



# THE CENTRE CALL

## GERMANTOWN JEWISH CENTRE

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## SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

by Rabbi Adam Zeff

In middle of winter, we turn to the Book of Exodus, to the stories of the Israelites finding their way from slavery to freedom. At the beginning of the book, the Israelites' fate seems to hinge on one person to whom God turns to speak God's

words on earth, and we might be forgiven if we thought their initial interaction less than promising. When Moses receives the call from God to be a prophet, Moses seems more than a little reluctant to answer the call. He hides his face from God's presence. He asks, "Who am I to do this?" He asks for God's name. He asks what he is to do if the Israelites don't believe him. He points out that he is not a good public speaker, and finally, he comes out with it: "Please, God, send someone else!" We might think it would be a good thing to be God's chosen prophet, so why doesn't Moses agree?

Perhaps part of the problem is with what it means to be a prophet in the first place. Typically, we think of prophets as people who can accurately foretell the future, and the Bible certainly contains evidence that prophets of this type were active in ancient times, giving predictions, finding lost objects, and taking on other such lucrative and non-controversial tasks. But this is not the type of prophet that God is asking Moses to be, and Moses knows it.

Instead, the job description that God seems to have in mind for "prophet" is more along the lines of "telling people messages from God that they really don't want to hear." Moses is asked to approach the Pharaoh—the most powerful man in the world—in order to call him to account for going against the ways of God. This is the same type of job given to later prophets from Elijah to Jeremiah and from Amos to Zechariah. It often involves scolding kings, angering priests, and upsetting the wealthy. It is not usually good for your health, and as Moses discovers, it often doesn't work, or at least not right away.

After hearing all of Moses's questions, diversions, and disqualifications, God gets angry and orders him to take on the job. Moses dutifully goes to Pharaoh and says in God's name, "Let my people go!"

What is Pharaoh's response? "Who is this 'God?' I know no 'God!' And I will not let the people go!" Instead, Pharaoh imposes more hardships on the Israelites, requiring them to make bricks without providing them with straw, which virtually guarantees that they will be punished for failing to complete their quota of work.

The Israelites, of course, blame Moses. "Why," they ask, "have you made life so difficult for us?"

And Moses, in turn, blames God. "Why did You harm the people? Why did You even send me? From the time I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, it's just been bad for everyone!"

God's response? "Trust me. Pharaoh will let the people go...eventually."

As we read through the story, we see that all of Moses's fears are realized. All the reasons he was reluctant to take the job turn out to be right. Pharaoh does not listen to him; things get worse than ever for the people; the Israelites turn on him, and freedom and justice are not achieved.

What are we to learn from Moses's experience as we search for our own prophetic voices? Speaking truth to power turns out not to be so easy. There are always reasons for not speaking up. Results, especially immediate ones, are not at all assured. It takes an incredible act of faith to believe that justice will come when it is so often delayed. In spite of all of that, we, like Moses, cannot remain silent. If the divine purpose is ever to be realized in this world, it will come down to us.

# SHABBAT & HOLIDAYS

## January 3-4

- ECP Shabbat Potluck
- Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday night service)
- Shabbat School (Beit Midrash for kids)
- Beit Midrash for adults
- Kol D'mamah with Leah Weisman

## January 10-11

- Rising Song Shabbat (Friday night service)
- Minyan Masorti Friday Night Potluck
- Shabbat School (Beit Midrash for kids)
- Beit Midrash for adults
- Charry Service: 2nd grade Siddur Ceremony
- Rising Song Minyan
- Parashat ha-Shavua b'Ivrit
- Shabbat Sha'baby

## January 17-18: Ralph Granger Memorial Shabbat

- Kol Zimrah (Friday night service)
- Shabbat School (Beit Midrash for kids)
- Beit Midrash for adults
- Ralph Granger Memorial Shabbat
- Rising Song Minyan
- Musical Marching Minyan
- Ralph Granger Memorial Shabbat Afternoon Program

## January 24-25

- Rising Song Shabbat (Friday night service)
- Shabbat School (Beit Midrash for kids)
- Beit Midrash for adults
- Charry Service: Camp Shabbat
- Dorshei Derekh: *Mazal tov to Natan Nevins-Klein, son of Rabbi Malkah Binah Klein & Neysa Nevins, on becoming Bar Mitzvah*
- Camp Fair

