



September 8, 2017

17 Elul 5777

Hevre,

We wanted to keep you up to date on recovery efforts and needs in our Texas communities following Hurricane Harvey. The outpouring of support and assistance have been incredible and appreciated by our *kehillot*.

There are four USCJ affiliated congregations in Houston area - Congregation Beth Yeshurun, Congregation Brith Shalom, Congregation Shaar Hashalom and Congregation Or Ami.

Congregation Beth Yeshurun, our largest *kehilla* in the United States, sustained the greatest damage. They have let us know that no help (such as places for people to attend High Holiday services) or books (*siddurim, machzorim or chumashim*) are needed at this time; what they will need most is money as their physical losses are estimated to be significantly above their insurance coverage. Donations to the [USCJ Disaster Relief Fund](#) will assist the congregation directly. This is what our network provides; Conservative *kehillot* helping Conservative *kehillot*. We ask that you add the [USCJ Disaster Relief Fund](#) link to your own website.

Congregation Brith Shalom was spared any flooding. They *did* have some leaks from their roof but those have been taken care of. They generously hosted a Beth Yeshurun *Bat Mitzvah* and are hosting their Chapel *Minyan*. Together with Beth Yeshurun, they hosted a Shabbat dinner for those in the communities impacted by Harvey.

Congregation Or Ami seems to have escaped damage to their building. They have opened their doors as a comfort station to those who need a place to be or for a change of scenery; they are offering Wi-Fi, coffee and air conditioning. Or Ami also set up a supply depot and are accepting donations of things like fans and dehumidifiers, which are the top requests, along with Sharpies, sponges, and disinfectant wipes. The *kehilla* is working with other Jewish institutions in West Houston to provide support to individuals affected.

Congregation Shaar Shalom sustained no damage to their building. The members of the *kehilla* came together to help congregants affected and to volunteer at other places in need of assistance. Their leadership also organized a clothing and blanket drive. Last Friday, Shaar Shalom held a healing service; inviting members of Temple Beth Tikvah, a Reform congregation to join them.

Nechama is on the ground and always is in need of volunteers and support. We are in conversations with them to organize adult and USY volunteer missions to Houston. More information will follow as

those missions develop. We also encourage you to contribute to the Jewish Federations of North America and the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston and other relief agencies.

SWUSY (Southwest USY) has organized a gift card drive, as gift cards are extremely helpful to families in the area, many who have lost everything. SWUSY is asking for donations of gift cards to Target, Walmart, Lowe's, Home Depot, or grocery stores, in denominations of less than \$50, which can be distributed to families in USCJ affected *kehillot*. Digital gift cards can be e-mailed to honig@uscj.org, and physical cards can be mailed to: SWUSY c/o Congregation Agudas Achim 7300 Hart Lane Austin, TX 78731.

It is clear that Florida is now a target for Hurricane Irma. In advance of the storm, Hanegev USY has canceled their regional board training weekend. We will continue to monitor Irma and keep you informed as we know more.

Our network of *kehillot* is an important source of support to our communities in Texas and as Hurricane Irma turns towards Florida and the east coast, we send our prayers and support to those *kehillot* as well. Please continue to pray for our communities.

<https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/prayer-during-and-aftermath-devastating-storm>

<https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/prayer-victims-hurricane>

Shabbat shalom,



Margo Gold

International President



Rabbi Steven C. Wernick

CEO