



TEMPLE
BETH AM

Project Bina: 5783/2023 Congregational Kibbitz Review

Our Agenda

- Blessing from Rabbi Ruth
- Engaging with today's presentation
- About Project Bina & the Kibbitz
- Kibbitz Findings:
 - Why people join and stay at TBA
 - Key themes
 - Detailed findings
- Final Reflections & Next Steps

Blessing



About The Project Bina Committee



Established Nov 2022

Project Bina is a volunteer committee working to establish a long-term feedback loop at Temple Beth Am. Project Bina seeks to deepen understanding of the needs of the Beth Am congregation, collect diverse perspectives from all TBA congregants, and use data and feedback to inform our future planning, programming, and services.

Current Members: Stacey Symonds (chair), Corinne Fligner, T.J. Stutman, Rachel Zerrell, and Amanda Radman, TBA Membership and Development Coordinator)

Communications Consulting: Kelly Rigotti, Molly Bermet

External research support for the Congregational

Kibbitz: Lillian Prueher, PhD, Zachary Rethorn, PhD

As we consider actions from Project Bina, we will align to TBA's mission and vision

TEMPLE BETH AM MISSION

We deepen relationships to Judaism and our community by engaging the soul, heart, and mind.

TEMPLE BETH AM VISION (UPDATED JULY 2023)

At Temple Beth Am, we seek to create a Jewish home for all our members, in all our wondrous diversity. Led by our mission, vision, and values, we aspire to co-create a congregation where every individual who enters our home can discover joy, meaning and belonging. We will achieve this vision of a synagogue home by transforming our 900-household congregation into a nimble, networked, and interconnected web of relationships rooted in powerful Jewish experiences and person-to-person connections.

About the Congregational Kibbitz



5783/2023 TBA Congregational Kibbitz Snapshot

WHY

- Consistent way for congregants to share their thoughts on Judaism and our congregation with leadership
- Socially re-engage as COVID restrictions have lifted
- Foster culture of “lashon ha-tov” which is constructive and collaborative dialogue among the TBA community

WHEN AND WHERE

- Apr-May 2023
 - Note results are relative to this unique time period
- Zoom or at TBA
- All TBA congregants invited by email and several announcements in TBA Happenings

WHAT

- Small group discussions of approx. 90 minutes for up to 6 congregants at a time
- TBA facilitators trained by professional researchers
- Staff support

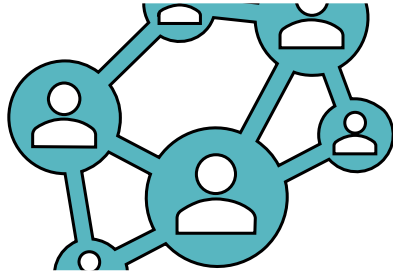
WHO

- 29 groups w/141 TBA members from 121 households
- Groups for discussion:
 - No kids up to grade 12 and over age 50 (67% in Kibbitz vs 58% in congregation)
 - Parents of kids up to grade 12 (31% in Kibbitz vs 39% in congregation)
 - No kids up to grade 12 and under age 50 (2% in Kibbitz vs 3% in congregation)

HOW

- Analyzed by professional researchers plus Project Bina committee
- Results are qualitative thematic analysis with supporting quotes

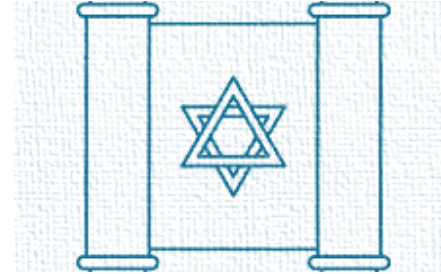
What did we discuss at the Kibbitz?