## January 31-February 1

- Kabbalat Together (Friday night service)
- Shabbat School (Beit Midrash for kids)
- Beit Midrash for adults
- Kol D'mamah with Leah Weisman
- Charry Service: JDAIM Shabbat

## February 7-8

- Shabbat in the Neighborhood (offsite)
- Shabbat School (Beit Midrash for kids)
- Beit Midrash for adults
- Shabbat Sha'baby
- Parashat ha-Shavua b'Ivrit
- Evening Concert with Jessi Roemer & Friends and G'vanim

## February 14-15

- Rising Song Shabbat (Friday night service)
- Shabbat School (Beit Midrash for kids)
- Beit Midrash for adults
- Minyan Masorti Anniversary Shabbat
- Charry Appreciation Shabbat
- Rising Song Minyan
- Musical Marching Minyan

## February 21-22

- Kol Zimrah (Friday night service)
- Shabbat School (Beit Midrash for kids)
- Beit Midrash for adults
- Charry Service: *Mazal Tov to Naomi Becker, daughter of Chip & Marta Becker, on becoming Bat Mitzvah*

## February 28-29

- Rising Song Shabbat (Friday night service)
- Shabbat School (Beit Midrash for kids)
- Beit Midrash for adults
- Charry Service: 3rd grade Tanakh Ceremony
- Rising Song Minyan



## MAZAL TOV! IN CELEBRATION OF...

**Hanna Nielson**, daughter of Rebekah Krantz and Rick Nielson, on becoming Bat Mitzvah

**Marcy Bacine**, on her 70th birthday

**Paul Farber**, son of Barry and Ruth Farber, and Aaron Skrypski on their Aufruf

**Yael and Jonah Smith Posner**, children of Wendy Smith and Michael Posner, on becoming B'nei Mitzvah

**Gabriel Axelrod**, son of David Axelrod and Keira Chism Axelrod, on becoming Bar Mitzvah

**Steve and Patty Segal**, on the birth of their grandson, Tomoki, to son Noah and daughter-in-law Ayano

**Pearl Raz and David Goodman**, on their Aufruf

**Linda Cherkas**, on her retirement and 65th birthday

## IN MEMORIAM

**Jeanette Dudnick**, mother of Robert Dudnick, grandmother of Harry and Emma and a long-time member of Germantown Jewish Centre

**David William Piser**, brother of Dan Piser, cousin of Ruth Loew

**Bernice Tunick**, mother of Michael Tunick

**Edward Siff**, father of Tamar Magdovitz

**Maxine Feldman**, mother of Ellen Mermelstein, grandmother of Adam and Lauren, beloved long-time member of Germantown Jewish Centre

**Betty Van Covern**, mother of Brad Sanders



## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

David Franklin & Reba Carmel

Richard Goldberg & Deborah Weinstein

David & Margaret Salamon

Grant Shulman & Richard Lewis

Yoni Stadlin & Vivian Lehrer

John & Barbara Torday



# THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Denise S. Wolf, President

Your synagogue leadership has passed some big "legislation." After more than a year-long process, the GJC Public Issues Policy has been enacted. In a nutshell, GJC may now issue statements and endorse public events. The pertinent part of the policy is:

- On issues of oppression of Jews and other marginalized groups, and on welcoming the stranger, we believe that the Executive Committee can speak in the name of GJC. On other issues, the Executive Committee believes that it is in keeping with the values of our community to tread carefully, and to respect differences of opinion.

Also:

- Congregants wishing to propose that GJC take a stance on an issue should contact an Executive Committee member or the Rabbi. The ultimate decision as to whether to sponsor the stance or event will rest with the Executive Committee, in consultation with the Rabbi.

This represents a sea change from our historic practice when GJC had a blanket prohibition from taking public stances. How did this come about?

In July 2018, GJC was approached to endorse a *Tisha B'Av* event to stand in solidarity with those seeking refuge at the U.S. Immigration Customs & Enforcement (ICE) office in downtown Philadelphia that was being sponsored by other area synagogues, as well as HIAS, and some local Jewish organizations. Although the Executive Committee (EC) does not typically meet over the summer hiatus, it convened an emergency session. There were compelling reasons to participate in the event. However, the EC recognized that doing so would represent a significant break from past practices. Instead, it cautioned against proceeding in a rushed manner to endorse the event and opted instead for a deliberate process. After all, careful deliberation is in our community's DNA.

