



THE CENTRE CALL

GERMANTOWN JEWISH CENTRE

Volume 26, Issue No. 6

Tamuz 5778 / July 2018



by Ari Witkin, Rabbinic Intern

At the beginning of this year, I wrote here in the Centre Call about the experience of returning and beginning, and the way we mark time with the changing seasons and holiday calendar. Then in the winter I reflected on the relationship between our prescribed cycle

of experience, as it relates to the holidays' thematic accompaniment and our own individual lives. As I reread these thoughts in preparation for this summer column, I was struck by my own fascination with time and how much the calendar animates the life of our community.

How fitting this reflection is in the midst of summer, when our lives are in full bloom, and as we again prepare to return to our spiritual beginning and the holiday season which is just around the corner.

To be honest, it's hard to believe that it has already been a year since I returned from living in Jerusalem and began my term as your student rabbi here at GJC. The year has been so filled with rich learning, celebration, and community that time has just flown by.

Many of the highlights of this past year of my life have taken place in our building and with our congregation. In teaching adult educational classes about Jewish theology and ethics I have been blessed to learn from the thoughts and knowledge so many of you have offered. Working with our confirmation students gave me the opportunity to get a glimpse of what young adult Jewish life looks like, and to expand my own understanding of what it means to be Jewish, thanks to the brilliant insights of our teens. In addition, being welcomed into the homes of so many members of the GJC community, in times of joy as well as moments of sorrow, has laid the foundation to what I hope will be relationships that continue for many years to come.

Almost a year ago now we welcomed the New Year together. With the sanctuary filled with our community's beautiful diversity, Rabbi Zeff challenged us to find meaning in

difference and to strive to engage in productive disagreement *l'shem shamayim*, for the sake of heaven.

At times this can be an exhausting task. In the work of building and maintaining community, navigating interpersonal and logistical challenges animates daily life. While the consistent need to dig deep in moments of conflict can feel like an impediment to building community, our tradition teaches that it is precisely those most difficult entanglements that have the ability to bring us closer together and closer to the divine.

A few weeks ago, on Shavuot, I sat in the Charry sanctuary and listened as many of the more experienced voices of our community shared about the tough conversations the congregation has worked through over the years. As the stories unfolded over the course of the evening, I became attuned to the notion that many of the episodes being discussed were new iterations of similar tensions and conflicts that had been encountered before but through a different lens. This reality reminded me of a line from the Mishna (Avot 5:17) that teaches "Every argument that is for the sake of heaven's name is destined to endure."

My take away from our "Torah of Hard Conversations" program was that here in our community of communities, those arguments for the sake of heaven have provided us with much positive endurance. The moments when we engage with each other through the greatest difficulty are the ones which allow our community to thrive. I believe that is what Rabbi Zeff has been suggesting to us this year. That it is not in solving or winning the argument that we bring the heavens into our midst, but it is the way in which we engage in the conversation that our words take on that quality of being *l'shem shamayim*.

As I look forward towards to another year serving this community, I am excited to deepen the relationships I have made and to continue to connect with more members of our community. It is my blessing for all of us that the spirit of vivacious and productive dialogue continues to animate our relationships and our congregation. It is a privilege to teach, to learn and to grow with each of you.

SHABBAT & HOLIDAYS

July 7 - Services as usual

July 14 - Services as usual

July 21 Erev Tish'ah b'Av - Services as usual

- Erev Tish'ah b'Av program with Rebecca Kirzner (8 PM): "Exiles, Migrants, and Refugees"
Service & reading of Eicha after program

July 22 Tish'ah b'Av - Tish'ah b'Av Service (7 AM)

July 28 - Services as usual

August 4 - Services as usual

August 11 Rosh Hodesh Elul - Services as usual

August 18 - Services as usual

August 25 - Services as usual

September 1 - Services as usual

- S'lichot Program & Service (8 PM)
- Late Night S'lichot Service (11 PM)

Kabbalat Shabbat - Fridays, 6 PM

Shabbat Morning Services - 10 AM

Shabbat Morning Kids Space - Kids are welcome to play Shabbat-friendly games in Room 305.



MAZAL TOV!

IN CELEBRATION OF...

Rabbi Josh Bolton on the publication of his book *100 Suggestions for Seekers & Spiritual Activists*.

Norman and Leah Schwartz, on the marriage (in Jerusalem) of their grandson Shlomo Zalman Schwartz to Sara Pokroy. Shlomo's proud parents are Raphael and Tanya Schwartz.

Norman and Leah Schwartz, on the birth (in Jerusalem) of their great-grandson Aharon Schwartz, son of Rivkah and Yehuda Leib Schwartz, and grandson of Raphael and Tanya Schwartz.

Norman and Leah Schwartz, on the birth of their great-grandson, Akiva Yehuda Waitzberg, son of Elisheva and Ushi Waitzberg, and grandson of Raphael and Tanya Schwartz.