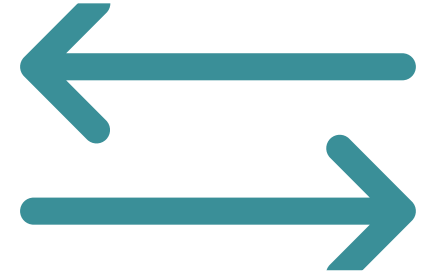
Why people join and stay at TBA



Social Engagement & Inclusion



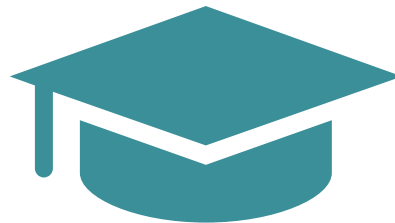
Worship/Communal Prayer



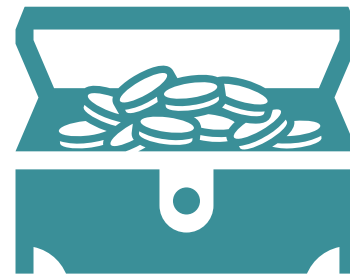
Rabbinic Transition



Adult education & activities



Youth Education & Parent Needs



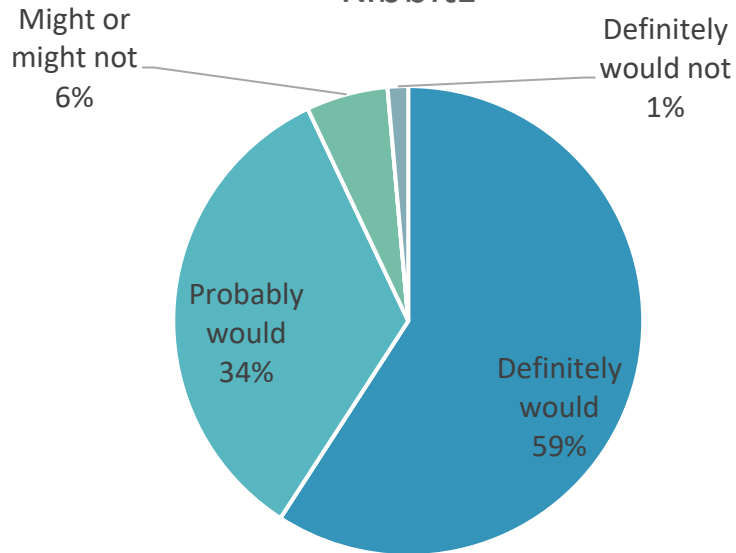
Financial Health



Communication

From Kibbitz feedback, we heard clearly that making the effort to listen more intently is highly valued by our congregants

Likelihood of Participating in another Kibbitz



Feelings about Kibbitz



Kibbitz participant survey N=71, out of 141 total participants, response rate = 50%

We got some great ideas for improving future feedback events from participants, facilitators and the Project Bina committee

More discussion
time

More diverse
group members

More flexible
drop-in format

Make sure
feedback is used

Option to discuss
deeper dive into
topics of interest

Some questions
worked less well
than others

It takes a village...a huge thank you to all who helped with this year's Kibbitz!

Facilitators

Alexis Kort	Liz Mizrahi
Allison Opson-Clement	Maya Menon
Betsy Maurer	Megan Ingram
Fred Diamondstone	Molly Bermet
Gary Goldbaum	Rachel Zerrell
Greg Berkman	Rebecca Fox
Heather Camp	Rebecca Hoff
Jessica Graybill	Ruth Berkman
Joel Fingerroot	Sara Weisman
Kaitlin Geballe	Shelly Cohen
Kelly Rigotti	Shoshana Stombaugh
Laura Karassik	Stacey Symonds
Laura Strauss	T.J. Stutman
Lauren Young	Theresa Glatstein

Clergy/Staff

Amanda Radman
Amber Hersholt
Davida Sims
Jacob Glickman
Jaime Shure
Megan Freeman
Molly Bermet
Rena Levine
Reyna Abraham
Rabbi Dana Benson
Rabbi Jason Levine
Rabbi Ruth Zlotnick
Colby Davis and the
Facilities team

Project Bina Committee

Amanda Radman
Corinne Fligner
Heather Camp
Rachel Zerrell
T.J. Stutman
Stacey Symonds (Chair)

About which of these topics are you most interested to hear?