The next step was the establishment of a sub-committee, officially dubbed, "Ad Hoc Committee to Consider Public Stance on Issues of Public Concern," to explore these issues. As President, I issued a formal "charge," with a preamble as follows:

"The Executive Committee recognizes that Germantown Jewish Centre has always engaged with our political world in multiple ways, through programs, social justice activism, communications and *divrei torah*/sermons from the rabbis and members. However, as a matter of policy,

the synagogue has refrained from making public statements or sponsoring events with a direct political agenda.

The Executive Committee equally recognizes that many GJC members are presently advocating for the institution to act in a more public way, including potentially issuing public statements or sponsoring public events."



This committee was tasked specifically with determining whether the synagogue should sponsor events and issue statements on issues of public concern and, if so, using what criteria and what approval process. A tall order, no doubt. Yet, under the leadership of Dan Livney (the current GJC Senior Vice-President), the committee tackled the assignment. It was not easy. Many members held a wide range of views and felt passionately about them.

The committee was "willing to meet as many times as needed and to delve into the language of the policy, the needs of the congregation and the potential consequences of this kind of advocacy," Dan noted. This was an impressive collaboration in which, according to Dan, individuals "compromised in order to find the best solution for the congregation's needs even when it did not conform to their individual ideals."

Who were these committee members? We are fortunate that Chip Becker, Lawrence Charap, Helen Feinberg, Greg Lattanzi and Dave Mosenkis dedicated their time and brain power on this committee. Past President Chris Levin is deserving of special mention, as she spearheaded this effort alongside Dan and was invaluable in getting this weighty task across the finish line. Helen Feinberg reflected that "we worked slowly, but all discussion was lively, courteous and engaging."

Input from the community was essential. A remarkable number of you provided it. Lawrence Charap observed that the committee "was committed at the outset to finding a solution that would balance competing perspectives on a very challenging issue. We worked hard to gather community feedback at different stages,"

(Continued on page 4)

## THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN (continued)

Through Survey Monkey® and parlor meetings, we learned your views. Almost 300 members completed the online survey. While 85% answered affirmatively that GJC should engage in making statements and endorsing events on matters of public concern, the consensus dissipated thereafter upon more specific questioning. Many felt that GJC should speak out if it involved a compelling moral issue and one that had a strong connection to Jewish values, ethics and texts. Others commented that a synagogue is a sanctuary and politics should be removed from the sacred prayer space. Some specific anonymous comments ranged from opposition to admonitions to tread carefully:

- "I would resent positions I do not happen to agree with. Why do we need GJC to play this role? There are so many other ways to be involved in political issues."
- "I am concerned about strife within the congregation and making holders of minority views feel unwelcome."
- "You may drive away moderate Jews of differing views."
- "This could divide, even fracture, our community."
- GJC does not have "one" voice, but many voices, many divergent opinions on a myriad of social issues. It would be wrong to assume all members can speak as one."

Other comments clearly urged speaking out as one community:

- "I would feel a sense of pride to see GJC represented in the public sphere."
- "We live in tough times. GJC can't afford to isolate itself."
- "I have been disappointed in GJC leadership's unwillingness to engage in public discourse."

- "Our voices together have moral authority, particularly when we speak in concert with other religious institutions."

We additionally collected your views through a handful of parlor meetings, which were well attended. We sincerely appreciated the dedication and feedback of the facilitators of these parlor meetings: Sarah Braun, Elaine Dushoff, Rabbi Fredi Cooper, Lynn Kotranski and David and Marilyn Kraut. The recorders of the parlor meetings, Marilyn Silberstein, Tamar Magdovitz, Debbie Fishman, Linda Feder and Kate Margo, also deserve a "*kol ha-kavod*" for their work.

After studying the feedback from the SurveyMonkey® and parlor meetings, the Committee drafted a policy that enables public engagement of issues. The Committee recommended the policy to the Executive Committee in early October, where it was passed with slight revisions. Two weeks later, the Board of Directors approved the policy.