Josh Hirsch, son of Mitchell Hirsch and Sylvia Lifschitz, on his marriage to Stacey Snyder.

Mitchell Hirsch and Sylvia Lifschitz, on the marriage of their son Josh to Stacey Snyder.

Becca Miller, daughter of Gavi Miller & Minna Ziskind, on becoming a Bat Mitzvah.

Joyce & Sheldon Eveloff, are thrilled to announce the graduation of their granddaughter, Allison Berman, daughter of Audrey & John Berman, from Bates College, Maine and continuing for her master's degree at Bank Street in NYC.

Jerry Kutnick & Wendy Weingarten, on the birth of their granddaughter, Naomi Eden, daughter of Meira & Eric.

Lia Taylor, daughter of Jessica Baskin-Taylor and Thomas Taylor, on becoming a Bat Mitzvah.

Gabe McLeary, son of Latifa diPaolo McLeary, on becoming a Bar Mitzvah.

Rabbi Judd Kruger Levingston, who has been named the recipient of the 2019-2020 Sylvia and Moshe Ettenberg Research Award from the Network for Research in Jewish Education. This \$20,000 grant will support research and writing for a project called The Moral Case for Play on character development and the role of play.

Michael Masch & Rachel Falkove, on the birth of their grandson.

Rabbi David Teutsch, on being honored at the Reconstructing Judaism graduation.

Chaim Dworkin & Linda Cherkas, on the birth of their grandson, Doniel Yeshava, born to Akiva and Tova.

Margalit Eisenstein, daughter Andrew & Ricki Eisenstein, on becoming a Bat Mitzvah.

Ken Weiss received the Presidential Award of the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society, its highest honor for a member's contributions to the field of psychiatry.

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Irving Wiesner, father of Esther Wiesner, grandfather of Mikaela and Liora

Bernice Stein Levinson, mother of Leslie Pontz

Dr. David Barcan, father of Camilla & Rafi and a long-time member of Germantown Jewish Centre

Sophie Seitchik, mother of Richard Seitchik

Flora Schnall, mother of Billie Schnall, grandmother of Deborah & Rachel Frank

Sonia Bloch, mother of Liz Bloch-Smith, grandmother of Ben, Rachel, & Shula

Edward Waxman, father of Rabbi Deborah Waxman

Tika Djerassi, mother of Judge Ramy Djerassi

Morton Puce, step father of Micheal Posner, grandfather of Yael, Jonah, & Ari

Francis Heller, aunt of Chuck Scheifer

Florence Kobran, mother of Marcy Bacine, grandmother of Matthew & Gabriel

Frieda Sanders, mother of Susan Weiss

President's Message

by Denise Wolf, GJC President



Many GJC members have extended well-wishes and messages of congratulations to me when they learned that I was the incoming President. Some have even extended friendly, facetious "condolences" as admonishments for the challenges that lie ahead. I choose to accept the congratulatory words. As your President, you should know that

I am enthused! I am energized! I am ready!

I am all of these things because our synagogue is, in short, rockin' it. From our capable and beloved Rabbi Adam, to our competent professional staff led by the talented Nina Peskin, to our thriving Religious School with the dynamic Rabbi Alanna at the helm, GJC is always active and abuzz. The stewardship of all the past Presidents, and especially the friendship and mentorship of Chip Becker and Mathieu Shapiro, is a true gift to me as I embrace this new role.

Most of all, I am thrilled to forge ahead with the 2018-19 Executive Committee, which is composed of dedicated individuals who are willing to meet and discuss, and to discuss and meet, and to meet and discuss again, until we make the best decisions we possibly can for our congregation. I am so honored to work with each one of them that I need to recognize them right here, right now:

Dan Livney a/k/a a patient voice of reason, always.

Greg Lattanzi a/k/a who brings his sense of humor to the process, as he busily doubles as a Religious School Committee co-chair

Art Ellis a/k/a we cannot tell you enough how much we appreciate your hard work on the High Holiday iAppeal!

Linda Kriger a/k/a whose insightful questions stop us in our tracks and whose costumes make us laugh at the Purim Bash

David Mosenkis a/k/a welcome! we are really, really, I mean really, glad you are joining us! We need you.

Alex Seldin a/k/a who effortlessly drops pearls of wisdom

David Fish a/k/a brings a refreshing candor to the proceedings

Steve Levin a/k/a whose calm presence and thoughtfulness helps get us to consensus

Lawrence Charap a/k/a who deserves a Pulitzer for the quality of his recording of the minutes

Connie Katz a/k/a whose warm smile and good cheer always lifts us up!

