati campus in a cross-campus Covid task force, while I was honored to take on the role, I wasn't afraid to say there are more pressing issues we should deal with first.

In these meetings, I learned of the HUC's acceptable levels of risk, and I worked diligently to craft an online "consecration" program of which we could all be proud. So when May 23rd, 2020, came around, my classmates and I gathered on Zoom with our families, friends, teachers, and guests and became rabbis. I became a rabbi, sitting next to Rachel in a seven by fourteen-foot room which had become my home office.

My classmates and I promised each other when it is safe to do so, we would have our moment at Plum



*Myself and Rachel (Dr. Rachel Podell Azriel)
standing on the steps of the Plum Street
Temple*

Street Temple, before the open Ark, below the hundreds of lights that illuminate the historical and holy building Isaac Meyer Wise once preached.

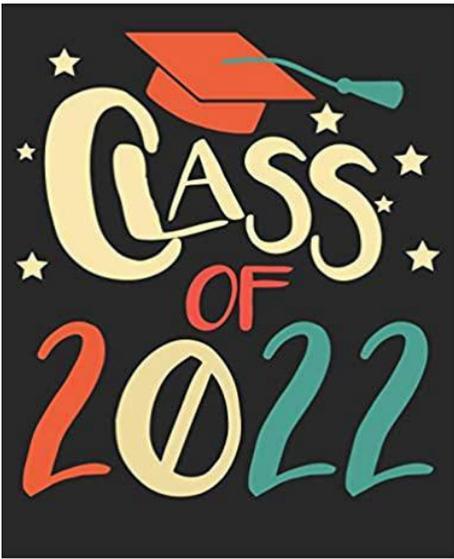
Two years later, on May 21st, 2022, my classmates and I gathered together, coming in from near and far, to have our moment.

The pandemic took so much from us. To take a little back for ourselves is a powerful experience. I will never forget my office on Bramble Avenue and where I stood in front of the open Ark at Plum Street Temple.

Pandemic stole so much from us; some of it can never be returned. I feel the loss of these past years, and I grieve with each community member. I pray that for every moment of loss, an equally powerful moment of healing is found. Maybe not today, perhaps not next month, perhaps not even in the next year or decade, but hopefully, healing will come.

Hazak, Hazak, V'nithazek. From Strength to Strength, may each of us be strengthened.

B'shalom,
Rabbi Benjamin G. Azriel



CONGRATULATIONS to our GRADUATES!!



Benjamin E. Char

Benjamin E. Char, son of David and Deborah Char; grandson of Tony Char of Dayton Ohio and Mark Chesler of Ann Arbor, Michigan; Benjamin graduated Cum Laude from Kettering Fairmont High School where he participated in the marching band, basketball, men's choir, symphonic chorale, a capella group Fusion, and Track. Benjamin lettered two years in track, was twice voted "outstanding Tenor I" by his peers in Men's Choir, and was also a scholar athlete. Benjamin will be attending Capital University in Columbus, where he has been recruited to run on their track team, while majoring in Zoology and Business. We all look forward to his next adventures!



Gabriel De La Cruz

Gabriel De La Cruz graduated from Lakota East High School on May 20. He will attend Bowling Green State University to study secondary education and theater.



Bryce Lindsay

Bryce graduated from the University of Vermont with a major in Anthropology and a minor in Political Science.



Brandon Long

Centerville High School class of 2022. He will attend the University of Cincinnati majoring in Social Work.



Jacob Westerkamp

Jacob Westerkamp graduated Magna Cum Laude in Computer Engineering from Ohio Northern University in Ada, Ohio, where he also played center back on the Men's Soccer team. He is currently deciding between graduate school and professional employment. Jacob's proud family includes his parents, John and Lori, and his sister, Rachel.

Adult Education

Chai Mitzvah June 2nd at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom

In appreciation for generous underwriting by Rabbi Judy Chessin, Temple Beth Or's Adult Education Committee (AEC) is delighted to announce the formation of a new *Chai Mitzvah* group. Because Temple Beth Or has hosted previous *Chai Mitzvah* groups, the national *Chai Mitzvah* organization is waiving the cost of materials to individuals who join the group. This means that you, personally, will pay nothing for materials.

We invite you to register online and join us for *Chai Mitzvah* – a personal Jewish journey to share with friends. *Chai Mitzvah* has groups in 39 states and 6 countries.



Register & Learn More:

<https://templebethor.com/chai-mitzvah/>

Building a Bridge: Improving Black/Jewish Relations

What values, hopes, and challenges do Jews and Blacks share? What divides us, and why? Cheryl Lynn Greenberg is a historian who has studied American Black/Jewish relations for years. Her mission now is to foster improved Jewish/Black community and personal relations by educating Jews about the past, both to increase understanding of “the other” and to stimulate self-reflection and action. Greenberg’s book, *Troubling the Waters*, (Princeton University Press) traces the history of the “golden era” of Black-Jewish political relations in the 1940’s-1960’s—how it started, what helped it grow, how and why it fell apart.

At this talk, aimed to a Jewish audience, Greenberg will discuss how the past of Jewish/Black relationships resonates in America now. The talk will be followed by a Q-and-A session with the author as well as a chance for interested participants to discuss their next steps in improving local Black-Jewish interactions.

Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, PhD, is the Paul E. Raether Distinguished Professor of History at Trinity College in Hartford, CT, where she teaches African American history, race and ethnicity, and twentieth-century U.S. history. She has presented academic talks in Finland, China, and Germany, given community lectures on Black/Jewish relations across the US, and taught history courses at Connecticut’s Cheshire Correctional Institute.

**Zoom talk and conversation with Dr. Cheryl Greenberg
Tuesday, June 21, 2022; 7:00 p.m.**

Sponsors: Temple Beth Or AEC and Dayton JCRC

Register: <https://templebethor.com/adult-education/>

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PLEASE JOIN US FOR AN OPEN HOUSE ON
SATURDAY, JUNE 18TH FROM 4-9 P.M.

Drinks and appetizers provided

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Volunteer for Lay-led Services!

Please contact Rabbi Judy Chessin if you are interested in hosting a lay-led *Shabbat* service this summer.

Email: rabbichessin@templebethor.com

June Chai-Lights

Thursday, June 2, 7:00 p.m. on Zoom

Chai Mitzvah: *Chai Mitzvah* is a personal Jewish journey to share with friends, with groups in 39 states and 6 countries. Visit page 6 for more info.

Friday, June 3, 6:30 p.m. In Person & Streaming

Rock of Ages Shabbat: Marc Rossio rocks the house as he and Rabbi Chessin lead a creative and musical *Shabbat* service.

Saturday, June 4, 10:00 a.m. on Zoom

Apocryphal Study: Join Rabbi Chessin and our study group as we continue to explore the book of Jubilees.

Sunday, June 5, 10:00 a.m. In Person (Levin Hall)

The festival of *Shavuot* occurs seven weeks after Passover and marks the giving of the *Torah* on Mt. Sinai. Special customs on *Shavuot* include the reading of the Book of Ruth and studying *Torah* and remembering our loved ones with *Yizkor* prayers. Dairy dishes are served on this holiday to symbolize the sweetness of the *Torah*, as well as the “land of milk and honey. This year we will celebrate *Shavuot* with a special Seder, an interactive brunch with symbolic foods and festival readings. Please bring a brunch offering (blintz soufflé and dairy offerings welcome) as we mark this wonderful occasion.

Friday, June 10: No Services

Saturday, June 11, 10:00 a.m. In Person & Streaming
Torah Live!: Join Rabbi Azriel for *Shabbat* morning service..

Friday, June 17, 6:30 p.m. In Person & Streaming
Musical Shabbat: Join Rabbi Chessin and the Temple Beth Or Choir led by Mary 'Mahira' Rogers as we bid *L'hiteraot* to Diann Bromberg as our faithful accompaniest after 20 years of service!

Saturday, June 18, 10:00 a.m. on Zoom
Apocryphal Study: Join Rabbi Chessin and our study group as we continue to explore the book of Jubilees.

Tuesday, June 21, 7:00 p.m. on Zoom
Building a Bridge: Improving Black/Jewish Relations: Join us for a Zoom talk and conversation with Dr. Cheryl Greenberg on Zoom. See page 6 for info.

Wednesday, June 22, 7:00 p.m. on Zoom
Join us for our Annual Meeting on Zoom. See back cover for details.

Friday, June 24, 6:30 p.m. In Person (Outdoors)
Join Rabbi Judy Chessin and Rabbi Ben Azriel for special outdoor Summer Service followed by a food truck *Shabbat* picnic!

Consecration, Confirmation, and Graduation!

Temple Beth Or celebrated our 5782 Makor students in an innovative *Shabbat* Service. We combined our Consecration (the welcoming of our newest students), Confirmation (the celebration of our high school learners), and Graduation (the honoring of our high school graduates) in one *Shabbat*. We also offered a special blessing for Teacher appreciation. The most moving part of the ceremony was when our eldest students blessed their Consecrants in front of the open ark. Temple Beth Or will create a big sister/brother partnership between our students in the years to come.



Temple Beth Or wishes L-R Micah Gruenberg, Gabe De La Cruz and Benjamin Char well in as they graduate high school





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Temple Beth Or Annual Meeting

Wednesday, June 22nd, 2022 via Zoom
 Meeting begins @ 7:00 p.m.

Website: <https://zoom.us/>
 (select "join a meeting")

Meeting ID: 811 8499 0654

Password: 181818

An email meeting invitation will be sent via Plan-It Beth Or before the meeting. You may also contact Donna at the Temple Office, 937-435-3400, to be sent the link.

Join us for the announcement of election results and for a Q&A session about the past year!

Nominees for Board of Directors

Four to be Elected:

Rachel Booth • Stuart Merl
 Ira Segalewitz • Evan Weiss

Ballots will be accepted (mail or email) until Monday, June 20th

Continuing Board Members:

Scot Denmark • Jake Elder
 John Granby • Mark Gruenberg
 Stephanie Kirtland • Marc Siegel
 Shara Taylor

We thank departing Board members, Jane Briskin, Marni Flagel, Caryl Segalewitz, and Dan Sweeny

for their service on the Board!

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