Lay leaders, past presidents, the Rabbi, members from the various *minyanim* and various constituencies in the synagogue all played a role in the deliberations and in the creation of the Policy. The Policy heeds the cautions learned during the process. It does not permit engagement of all issues all of the time. Rather, it permits engagement around issues that reflect very broadly endorsed values of the synagogue as a whole: the oppression of Jews and marginalized groups, and welcoming the stranger. It also recognizes that topics outside of these parameters should be considered with more caution. Lastly, the policy places trust in the synagogue leadership to determine whether to engage in a particular public issue at all. Thank you for this trust. We will always put our heart, soul, and minds to making decisions that are best for our community.

## BELATED TODAH RABBAH FROM THE HIGH HOLY DAYS

There were a few people who were inadvertently omitted when GJC thanked all the members of the congregation who participated in enriching our High Holy Day services.

Kol D'Mamah thanks Martha Lask and Jonathan Harmon for the Kol D'Mamah Yom Kippur Break the Fast.

# GJC THANKS OUR NEDIV LEV AND ROSH PINAH MEMBERS

"A gift from generous hearts"  
(Exodus 25:2)

Within the GJC community, we are fortunate to have a growing number of extraordinarily generous members who give \$10,000 or more to the Centre annually, providing a backbone to GJC. This group of donors who belong to the Nediv Lev (generous of heart) giving circle enable the shul to serve our community. Their commitment enables the shul to provide for the needs of all our members. We especially thank the Nediv Lev circle below for helping Germantown Jewish Centre to continue to offer the highest possible level of education, religious, and social programming.

**Marcy & Dan Bacine**  
**Jane & Richard Baron**  
**Peninah & Albert Berdugo**  
**Harold Berger**  
**Linda & Jake Kriger**  
**Chris & Steve Levin**  
**Barbara & Dick Menin**  
**Sandy & Jim Meyer**  
**Paul Minkoff**

**Elise Singer & Don Perelman**  
**Martha & Chuck Schleifer**  
**Allyson & David Schwartz**  
**Denise Scott Brown**  
**Dveera Segal & Brad Bridge**  
**Patty & Steve Segal**  
**Stefanie & Alex Seldin**  
**Joan N. Stern**

\* \* \* \* \*

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

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

**Marta & Chip Becker**  
**Michael Beer**  
**Sarah Braun & Shai Gluskin**  
**Evelyn Eskin & David Major**  
**Rachel Falkove & Michael Masch**  
**Helen & Michael Feinberg**  
**Dayle Friedman & David Ferleger**  
**The Hahn & Weiss Family**  
**Myra & Gert Jacobsohn**  
**Barbara Jaffe & Howard Langer**  
**Hillary & Judd Kruger Levingston**  
**Katie & Geof Margo**  
**Cyrilla Rosen**  
**Denise Wolf & Paul Rudick**  
**Jessica & Mathieu Shapiro**  
**Beth Stearman**  
**Betsy & David Teutsch**

For information on joining one of these giving circles, please contact Nina Peskin at [director@germantownjewishcentre.org](mailto:director@germantownjewishcentre.org).



# TODAH RABBAH!

Todah Rabbah to everyone who generously gave to the High Holiday Appeal!

Below is a list of gift dedications, representing the many ways each of us connects to Judaism and to this beautiful community. If you have not yet contributed, but would still like to contribute, please contact the office. We will list your name and dedication in the next issue of the Centre Call.

Adina Abramowitz & Naomi Klayman,  
with thanks to Rabbi Rebecca Richman  
Avruhm Addison & Bobbi Breitman  
George & Kathy Amrom, in memory of  
George's sister, Miriam Lewin  
Sherman Aronson & Joyce Lieberman, in  
memory of their parents  
Louie Asher & family, in honor of Jacob  
and Kendra and the signing of their  
ketubah  
David Axelrod & Keira Chism Axelrod  
Josh Barash & Devorah Lissek  
Craig Barkan & Amy Schrager  
Richard & Jane Baron  
Nancy Bauer  
Chip & Marta Becker, in honor of Denise  
Wolf for her service to the congregation  
Lonnie Beer, in memory of her parents  
Harry Lore and Edie Schwartz  
Albert & Peninah Berdugo  
Lizanne Berger  
Rick Berkman & Toni Seidl  
Alice Berman  
Michelle Bernstein, in honor of the ECP  
staff, along with her beautiful children,  
who all help her see light in a positive  
and loving way  
Josh Bolton & Natalie Lyalin, in honor of  
the GJC office staff  
Chana Bonn  
Lila Booth  
Ned & Caren Borowsky  
Jeremy Brochin & Reena Spicehandler  
Albert & Ellen Brown, in appreciation  
of the wonderful experience their  
granddaughter has had at ECP  
Eleanor Brownstein  
Lawrence & Ellyn Charap, in memory of  
Stanley Charap, Monty Specker, and  
Jess Novick  
Tamara Cohen & Gwynn Kessler  
Heshie & Fredi Cooper  
Steve & Linda Corsover  
Nan Daniels, in honor of her grandchildren