In the months leading up to my being President, I embarked on a listening tour to educate myself about GJC and, most of all, about . . . all of you. I had the pleasure of meeting many of you from the various GJC constituencies, asking you questions, listening to your answers, and taking notes. And, certainly, I was schooled! I met folks from Minyan Masorti and Dorshei Derekh, from the Men's Club and from the Women of GJC, parents from the Early Childhood Program and the Religious School, from Hazak and from the Social Action Committee, from the GJC-Center City group, and past Presidents and Rosh Pinah donors. I learned about your connections to the synagogue, and your concerns and aspirations for it. The common theme I heard over and over again was nothing short of remarkable, for its sincerity and simplicity: "GJC is my home." Think about that. "GJC is my home." We all connect to the synagogue in different ways, and at different times, but yet, it is our collective home.

By design, we are a "community of communities." This phrase is highlighted in our literature, featured on our website, and embedded in our core. And we are proud of it. We house three independent minyanim – each with its own leaders, customized prayer services, and social gatherings. We hold diverse views not only on davening and religious practices, but also on our approaches to tikkun olam as well as to our politics about the State of Israel. Yet, despite our mixed outlooks, we often come together to celebrate b'nai mitzvah, Charry Weekend, Granger Shabbat, the Purim Bash, GJC Celebrates Hanukkah, educational programming and so much more.

But there is a price. Let's not paint only the rosy picture we want to see. We are sometimes strangers in our own house and we sometimes don't cross paths with one other. Several months ago, I attended a meeting between two sub-communities of GJC. Early in the meeting, it became evident that most folks did not even know one other. Each of them were deeply committed and connected to the synagogue. Each of them considered GJC to be their home. Yet, they had never spoken before. They were strangers in their own home.

Our special community of communities on the corner of Ellet Street and Lincoln Drive in Mt. Airy is, without a doubt, a beautiful place. We all cherish our home. Through the next two years of my presidency, I will respect and honor our differences, and I will also strive to bring us closer together.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Rachel Blake & Rob Jefferson

Ariel Cohen

Mordechai Martin &
Atennea Rosado-Virques

Hal & Wendy Miller

Keyonee Thalia & Percy Rosales

Pam Schaefer

Steve Weintraub

ROSH PINAH

"The humblest of stones has become the chief cornerstone." [Rosh Pinah] (Psalm 118:22)

GJC expresses its deep gratitude for the generous support of its congregants who have chosen the Rosh Pinah (Cornerstone) level of membership. Their contribution provides crucial support, enabling us to serve the entire GJC community. We cannot adequately thank the following members for their commitment to Germantown Jewish Centre:

Marcy & Dan Bacine

Jane & Richard Baron

Marta & Chip Becker

Michael Beer

Peninah & Albert Berdugo

Harold Berger

Dveera Segal & Brad Bridge

Helen & Michael Feinberg

Dayle Friedman & David Ferleger

Sarah Braun & Shai Gluskin

Myra & Gert Jacobsohn

Linda & Jake Kriger

Barbara Jaffe & Howard Langer

Chris & Steve Levin

Evelyn Eskin & David Major

Rachel Falkove & Michael Masch

Barbara & Dick Menin

Cyrilla Rosen

Allyson & David Schwartz

Denise Scott Brown & Robert Venturi

Patty & Steve Segal

Stefanie & Alex Seldin

Jessica & Mathieu Shapiro

Beth Stearman

THANK YOU

Germantown Jewish Centre
would like to extend thanks and gratitude to the
Wolfe Family Foundation
for generously supporting and making
our programming possible.

PLANNED GIVING & NER TAMID



Remembering Germantown Jewish Centre in your will, a trust, or retirement asset is a meaningful way to ensure that your commitment to our community continues to help our synagogue thrive for generations to come. For more information on how you can include GJC in your estate plans, please contact Nina Peskin at 215-844-1507 x12.

Germantown Jewish Centre is pleased to present a new and exciting look to the Centre Call, which, as always, continues to highlight the connections we make with one another, and wonderful things we are doing in the world.

MUSSAR at GJC

Over the past seven years, GJC and its members have been involved in expanding the study of Mussar in a number of different ways. We have hosted Rabbi Ira Stone of BZBI for several Shabbatons enjoying his scholarship, and we have held regular Mussar classes for adults. Through the Religious School, we initiated classes for incorporating Mussar principles into parenting. Even before Mussar study came to GJC, in 2003, a number of GJC members drove weekly to BZBI where Rabbi Stone birthed the Center for Contemporary Mussar (CCM), formerly called Mussar Leadership Programs.

Mussar is a Jewish spiritual practice whose central tenet is the core of Torah, i.e., "Love your neighbor as yourself." While we know this viscerally as Jews, we also know how hard a precept it is to uphold. Our program, based on the theology of Rabbi Ira Stone and strongly influenced by the French philosopher Emanuel Levinas, was inspired by the program developed by Rabbi Israel Salanter in 19th century Lithuania. We engage students with the primary texts in Hebrew and English of *Messilat Yesharim* by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, *Tomer Deborah* by Rabbi Moshe Cordevero and *Cheshbon Hanefesh* by Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Satanov which teaches about middot (virtues). The practice also draws on positive psychology and an approach to halachah as a Jewish mode of existence in a contemporary key. In addition to our weekly classes, students journal about their practice, meet in chavruta (paired study), take on observance of specific mitzvot of their choosing, and study Torah on a regular basis. Every component of our program is geared to students both learning self-care and focusing on the needs of others.