Topics we explored in the Kibbitz



Why people join and stay at TBA



Worship/Communal Prayer



Adult education & activities



Communication



Financial Health



Youth Education & Parent Needs



Social Engagement & Inclusion



Rabbinic Transition



Overall Findings



Members are attracted to, and stay at, TBA for diverse reasons

REASONS TO JOIN

Parents desire Jewish education and to instill Jewish values in their children

- *"[I] wanted to raise my child with Jewish Learning."*

TBA's warm, friendly, and welcoming environment

- *"[You're] not judged by how much or little you can do, and [people are] always happy to see you."*

Members desire to connect with Judaism in community

- *"[I'm] looking for ways to engage in the community."*

REASONS TO STAY

Belonging to TBA fosters Jewish identity in individuals and families

- *"I think it's important to raise a child with values, history, and tradition."*

The community they have experienced

- *"[I] feel attached to the congregation in a familial way."*

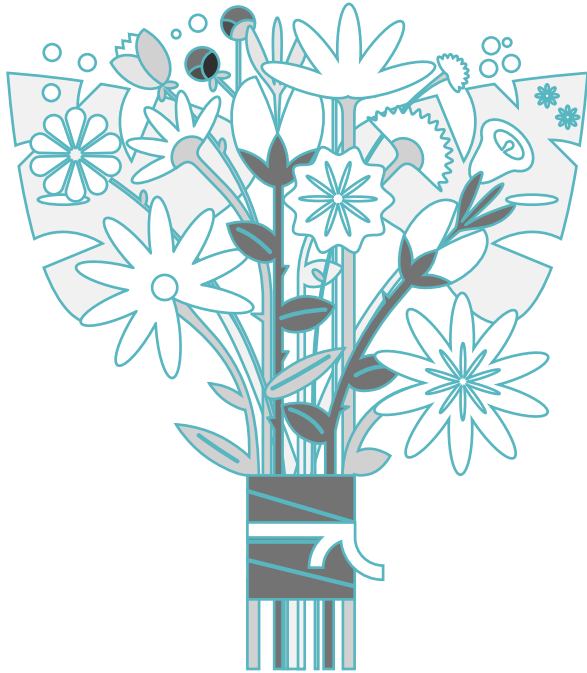
Experiencing lifecycle ceremonies

- *"Something powerful about having all my Jewish Lifecycles happen at Beth Am. It's an essential part of my identity."*

It has become a habit in their lives

- *"I would say it's a certain sense of loyalty and history."*





Overall Kibbitz Findings

We learned that both new and existing members are seeking to:

make a (re) commitment to Judaism and TBA

(re) build and strengthen connections

learn from others and about TBA

Making a (re) commitment to Judaism and TBA



Desire to understand our goals/mission better and how they fit into TBA's activities and priorities



Members are seeking ways to engage and get involved, but lack awareness and/or access to opportunities



Making a (re) commitment to Judaism and TBA

“Things seem to happen, and some are good, but they don’t always fit into a scheme.”

“I would love to connect more with people across generations or groups.”

(Re) Build and strengthen connections



Members enjoy and desire to participate in meaningful activities, but remain disoriented by COVID



Members of all demographics report it can be challenging to make deep connections, despite being an outwardly welcoming community



(Re) Build and strengthen connections

“I haven’t hit my stride post-pandemic, trying to figure out where I fit in again.”

“People who know each other are very warm, but new members are not obviously welcomed.”

Learn from others and about TBA



Members want to learn from each other about Jewish and general topics



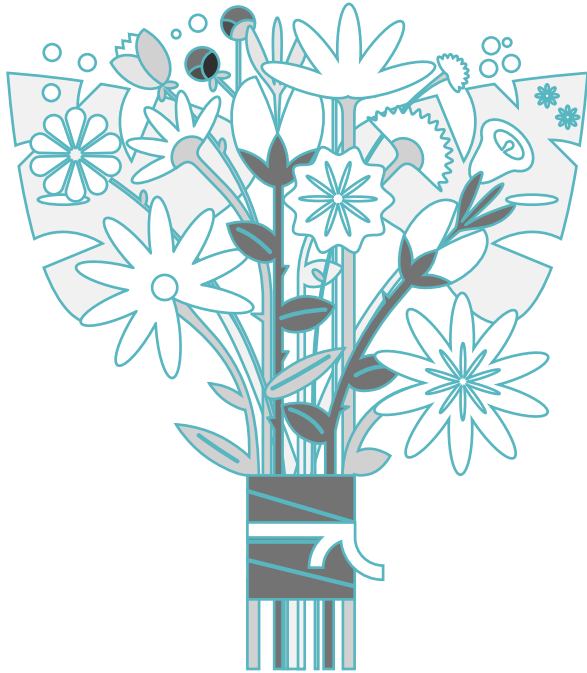
They also want to get (re) acquainted with Temple clergy, staff and board and their roles so they can navigate effectively