Howard Dansky & Yona Diamond Dansky  
Lyn Davis, in honor of Connie Katz, for all  
that she has done and brought to GJC  
Avi Decter  
Vinny DiLorenzo & Andi Brockman  
Ramy & Monica Djerassi, in loving  
memory of their aunt Mati Djerassi  
and mother Rita Paddick who passed  
last year  
Lou Dobkin & Robin Robinowitz  
Scott & Sandra Donover  
Robert Dudnick & Anna Herman  
Elaine Dushoff, with thanks to Betsy and  
David Deutsch for so many reasons  
Chaim Dworkin & Linda Cherkas, in honor  
of Rabbi Zeff and the GJC choir  
Michael & Linda Dzuba  
Ron Eisenberg & Judy Groner  
Janet Elfant, in memory of Avriel  
Yosef Keogh  
Art & Lynne Ellis  
Mikael Elsila & Dina Pinsky  
Sara Engel  
Sheila Erlbaum, in memory of her mother,  
father, brother, and friend, Neely Snyder  
Barry & Ruth Farber  
Michael & Helen Feinberg  
Walt & Rochelle Fellman  
David & Betty Ann Fellner  
Aaron Finestone & Patty Wright  
Justin Fink & Sandra Masayko  
David & Marcy Fish  
Jacob Fisher & Ronnie Rubin  
Eric Frank & Billie Schnall  
Jeremy Frank & Jen Zarro  
John & Elaine Frank  
Jonathan Frank & Cheryl Roth-Frank  
Howard & Marjie Gleit  
Richard Gold & Cheryl Kritz  
Joshua Goldblum & Deborah Fishman  
Mindelle Goldstein, in honor of the entire  
staff of GJC and their extraordinary  
and valuable effort  
Allen Gottlieb & Ellen Fleishman

Julie Greenberg  
Marsh Greenberg & Addy Sugarman  
Mike Gross & Penina Kelberg  
Alex & Jessica Gurvich  
David Hahn & Barbara Weiss  
Linda Hahn & George Feuer, in gratitude  
for the excellent music at the High  
Holiday services  
Jonathan Harmon & Martha Lask, with  
thanks to Leah Weisman Brunner for  
sustaining Kol D'mamah this year at GJC  
Eli Havivi  
Shawn Hennessey & Iris Shamir  
Steve & Marlene Hilkowitz  
Mitch Hirsch & Sylvia Lifschitz, in honor  
of their mothers, Rose Lifschitz, who  
recently turned 98 and Eileen Hirsch,  
who will turn 100 soon  
Dan Hoffman & Abby Pozefsky  
Jeremy & Shellie Holl  
Juha & Elana Hollo  
Abigail Horn & Maria Pulzetti  
Nina Israel  
Martin & Ann Itzkowitz  
Rob Jefferson & Rachel Blake  
David Kanthor & Burgandy Holiday  
Avi Kaplan & Tresa Grauer  
Dean Kaplan & Barbara Mattleman, in  
honor of Rabbi Zeff and Nina Peskin for  
their support in this difficult year  
Marty & Carol Kaplan  
Bill Kavesch  
Kevin Kleinman & Chana Rothman  
Nilmini Klur  
Bernie & Ellen Kolodner  
Jake & Linda Kriger, in memory of Jake's  
brother, Morty (z"l)  
Janet Kroll  
Linda Kugler  
Howard Kunreuther  
& Gail Loeb Kunreuther  
Peter & Peshe Kuriloff  
Jerry Kutnick & Wendy Weingarten  
Ed & Dena Lake