A number of GJC members currently teach Mussar at various programs including GJC, other locations in Philadelphia and even nationally. The teachers include Beulah Trey, Sonia Voynow, Linda Kriger, Herb Levine, Malka Binah Klein and Pearl Raz. Linda and Herb serve on the CCM board with Linda serving as Chair of the board. Beyond board participation, GJC members participate in other vital activities within CCM. Beulah serves as Director of Curriculum and Practice and has been instrumental in the evolution of the program's theology. Herb is co-editing the new edition of the main workbook for students. I began

teaching in 2009, first at Or Hadash and then in 2011, at GJC and other locations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. In addition, I supervise current teachers and am co-training a new cohort of teachers which include GJC members Karen Kripke and Naomi Hirsch.

On Monday May 14, 2018 the third cohort of GJC adult students participated in their Mussar Commencement ceremony. These students have been studying Mussar weekly for the past four years. Each semester is 13 weeks long, which means they attended 104 classes...ok, some occasionally missed a class but you have to admit, that is a serious commitment of time! Each cohort has consisted of GJC members and non-GJC members. We have even had a few non-Jewish students who are drawn to this Jewish spiritual path.

Here is a picture from the most recent Commencement. Mazel tov to all.



Rabbi Ira Stone (Rosh Yeshiva), Mindy Shapiro (madricha), Sue Sussman, Gena Epstein, Karen Kripke, Naomi Hirsch, Ellen Tichenor, Marilyn Esner, Susan Klein

If you are interested in studying Mussar, feel free to contact me at mindsue39@gmail.com for details.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

by Linda Kriger

Summer is upon us and GJC has a new president, Denise Wolf, and a (slightly) reconstituted executive committee. Here are brief profiles of committee members who make policies for the synagogue community, which are then voted upon by the Board of Directors.



Denise Wolf, the new president of GJC, proves the point that if you want something done, ask a busy person. She is a federal prosecutor with the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, the wife of Paul Rudick, and the mother of three boys. The family joined GJC when

Denise's sons were in the Early Childhood Program more than a decade ago. "GJC means a lot to me and my family," Denise said, "and serving on the executive committee was one way I could give back to our community, as well as get to know many of the wonderful members better."

Denise has been in training for the presidency for the past two years as vice president. "I assisted and advised the President on budget, programming and personnel." She loves serving as Bimah Officer.



Chip Becker, immediate past president of GJC, will remain on the committee for two terms to provide institutional memory as well as his expertise on all matters related to the synagogue's operations. A lawyer at the Kline & Specter law firm, Chip is responsible for the firm's post-trial and appellate

practice. He joined the executive committee, he said, because "GJC is important to our family, our community, and our entire neighborhood. I thought this was a way I could be helpful." Married to Marta, they have three children. The Beckers joined GJC in 2004 and are members of the Charry minyan.



The newest member of the committee is **David Mosenkis**, Vice President of Tikkun Olam. David is a Visual Analytics Consultant at Genentech, a biotech company. He joined the committee because he "wants to be part of the GJC leadership and contribute to steering the congregation in healthy, inspiring directions. I hope I can help

harness the energy many of our members have for social justice and strengthens our impact on the wider world," he said. David is married to Nahariya, with two children and four grandchildren. He lives in Mt. Airy and davens with Dorshei Derech. He has been a member of GJC for 25 years.

Lawrence Charap, recording secretary, is a director for higher education outreach for the Advanced Placement Program of the College Board. In his day job, Lawrence meets with faculty and academic administrators at colleges and universities to discuss how AP aligns with the expectations students will meet in college. He joined the committee because he was asked. "That's really all there is to it," he said. He takes notes at all executive committee meetings and Board meetings. He is married to Ellyn and has three children. He joined GJC in 2011 and davens with Minyan Masorti.



Connie Katz, corresponding secretary, is a treasure trove of 36 years of institutional memory. "It was an eye-opener to me when I realized that even with my youthful-feeling heart, I am the "old timer" on the Executive Committee," she said. "I mail hand written notes to members celebrating life milestones or mourning the death of a family member."

Connie retired many years ago as a School Psychologist

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT (continued)

for the Perkiomen Valley School District to raise four children and be an active volunteer. She joined the executive committee to keep up with the many changes taking place at the time of Rabbi Gordon's resignation. She is married to Sam, and has four children and four grandchildren. She is a member of the Charry community.



