



Letter from Rabbi Michael Feshbach

February 15, 2022

Dear Members and Friends of Congregation Beth Israel:

I am delighted to be coming to Congregation Beth Israel as your rabbi this coming July. My name is Michael Feshbach. I am married to Julie Novick; we have three children: Benjamin (25), Daniel (24) and Talia (20).

I am currently the rabbi of The Hebrew Congregation of St Thomas, in the US Virgin Islands. Before that, I was the Senior Rabbi of Temple Shalom in Chevy Chase, MD. You can read more about me on my personal website (www.michaelfeshbach.net), or at the website of The Hebrew Congregation (www.synagogue.vi.)

I am excited to be coming to Beth Israel, for both personal and professional reasons. Rabbi Weis and I have been close for almost 20 years. We studied together at the [Shalom Hartman Institute](#) beginning in 2010. I not "replacing" him, but I am honored to carry on the work of a colleague and cherished friend.

We will be coming from one congregation with a long history and deep roots, to another. The Hebrew Congregation of St Thomas is home to the oldest synagogue building in continuous use under the US flag - and one of five synagogues in the world with sand on the floor.

I am proud of what I have accomplished here. But these have been difficult years. Even without COVID, our islands are still recovering from the sister storms, Irma and Maria, which hit in September 2017 - just a month after our arrival. Travel back and forth to the mainland became more challenging. In coming to Beth Israel, we will be an hour from two of our children, less than three hours from our eldest, and under four hours from Julie's family.

I am excited to be coming to a vibrant Jewish community, with a leadership ready to be true partners, and a terrific staff and clergy team. I was impressed by all of the congregants and community members I met, who came across as warm, welcoming, caring and genuine. I want to extend a special thank you to Linda Karp and her leadership team; to Shelly Meyers and members of the Search Committee, and to Susan Sokalsky, Cookie Feldman, and Cantor Averbakh. I am grateful the role you played in this process, and I truly look forward to working with all of you!

It is true that where we now live is spectacularly beautiful. But I am thrilled to be returning to an area with Jewish youth and a religious school, with a developed Jewish communal infrastructure, and with other synagogues nearby.

We are, ironically, going from one resort area to another - although it may take us a while to get used to cooler water once again!

I am sure there will be opportunities in the coming months both virtual and in person, for us to meet one another. In the meantime, please feel free to be in touch directly. The best email for me is michael.feshbach@gmail.com.

I look forward to getting to know all of you. May the beginning of our time together coincide with a rebirth, and a new sense of connection, as we emerge from these past few years of pandemic.

May you all stay safe, and healthy. And may we meet in person soon!

L'shalom (in peace),

Michael L. Feshbach

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Rabbi