## TODAH RABBAH! (continued)

**Marcy Landesberg**, in memory of her husband, Harold Landesberg  
**Christopher & Sally Lane**  
**Howard Langer & Barbara Jaffe**  
**Doug Lerner & Ken Cohen**  
**Steve & Chris Levin**  
**Judd Livingston & Hillary Kruger**, with gratitude to the GJC community  
**Craig & Addie Lewis Klein**  
**Seth Lieberman & Beth Janus**, in memory of Murray J. Janus  
**Vilma Lieberman**  
**Barbara Lissy**, in honor of Ruth Lissy Rosenberg and Ellen Lissy Rosenberg and Stephen Orens  
**Itzik Lorant & Elayne Blender**  
**Peter Maas & Lesley Carson**  
**Sam & Tamar Magdovitz**  
**Mitch & Sue Marcus**  
**Geof & Kate Margo**  
**Morgan Marks & Rachel Sitkin Marks**  
**Nathan Martin & Abby Weinberg**, in honor of Denise Wolf and the Executive Committee's leadership  
**Alan Mendelsohn & Mindy Shapiro**  
**Andrew & Ellen Mermelstein**  
**Gavi Miller & Minna Ziskind**  
**Judith Miller**  
**Marty & Linda Millison**  
**Alex Molot & Adena Klem**  
**William Moody & Louise Leibowitz**  
**Dan Moscow & Sharon Strauss**  
**Jonathan & Andrea Moselle**  
**David & Nahariyah Mosenkis**  
**Jeffrey & Linda Needleman**  
**Norm & Adina Newberg**  
**Jill Nissen**  
**Steven Peitzman**, in honor of all GJC musicians and the choir  
**Josh & Nina Peskin**, in loving memory of Josh's grandfather, Dr. Bernie Kuhr  
**David Picker & Ann Trail**  
**Bob & Sherry Pomerantz**  
**Michael Posner & Wendy Smith**  
**Pearl Raz & David Goodman**, in honor of their upcoming wedding  
**Yoni & Aviva Reinfeld**  
**Marge Richman**  
**Ed & Andrea Rock**

**Cyrilla Rosen**, with thanks for her wonderful family in the USA and Israel  
**Ivan & Rina Rosenberg**  
**Judith Rossman**  
**Greg & Marcy Rost**  
**Benjamin & Juliet Rotenberg**  
**Jimmy & Naomi Rotenberg**  
**Chris Rugen & Alisa Kraut**  
**Henry Salama & Shirley Brown**  
**Paul & Merle Savedow**, in celebration of their daughter Rebecca's marriage to Matthew Liskowski  
**Alan & Barbara Schindler**  
**Norman & Leah Schwartz**  
**Hideko Secrest**, in honor of Rabbi Zeff for all he has done for GJC, and in memory of his father, David Zeff  
**Alex Seldin & Stefanie Fleischer Seldin**  
**Mathieu & Jessica Shapiro**  
**Will & Akhila Shapiro**  
**Brian & Elana Shaw**  
**Marilyn Silberstein & Joel Reiss**, in honor of the bat mitzvah of her granddaughter, Elia Elle, and the marriage of her daughter, Adina Joy  
**Joan Silver**  
**Alan Silverblatt & Lynne Jacobs**, in memory of their parents  
**Marc Singer & Leah Lande**  
**Michael & Marta Sivitz**, in memory of Anna & Clemens Brand and Sidney & Bess Sivitz  
**Mark Smith & Liz Bloch-Smith**, in memory of their parents, Ted & Sonia Bloch and Don & Betty Smith  
**Mindi Snoparsky & Jim Lammendola**  
**Alan Soffin & Maxine Margolies**  
**Bev Somerson**  
**Michael & Shelley Spear**  
**Mark Spiller & Amy Cohen**  
**Jordan & Paula Spivack**  
**Gary Stein & Ellen Reese**  
**Paul Rider & Emily Steinberg**, in memory of Emily's parents, Bernard and Jacqueline Steinberg  
**Harris & Jane Steinberg**  
**David Stern & Kathryn Hellerstein**  
**George & Debbie Stern**, with thanks to all who help out during our Hospitality Network rotations