Art Ellis, Vice President for Development, helps GJC raise money through the High Holiday campaign and other fundraising efforts (with many thanks to Development Committee members Addie Lewis Klein and Maani Waldor.)

He is Vice President for Communications and Member Relations at WHYY, where he's worked for 30 years. He said he felt "a sense of responsibility to help GJC remain healthy and strong, since I've benefited for a long time from the community built around our synagogue." Art has been married to Lynne for 42 years. They live in Center City. They joined GJC shortly after moving to Mt. Airy in 1980, but Art's GJC roots run deep: his grandparents were members and his mother was in the 1939 confirmation class.



Steve Levin, Financial Secretary, retired three years ago from practicing pediatrics. Since then he has been a managing partner in his family's investment business, mostly in commercial real estate. After retiring, Steve "finally had the time to devote to the community and do it in a thoughtful way. I think my age and my experience in medicine and now in business help provide a balanced view on the issues we face, not only as a spiritual community but also as a community faced with building and financial needs." Steve is married to Chris, former president of GJC, and they have three grown sons. They joined GJC in 1983.



They live in Chestnut Hill.

Gregory Lattanzi is the committee's Assistant Vice-President for Education. He is Curator and State Archaeologist at the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton, NJ. He joined the committee because he wanted to be more involved in GJC and represent religious school education issues and needs. Gregory is married to Dr. Haviva Goldman and they have two children in religious

David Fish, an anesthesiologist and critical care physician, joined the executive committee four years ago and now serves as its comptroller. Married to Marcy, with three children and three grandchildren, David has been a member of GJC for 24 years. "I joined the committee at the urging of Nina Peskin, (executive director of GJC)" he said. "I explained to her that I was probably not a good fit, since I tend to be a contrarian. She said that was one reason why they wanted me on board." He added, "I have learned when to open my mouth and when to keep it shut."



Yours truly, **Linda Kriger**, is liaison to membership outreach, and has been a member of GJC since 2000 and writes the member profile feature in the Centre Call newsletter. I joined the committee soon after Rabbi Gordon's resignation and with a short break have been a member since. I was a reporter for the Providence Journal and a medical writer for the Philadelphia Inquirer. I am married to Jake and have two sons, three stepchildren and (almost) seven step-grandchildren. I wrote the book, *"Gut Feelings: Social and Emotional Struggles with Crohn's & Colitis."*

WOMEN OF GJC

by Sandy Meyer and Vilma Lieberman, Co-Presidents WGJC

A new Board for Women of GJC was elected in May to serve for 2018-2019. We have added several new names to the Board and are looking forward to having these new faces energizing our work and being a vital part of our group.

Torah Fund was once again a wonderful day to be with friends and honor this year's Torah Fund recipient, Peninah Berdugo. Peninah told us about her family's long connection to the Seminary and Torah Fund. Our speaker, Ellen Frankel told wonderful stories about women's roles throughout Jewish history.

In Peninah's words:

"My grandmother, Jessica Alexander, could be called an organizational woman. She was very involved with our synagogue's Sisterhood, with Hadassah and with Women's League... I only knew that she was a *very important woman* who often "went off" to New York for "meetings," very dressed up in a fancy suit, long white gloves and a hat...

I'm not sure at what age I learned the reason for her trips to NY, which was that she was very involved with Women's League for Conservative Judaism and an avid fundraiser for The Mathilde Schechter Residence Hall, basically a building fund for a small JTS co-ed undergrad residence hall, which opened in 1976. She was campaign's first Chair."

This fund-raising arm later became known as Torah Fund. We laughed as Peninah recalled herself as a ten year old at a Women's League annual luncheon in New York City when her grandmother was being honored. Peninah was asked to lead Birkat Hamazon, the Grace After Meals, and was given a necklace as a memento of that day. Peninah wore the necklace to our Torah Fund Brunch as a memory and link

between her grandmother and herself. Peninah's story is a testament to her family's long tradition of "Jewish education, giving tzedakah, welcoming the stranger, keeping Jewish holidays: truly living Jewish values."

WGJC will be busy during the summer months planning for next year's programs and of course, the Purim Bash. Mark your calendar for Saturday night, March 9th, 2019, for an evening filled with song, dance, food, restaurants and unique auction items and, of course, friends with whom to share this entertaining event.

This year's Building Beautiful project has been underway. Please check out the new items on the Playground next time you are at GJC. The firetruck is being used fully by the Early Childhood Program and all children who play on the playground. Other improvements are moving along as weather permits.



Have you seen the exciting changes to the playground. Your Building Beautiful donations at work.



Peninah Berdugo, Torah Fund honoree



Ellen Frankel, Torah Fund speaker



Attendees enjoy the program at Torah Fund

NEWS FROM HAZAK (55+ programming)

by Coleman Poses

HAZAK has once again completed a rather unusual year, covering a variety of activities ranging from the silly to the sublime. In conjunction with the Women of GJC, we screened the 1965 classic, "A Thousand Clowns," a frenetic comedy with some serious underlying themes about modernity. HAZAK also sponsored the annual Opera Under the Stars, where maven Sam Feinberg presented us with a program entitled "Verdi's Ernani: A Step to Greatness."