Learn from others and about TBA

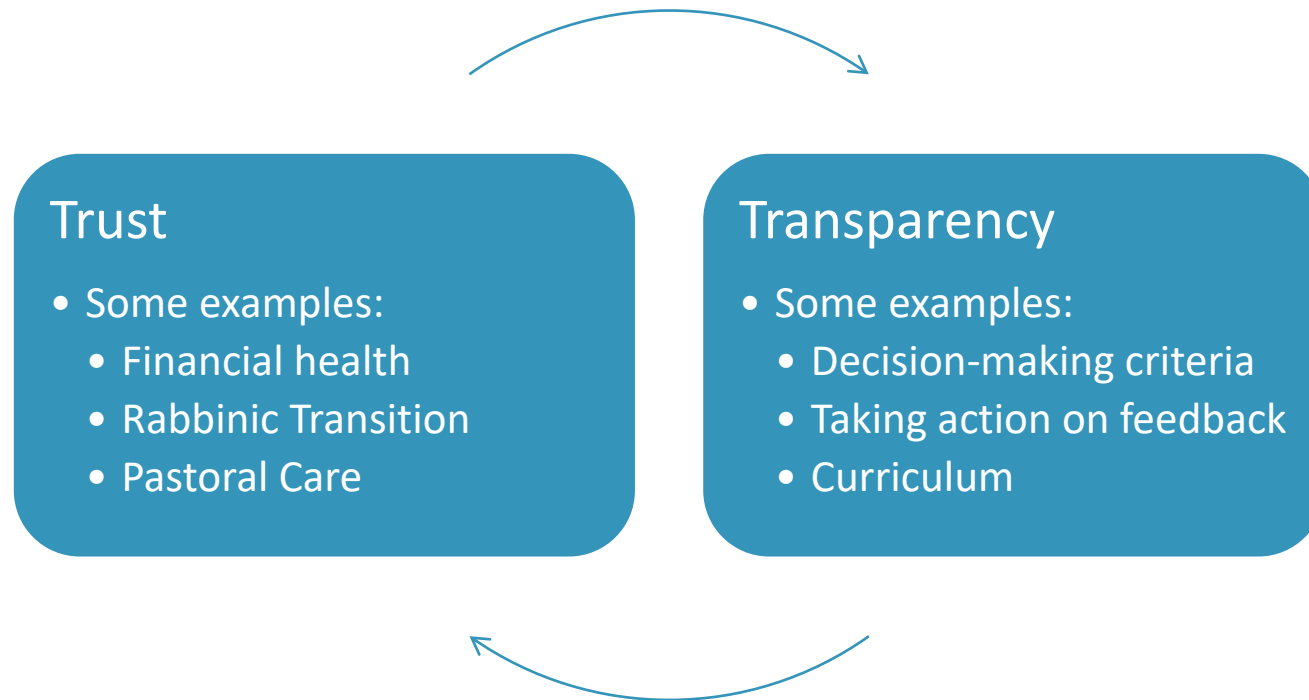
“One of the aspects of this community is that we really want to learn. I would like more things that tap into adult education.”

“Who is on the board, what are the committees, where do I find this?”



Overall Kibbitz Findings: Congregants want to be a part of an organization they **trust**, which is **transparent** with need-to-know information, and that helps them **fulfill their Jewish identity** through meaningful religious practices.

Member trust is built through transparency and action



It was very important to nearly all Kibbitz participants that TBA help them **fulfill their Jewish identity** through meaningful religious practice



What, if anything, was surprising to you about these overall findings?