**Joan N. Stern**  
**Joan W. Stern**  
**Richard Stern & Mindy Brown**  
**Elaine Stewart**  
**Bob Tabak & Ruth Loew**  
**Donna Tartasky**  
**David & Betsy Teutsch**, in honor of their grandchildren, Shulamit, Sender, Eyal, and Nadav  
**David & Brigitte Thalheimer**  
**Irwin Trauss & Georgette Bartell**  
**Howard & Ronit Treatman**  
**Erik & Joyce Videlock**  
**Alex Volin Avelin & Sheila Allen Avelin**  
**Sonia Voynow & Bret Boyer**  
**Leah Wald**, in honor of Rabbi Zeff and Dorshei Derekh  
**Lou Walinsky & Nina Gordon**  
**Rivkah Walton**, in memory of her parents, Norma and Henry Walton  
**Deborah Waxman & Christina Ager**, in honor of the clergy and staff of GJC for all they do  
**Joey Weisenberg & Molly Weingrod**  
**Chava Weissler & Nancy Fredland**  
**Russell Woessner & Della Lazarus**  
**Matt Wray & Jill Gurvey**  
**Hy & Geanne Zerkowitz**  
**Wayne Zukin & Susan Smith**

Thank you also to our donors who wish to remain anonymous.

# TIKKUN OLAM

## “Breaking Bread—Breaking Barriers”

### Anuj Gupta’s Community-Building Initiatives

by Margaret Shapiro



Anuj Gupta, the general manager of the Reading Terminal Market, gave an inspiring talk at GJC on November 3, sponsored by the Tikkun Olam Coordinating Team, about the Market’s innovative civic values program, “Breaking Bread—Breaking Barriers.” Anuj spoke philosophically and pragmatically

about how preparing and eating food together can transform strangers into partners for creating vibrant and cohesive neighborhoods.

Anuj is a celebrated Mt. Airy neighbor who previously worked as an attorney at Ballard Spahr, LLP in its real estate and affordable housing division. He also served as deputy general manager to Mayor Michael Nutter and most recently was director of Mt. Airy USA, where he worked on business and housing development. In June 2019, as a result of his Reading Terminal work using food to build community, he was selected as one of the Knight Foundation’s first seven national Public Space Fellows and was awarded a \$150,000 grant to expand his community initiatives.

He began developing these initiatives in 2016, in partnership with HIAS-PA, the University of Pennsylvania, and the City of Philadelphia’s Human Relations Commission. The participating partners identified social groups in the city that lived near one another but either did not know each other or had some measure of misunderstanding between them. Each neighborhood pair was asked to come to Reading Terminal Market to learn to cook one another’s cuisines and, after the food was prepared, to sit down for dinner and break bread with each other. A program coordinator helped them socialize. The goals of the dinner were to honor ethnic identity and build respect, trust, and friendship that would carry over into neighborhood life.

Over the course of eighteen months, the Market and its partner organizations worked with twelve different communities. There were Koreans who cooked and ate with their West Philadelphia neighbors, Cambodians sharing their cuisine with neighbors from South Philadelphia, and Syrians exchanging dishes with their Northeast Philadelphia neighbors. The project culminated in one dinner in which all communities were invited to sit with each other, across one long communal table spanning the length of the Reading Terminal Market, with a dish shared from each cuisine.

Breaking Bread’s second initiative to enhance civic dialogue has been boosted by new project partners, including the Vetri Community Partnership, the Fairmount Park Conservancy, and the Knight Foundation grant. Relocated beyond the four walls of the Market to neighborhood parks, now the Breaking Bread model uses public spaces that should be our most democratic and accessible to help city neighbors find common ground. The Breaking Bread coalition has been bringing people together through meals at public park dinners in South Philadelphia, Kensington, Southwest Philadelphia and, right in our own backyard, in Germantown’s Vernon Park. Residents meet over a meal with a facilitator to discuss issues important to their neighborhood and brainstorm for constructive measures. Anuj pointed out how his public park project parallels the existing civic engagement work of organizations in West and East Mt. Airy, famous for our “Eat Your Heart Out” and “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner” neighborly chow fests. Anuj is now working on yet a third iteration of Breaking Bread that will involve children.

The GJC audience was very enthused and had many ideas for follow-up. We will be looking into future opportunities for involvement. Please contact Tikkun Olam Coordinating Team member Margaret Shapiro at [mshapiro2@me.com](mailto:mshapiro2@me.com) if you would like more details.



SAVE THE DATE!

# The Bash

Saturday, March 28 at 8 PM

featuring live music with Heath Allen & Friends  
and MC & Auctioneer Jeff Hammond

## amazing auction

GiveSmart Mobile Bidding  
5-Star & Live Auction  
Restaurant, Wine, & Silent Auction

## great party

Hors d'oeuvres & Cocktails  
Live Music & Dancing  
Hi-Top & Lounge Areas

## key fundraiser

Supports ECP Scholarships  
Sustains GJC's Religious School  
Builds Services, Programs & More!