In the fall, Dr. Ken Weiss led us in an interesting discussion of the controversial Israeli film, "Waltz with Bashir," a graphic novel-like story that skillfully melds history with psychology in an unpleasant chapter of the film maker's life.

HAZAK also co-sponsored (along with the Men's Club and Minyan Masorti) a reading by Dr. Herb Levine from his book of poems, *"Words for Blessing the World."*

The harsh winter weather did little to hinder our activities. In December, we visited one of Philadelphia's little known gems, the Fabric Museum, covering a retrospective of exhibits by some of the world's great modern artists. In February, Sam Magdovitz gave our group a tutorial in the upper shelf scotches available on our shores - another event co-sponsored with the Men's Club.

Other highlights for the year were the screening of "Yoo-Hoo Mrs. Goldberg," (with a discussion led by Maura Sostack), and our HAZAK Shabbat.

The HAZAK book group also read and discussed a variety of books with titles such as *"After the Fire," "Waking Lions,"*

"When General Grant Expelled the Jews," "The Lost," and *"Hillbilly Elegy."*

We are working to develop a program for next year as varied and interesting as the year that has just ended. We will certainly have Opera Under the Stars, as well as HAZAK Shabbat, and our book group, but there will be some other surprises as well. We don't want to give too much away yet, but two of our topics will be dealing with beer and sex. And save the date – Sunday, October 7, 2018 at 10 AM, when we will be showing the world premier of "LEAVING MEMEL - REFUGEES from the REICH!" a film based upon a book written by GJC's own Cherie Goren. And stay tuned for next year's calendar, and other announcements about our programming.



DID YOU KNOW?

HAZAK programs are planned for those age 55+, and are geared to reflect both common interests and get us to "stretch" to try new activities as well. Our well-attended book group meets monthly all year long. HAZAK also sponsors book talks by local authors, as well as speakers on topics of particular importance to our interests. We host Sam Feinberg each August to discuss opera, and we show great films! We also take day trips to cultural and natural sites in the area, often to places members have never been. HAZAK is for all of us to stay connected to GJC and to each other: to venture out and experience parts of our city we haven't seen before, to read, learn and talk together, to keep us strong. We hope you will join us. Membership is \$10/year.

ISRAELI DANCING

**Wednesdays at 10 AM:
August 1, 8, 15, 22, 29**

Taught by our wonderful, experienced dance teacher, Grant Shulman, GJC's Israeli dance group welcomes dancers of all ages and levels. We begin each session with 45 minutes of beginner dances, followed by instruction, review, open dancing and requests with increasing levels of difficulty. GJC's dance group is proud to be friendly and inclusive.

**For more information, please contact
Tamar Magdovitz at
tamarmagdovitz@gmail.com**

AMAZON SMILE

**EVERYONE CAN SUPPORT OUR
GJC COMMUNITY THROUGH WOMEN
OF GJC IN JUST 3 EASY STEPS!**

Register with Amazon smile and .5% of every purchase in the **Little Shop** will go to GJC Women's Club, which in turn goes directly to GJC!

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2. Search for Germantown Jewish Centre
3. Select charity:
4. Germantown Jewish Centre

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Summer Hours:
Wednesdays and Fridays
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(winter hours resume in September,
which will include Sunday morning,
and Wed, Thurs, and Fri afternoons
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- July and August-10% off everything*!!
- *except books, wine, tefillin, and mezuzah parchment

2018 Young Families Retreat

by Maria Pulzetti



Photos from this year's GJC Young Families Retreat



The 8th annual GJC Young Families Retreat was held in April at the Malvern Retreat Center. Over the weekend, 104 GJC members, including 57 kids ages 0-13, celebrated Shabbat together, played, shared meals, and enjoyed perfect spring weather. The retreat programming included three different children's Shabbat morning services, a nature walk, family Pirkei Avot study, improv comedy, meditation, and Capture the Flag. On Sunday morning, for Earth Day, we had a bottle bricks competition, and together turned several bags of plastic trash into 40 bottle bricks for the Ramah Community Garden. Rabbi Alanna Sklover joined us in her capacity as rabbi and as parent of the youngest retreator.

Most important, the retreat is a time for parents and children to build and deepen relationships. The retreat parents describe why their families come to the retreat:

"We deepen our connections to people in our community, and have a lot of fun!"

"We love the long and relaxed time frame that allows for relationship building, closeness, and true connection as Jewish families. I also love how we do Shabbat there."

"We want to build a sense of Jewish community."

"I love being able to talk to people and get to know people better. I always feel more connected to our community afterwards."