- Nothing/Seemed accurate enough with no surprises 6
- The section on worship 1
- Not surprised, and agree with almost all the needs that are expressed 1
- People say they want to be involved but yet not that many show up 1

Next, we'll dive into specific topic areas, which connect to the overall themes:

- Social Engagement & Inclusion
- Worship & Communal Prayer
- Rabbinic Transition
- Adult Education & Activities
- Youth Engagement & Parent Needs
- Finances and Giving
- Communication





Social Engagement & Inclusion:

More can be done to promote inclusion and empathy especially between generations and for underrepresented groups

How welcoming is TBA for new and existing congregants?



Members enjoy and desire to participate in meaningful activities, but remain disoriented by COVID

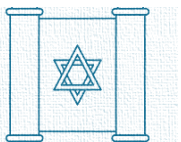
- *"I haven't hit my stride post-pandemic, trying to figure out where I fit in again."*
- *"With the pandemic, I've been reluctant to go in person."*

Some are struggling to figure out where they fit in due to lifestage or other concerns and need help to engage

- *"I would like to have dinners where singles would be included."*
- *"My partner is experiencing a terminal illness and I am having trouble finding support and my place at TBA."*

Specific activities were particularly appealing to promote social engagement and inclusion

- *"I want to do a plug for the Hearth groups. It was the most engagement I had post-pandemic. Thank you for those!"*
- *"I would love to connect more with people across generations or groups."*



Worship & Communal Prayer:

Jewish communal prayer is of the utmost importance, though many are looking for more flexibility and support to fully engage

Jewish communal prayer is very important to members of TBA across all demographic segments

- 86% of participants said that Jewish communal prayer was “Very Important”
- People connect in different ways: *“Choir helps those in the congregation feel connected when they do not know the music but can still enjoy it and participate.”*

Members desire to have a diversity in service times and types

- *“We went to Friday services last week ... and had a kid meltdown because of the late hour.”*
- *“[I] appreciated when TBA used to have different times for services throughout the month.”*

Some Members, especially those 50+/long-time members, are facing challenges connecting to our evolving Jewish communal prayer

- *“I am happy to learn a new song, but (also) happy to sing along with what I know. Too much unfamiliar music is a barrier.”*
- 50+ members also have a desire to see more effort given to accessibility related to vision and hearing challenges



Rabbinic transition:

Members desire increased transparency about, and input into criteria for, the hiring process to replace Rabbi Jason

Appreciation was expressed for Rabbi Jason's service to TBA

- *"I think he served an incredible role with kids who he really related to and I'm grateful for that."*

Members desire transparency about, and input into, the hiring process

- *"I would encourage as much communication and transparency as possible, even if the leadership doesn't know what the next steps are."*
- *"How much flexibility do we have on roles and responsibilities of clergy?"*

People, not surprisingly, have some opinions about replacement criteria

- Interests and advice for rabbinic candidates are being gathered in a survey sent out from the Rabbinic Search committee last week (all congregants 11+)
- These will be included in information we provide to selected candidates about our community and used to inform the committee's decision criteria





Adult education and activities:

Members clearly voice a desire for more adult education and engagement opportunities

Interest in formal and informal ways, to engage intellectually with others in the congregation

- *“There is a yearning for learning here.”*
- *“If I want kids to follow in my footsteps, I need to demonstrate to them that I show up to my own religious education.”*

Jewish studies are one of the most mentioned topics of interest

- *“I would like in depth Jewish learning such as studies of the Talmud”*
- *“I would like to get more engaged in conversations that poke more intellectually into religion and spirituality and what do our texts say...”*

Almost all members across demographic segments are aware of, and interested in, social justice activities, but many are not confident in how to engage

- *“I don’t feel like I know enough to participate”*
- *“I’d like to see more one time efforts vs long term commitments.”*



Youth & Parent Engagement:

Parents have questions about the curriculum and roles of Gan staff/Madrachim

- Parents desire greater transparency about the Gan curriculum
- Parents are supportive of having Madrachim in the classroom but want to understand their roles/responsibilities
- Some parents would like some different communication types/frequency about the Gan activities/schedule

Note: These issues are being addressed separately with additional forums/workshops and research



Youth & Parent Engagement:

Parents are looking for ways to engage more deeply and set a good example for their kids, but face some challenges



They would like to participate in more adult education, activities and worship/communal prayer but may need on-site childcare or other support

From our High Holy Days' surveys, we also saw they were looking for more options for their kids to attend age-appropriate and meaningful services