The family retreat committee is grateful to Linda and Jake Kriger, whose generous support permitted the retreat to offer partial scholarships to seven families this year. The 2018 retreat committee is Maria Pulzetti, Molly Weingrod, Mike Gross, David Kanthor, and Debbie Werlin. Every parent at the retreat participates in some way in the programming and coordination. It is truly a community effort.

Save the date for next year: May 11-13, 2019. All families with kids 0-13 are welcome!

MEMBER MEMORIES

coordinated by Eve Pinkenson

We are starting a new feature in this issue....

one in which GJC members tell some of their favorite holiday or GJC-related stories.

If you have a favorite story you're willing to share, write it down, send it to epinkenson@comcast.net, and as the calendar year progresses, the Centre Call will try to include some in each issue.

Our member sharing memories this issue is Marilyn Silberstein. Marilyn shares 3 special memories...

I've always had dogs, and they've always been an important part of my family. We had Mazel for 13 wonderful years. She was a German Shepherd dog whom we bred a couple of times and actually showed on occasion. She may have been canine, but she was very Jewish.

When she and my daughters were young, we always included her in our Chanukah celebration. Each night when we lit the candles, she patiently joined the family around the *chanukiah* and waited until we lit the candles and sang the *b'rachot*. Then we gave the girls **and** Mazel gifts. Sometimes she got something special and sometimes she just got a dog biscuit, but she always got something. Despite the fact that Chanukah came only once a year, she always remembered the "drill" and anxiously anticipated it.

One Chanukah, I actually forgot to get her a gift. She patiently sat at the *chanukiah* and waited for the treasure she expected. Feeling like a failed mother, I rushed to get her a dog biscuit, realizing that she actually remembered and expected the treat! I never let that happen again...

For several years, my daughters and I were invited to the Seder at Rabbi Sandy and Linda Hahn's house. We were always excited about the prospect of spending this wonderful time with them, first in their Mt. Airy home, and later in Center City. The Seder was always welcoming, with wonderful food, singing, and great discussions.

One year in the Hahn's Center City house, we enjoyed a wonderful Seder and prepared to open the door for Elijah. When we did so, a mouse quickly slipped through the open door and into the room. We were presented with a distinct dilemma: was this a mouse...or could it be....who knows?

Does anyone know the shape the *mashiach* might take? No one loved the idea of a mouse in the house, but no one wanted to hurt it either. As it scurried through the house with several of us in hot pursuit, there was much intellectual discussion on the matter. Finally, Dan, Linda's younger son, managed to coax it into a paper bag and set it free outside. The world took another spin.

My final story is one of the most beautiful memories I have of my father and one I will always cherish. My father was from an immigrant family and was raised in an Orthodox atmosphere. As he grew up, like many of his generation, he rejected many of the trappings of Orthodoxy. My mother was from a "Yankee" family. Her family knew they were Jewish, but practiced very little ritual. But both of my parents had a true love of Judaism, and it was a vital part of our home.

As I grew up, I was strongly attracted to the ritual and persuaded my parents to observe some basics, such as lighting Shabbat candles. After I had my own home and family, I tried to incorporate even more tradition into our lives. An important part of every week was our Shabbat dinner, which my husband and I instituted as soon as we got married, so our children would be born into the habit.

My parents, who lived in Boston, enjoyed our tradition and made it a point to arrive in time for Shabbat dinner whenever they came to visit. One Shabbat, when our children were still young, we gathered for dinner, lit the candles, passed the tzedakah box, said *Kiddush*, and *Motzi*. Suddenly, my father seemingly collapsed onto the table. Of course, we were all very concerned, but he quickly raised his head, displaying a shower of tears, as he sobbed, "This is what I'm about; this is what my life is all about." He's still with me when I observe Shabbat today.

GJC ALUMNI IN ISRAEL



What with one thing or another, we did not have a new GJC alumnus to write for us this issue. Jessie Bonn came to the rescue with this really interesting piece...

It's daunting to write about life in Israel to an open, unknown audience. No matter what one writes, it seems "loaded." The country that may be the most projected upon, like the child who bears the burden of family expectations, is under constant scrutiny, and there's no free pass issued to ordinary citizens. If I write about parenting soldiers, it's "what about Gaza?" If my focus is the joy I take in synagogue hopping, it's "what about freedom from religion?" From the opposite angle of critique, if I write about driving Palestinian kids to dialysis appointments, it's "aniyyei ircha kodmim," or in English, prioritize the needy in your own city -- a Talmudic expression introduced in Baba Batra. GJC Readers, I'm nervous about your reactions! To play it safe, I've chosen the zoom-in theme of my apartment block.

Let's start with the view from my writing perch, dominated by the not-yet-blooming sunflowers growing in my window box. A sunflower in Hebrew is "chamaniyah," from "chama," a poetic word for "sun." In Arabic, they're aptly called "Abad i-shams" -- sun worshippers, and judging from the sharp angle at which some of mine prostrate, they are the closest I have to Muslim neighbors.