Parents express interest in participating in Social Justice activities that are family-oriented, but aren't aware of opportunities today or struggle to find time to participate

They appreciate multigenerational events like the Sukkot Fall Festival where all family members can participate



Finances and giving:

Members are generally comfortable with our current financial management, but are curious about long-term planning



Financial health means covering normal operating expenses and providing transparency into any issues



Some members believe that financial health should include a long-term sustainability plan such as an endowment and cultivation of legacy giving



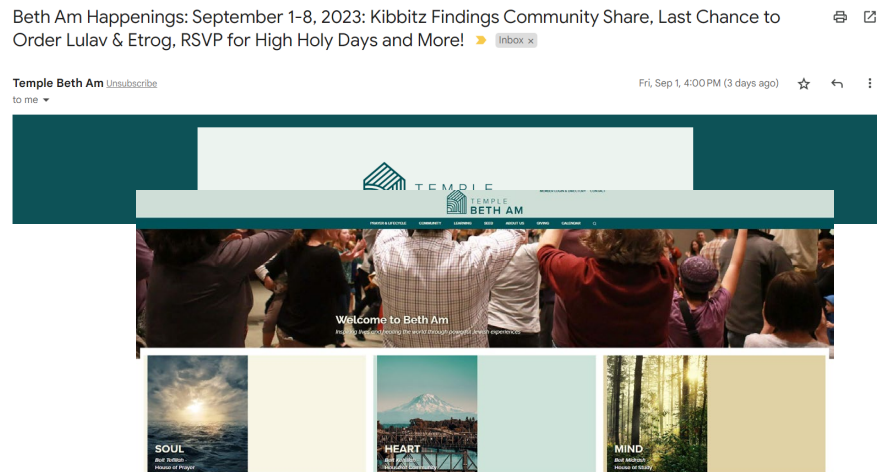
Transparency in how the Temple priorities intersect with financial giving is desired





Communication:

Members appreciate the frequency of TBA communications, though they would like more advance information to plan their participation



Members generally appreciate the frequency of a weekly email (the Happenings) but would like it earlier in the week

- *“Consider sending the email earlier, so people can do more planning for the weekend.”*

Members desire monthly and/or quarterly communications about upcoming events, current state of the temple, and temple priorities to allow for planning

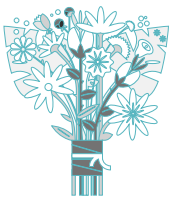
- *“I would love a newsletter every 1-2 months, with events and some connections – life cycle events and comments from congregants, not just the rabbis, staff and board”*