Zooming out, I'd like to introduce you to some of my homo sapien neighbors and through them, share some Jerusalem stories. Yair and Ofra, on the top floor, are Kurdish, first cousins, and in their mid-50s, already grandparents of three.

Yair and I are on good terms, but have clashed over the fact that although he works for the sanitation department, he -- acting independently -- threw away the composter I had set up over ten years earlier in our building's small backyard. (Follow-up: By coincidence, later that same week, two municipal workers knocked on our door to try to enlighten and interest us in the city's new composting initiative. I guess Jerusalem City Hall is too big a bureaucracy for dumpster and composter to fulfill the vision of lion and lamb. Needless to say, still in mourning over my composter, I sent them upstairs for a staff meeting).

From directly above, through the mere (engineers, brace yourselves) mere 10 centimeters of ceiling that separate us from our neighbors, we can hear the bustle of a national-religious family with four children, ages 4 to 13. With the father, a physician at Hadassah, we share a close friend...the two were together in yeshiva in Kiryat Arba. It may come as a surprise to some GJC readers, that we have close friends to our left and far to our right...our quiet protest against the self-perpetuating polarization of Israeli society. If the key to changing the U.S. electorate means having conversations with those who share Trump's vision of making America "great again," the same is true here, where we have friends who support the settlement movement and a "greater" Israel. It's a spiritual practice for any who try to hold the extremes of the "arba kanfot" together, and I'm stretched even further by it on Tuesday nights when I have my weekly Arabic-English language exchange over the internet with a young student in Aleppo.

Back to the neighbors: From across the hall but travelling mainly through the airshaft, waft the sweet voices of Osnat and Gidon's children, weaving French, English and Hebrew together into conversations intelligible mainly when we're in the bathroom, due to the airshaft's location. On the bottom floor is a newlywed couple, British immigrants... he's a surgeon and she's at the wonderful non-profit "Yad Le-Kashish."

Finally, nesting across the hall from the Brits is a Mormon family with five boys. They're here because the father received a tenure-track position in the Hebrew U. physics department at Givat Ram. But it's the mother who defies

GJC ALUMNI IN ISRAEL (continued)

gravity, running near-marathons weekly with the physics department running club (first I'd heard of it!). I've learned from Heather and John about the inspiring ideal of "service in friendship" but not much else about Mormonism. When Teddy Kollek approved the construction of the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies (on Mt. Scopus or the Mount of Olives, depending on how it's pitched), he required the church leaders to submit a written pledge that they would never missionize in Israel. Our neighbors take this so seriously that they are unwilling to divulge to their Orthodox landlords (Yoel and Tammy, in the U.S. for Tammy's sabbatical year) even the most basic facts about their faith. "I'd be happy to discuss it on American soil," says John (who, incidentally, loves Friday night davening at the Yakar Synagogue and has arranged "El Yivneh HaGalil" in multiple parts recorded in his own voice.)

To complete the picture, I'll add a word about Yoel and Tammy, who will be returning from Sabbatical in July, causing a Mormon exodus to the nearby neighborhood of Abu-Tor. When we moved in 18 years ago, Yoel, who is a professor of physics, forbade me from hanging my laundry out over his window so as not to bring back childhood memories of Kiryat Gat, where he grew up in a large Tunisian family. He applies a physicist's quantum-leap style of logic to his view of his tenants' Mormonism: "You might say that our revelation is a far-fetched story. But at least ours happened 4000 years ago!" Yoel is a survivor of Sultan Yaaqub, one of the infamous battles of the First Lebanon War, and is sympathetic to Shas, unlike Tammy, who lectures on border studies and reads *Haaretz*. All this, in 12,000 square feet at Rechov Rabbi Meir 14.

Welcome to my neighborhood.

NEWS FROM THE MEN'S CLUB by Dick Menin

In keeping with the goal of Men's Club's increasing fellowship and friendship among the members of GJC, we will be returning to informal dinner meetings at local restaurants. This will allow people to gather in a low stress environment with friends from the shul. I'll be sending out time and place notifications in the Shabbat bulletin, on the website and by email to Men's Club members.

Because of summer vacation schedules we will have none of our regular programs. In the fall we'll be welcoming back Dr. Andrew Newberg to talk about Jewish Spirituality. Several films are planned as well.

Over the summer, we will continue our packing and delivering activities with JRA. These will be on Sundays July 8 and September 15. Please contact Dick Menin or Jim Meyer with details.

Have a great summer.

TODAH RABBAH

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Sincere thanks and appreciation to those who remember to honor their friends and loved ones through their generous contributions.

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If you are interested in writing for The Centre Call, we would love to hear your ideas! Please contact Kate Lawn at program@germantownjewishcentre.org. The deadline for every issue is the 1st of the previous month.


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