Some Members are not satisfied with the website currently

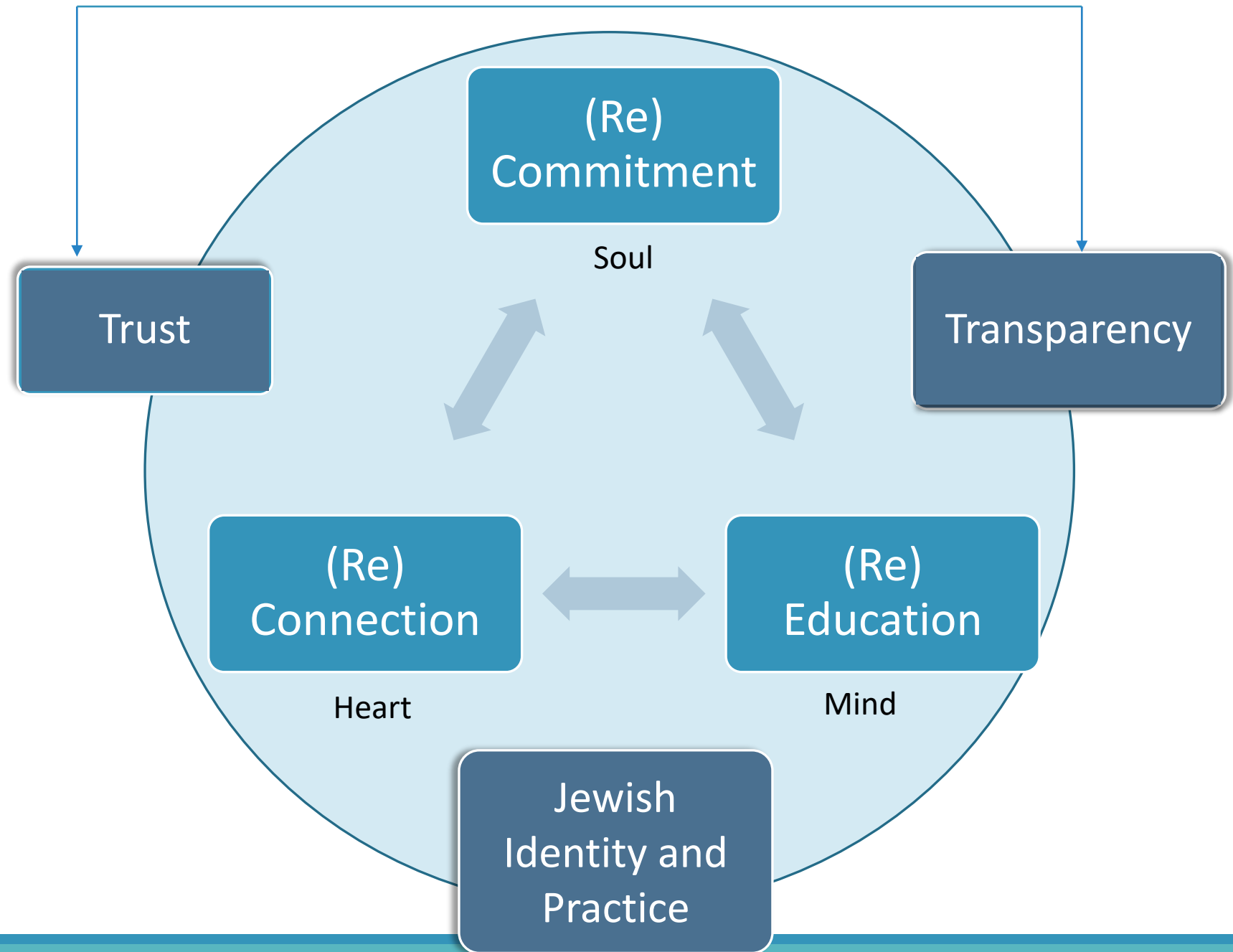
- *“It is difficult to find important information, not well organized, and details for events are missing or hard to find.”*
- Some members mention wanting more calendar integration

Final Reflections & Next Steps





In summary: We learned that both new and existing members are seeking connection, commitment and education; some for the first time, while others want to recapture what they experienced previously at TBA. They want these things from an organization they trust, which is transparent with need-to-know information and helps them fulfill their Jewish identity through meaningful religious practices.



What was one insight that stood out to you from today's presentation?

That , by and large, people seem fine with temple modus operandi

We need to move from "Seattle Freeze" welcoming to finding a way to help those new folks feel they BELONG

Our community values worship and lifelong learning together.

That we need to work harder to be more welcoming

People really feel ownership deeply. They want to weigh in in a lot of ways. Tough operationally but a wonderful thing!

Not surprising that people who chose to participate what more involvement. What about those who did not. What do we need to do to engage them.

The need for better communication with more detailed information. And the need to better integrate new members.

Need for heightened work on accessibility

The temple really captured a full range of input and concerns in a complex way

Opportunities for tech integration to solve some issues

What area or questions do you think we should dive deeper into in future Project Bina research?

Ways people want to be made to feel they belong -- what would keep new folks around?

More emphasis on "how" rather than "what." How do we be one more welcoming, etc

What makes people uncomfortable

How do people get recruited? Other than showing up until someone asks you to set up chairs and oh by the way be on some committee

What makes people stop volunteering?

Education/ community integration/ prayer

What type of communal worship do people want?

Engagement and communication

Meeting communication needs.

Communication modalities seems so easy on the surface, but getting it right needs a lot of nuanced research

While it could be a difficult issue, especially now, part of being involved in the worldwide Jewish community is discussion about Israel.

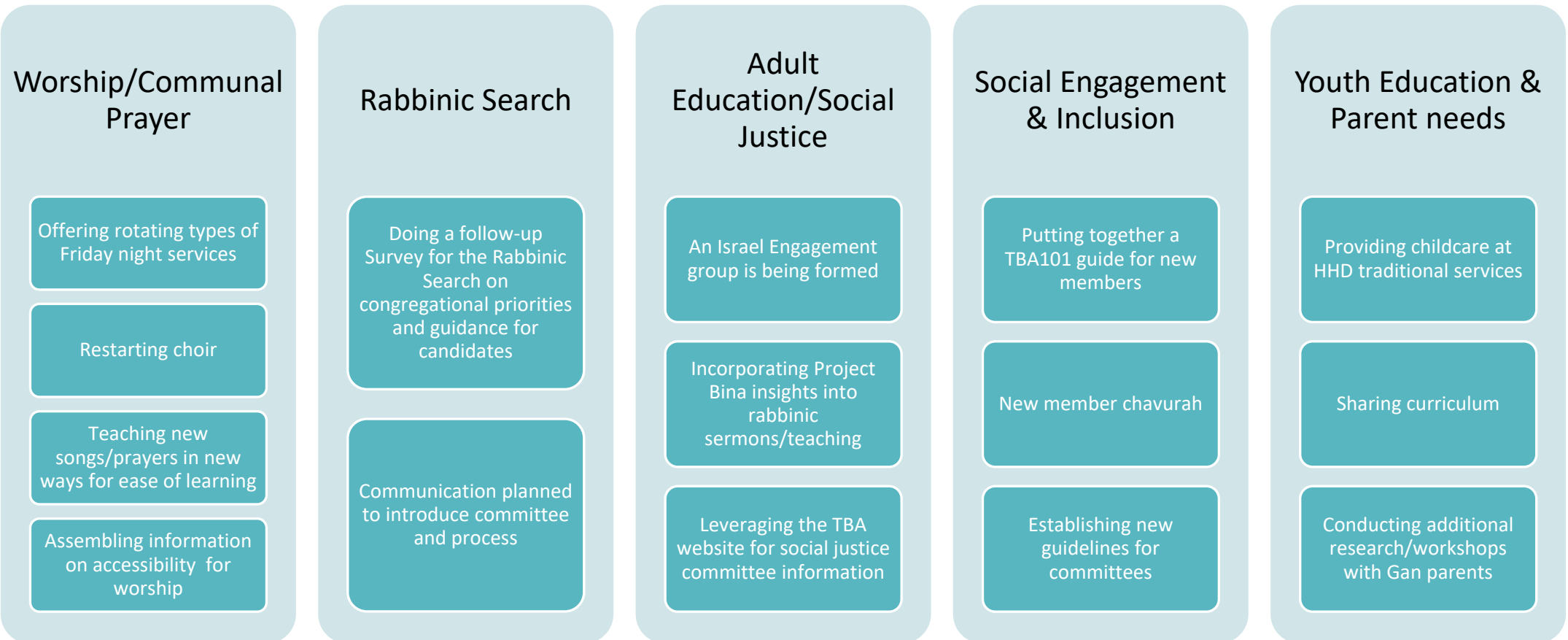
Rethinking the standard schedule for services. More choices would be nice.

Taking action on your feedback

Review of these Kibbitz findings have taken place with the following groups:

- ✓ Clergy
- ✓ Staff
- ✓ Board
- ✓ Kibbitz Facilitators
- ✓ Committee and lay leaders for: Finance committee, Advancement committee, Rabbinic Search committee, Social Justice, Membership and Adult Engagement, Worship/Communal Prayer, with Youth Education in progress

Based on this feedback, many people & groups are starting to take action. Here are some examples of things which are in progress:





Please email Feedback@templebetham.org
at any time with your thoughts about the Kibbitz or other topics

- *Email monitored by Amanda Radman, Membership & Development Coordinator*
- *Feedback incorporated into existing Project Bina workstreams or distributed to appropriate people/groups for consideration in context of mission/vision and resources available*
- *Feedback will remain anonymous unless you would like to be identified*
- *We will not respond individually unless it is an urgent issue*

One last thing...



We are looking for members to join the Project Bina committee to help us shape the future of feedback and insights at Temple Beth Am.

Please contact

Amanda@templebetham.org if you are interested in being a part of this dynamic committee!



Project Bina@
TEMPLE
BETH AM

Todah
Rabah!