## NEWS FROM THE MEN'S CLUB

by Dick Menin, President

I'd like to start by thanking everyone who helped make the "Dancing Children Hanukiyah" a success again this year. Whether you helped assemble it or sponsored a candle, we couldn't have done it without you.

This past November, the Men's Club partnered with "Our Closet"—an associate of Jewish Federation and Children's Services—to collect men's clothes for people in need. Since this was our first venture in this project I had no idea how responsive our congregation would be. I'm pleased to thank all those who

donated and helped sort the clothes. We had over 520 items brought in, a great result which will clearly be appreciated by the beneficiaries. We will do this again in the future.

GJC member and architect Sherman Aronson will discuss "Designing the Green 'New Deal'—A survey of ideas for integrating climate action in the world" at our next Men's Club meeting. Mark your calendar for Sunday, January 12, at 10 AM in the Temin Canteen Room. A \$5 brunch will be available. Please RSVP to me at [MeninR@einstein.edu](mailto:MeninR@einstein.edu). All are welcome.

## THANK YOU

Germantown Jewish Centre extends thanks and gratitude to the  
**Wolfe Family Foundation**  
for generously supporting and making our programming possible.

# MEN'S CLUB AND THE JEWISH RELIEF AGENCY

by Dick Menin, President

For a number of months, I have mentioned the Men's Club association with JRA, the Jewish Relief Agency. Following the initiative of Jim and Sandy Meyer, the Men's Club started its involvement with JRA about two years ago. Since then we have been a steady presence. Especially because I heartily recommend this as a B'nai Mitzvah service project, I would like to discuss the agency and what goes on that makes participation so worthwhile an experience.

The JRA began in September 2000 when local philanthropist and independent filmmaker Marc Erlbaum and Lubavitcher Chabad Rabbi Menachem Schmidt formed the organization to help Philadelphia area families in need of food support. That first month food was delivered to 19 families. In addition to universal delivery of staples such as cereals, pasta and beans, for Jewish recipients there are also seasonally appropriate items such as matzoh, wine-like grape juice and apples.

Utilizing targeted outreach and word of mouth, over the years the mission has ballooned in size. Each month numerous volunteers, often numbering in the hundreds, join together to box and deliver food to people throughout the Philadelphia region, and occasionally into neighboring states. There is an especially heavy turnout of volunteers during the Martin Luther King Day of Service time. Not surprisingly, the turnout lags during the summer months and needs more support.

In the past several years, JRA has routinely supplied over 3,000 families with food supplements. Neither the recipients nor the packers and deliverers need be Jewish. Many people of diverse ethnic backgrounds receive the packages and there are many Christians and Muslims who participate in the work.

Operations are based at the JRA warehouse on Dutton Road in Northeast Philadelphia. On the Friday before the Sunday packing, many of the needed boxes are assembled by whoever can be available then. There is some packing and delivering

done on Friday as well, but the main event occurs on Sunday morning. Families with small children begin the day during the "tiny tots" hour about 8 AM. At the same time, other volunteers continue box-making and readying the pallets of boxes, bottles and cans to be put in boxes. About 9:30 or 10, the packing of food begins with human conveyer belts carrying the boxes past the food stations, accompanied by rock music. It's quite a party. Those who are making deliveries then drive up to the loading docks to pick up the filled boxes. JRA has excellent maps and directions printed to guide drivers to their destinations. The whole experience usually ends by 12:30 or 1 PM. It is a lot of work but I always feel more exhilarated than fatigued at the end of the morning.

This is a great venue for a family team project that engages parents and children in the joys of volunteering. The JRA days of service can be found in the printed Shabbat Bulletin or the online GJC Weekly. Upcoming dates are January 19 and February 16.

For more information, please contact me at  
[MeninR@einstein.edu](mailto:MeninR@einstein.edu).



Ed Lake and Sandy Meyer



David Kraut and Chris Levin



Jim Meyer and Carole Tinkleman



Jim Meyer

# WOMEN OF GJC

by Vilma Lieberman and Linda Cherkas, Co-Presidents

## CeaseFirePA Presentation

On Sunday, November 24, WGJC held a timely and important presentation by CeaseFirePA. Shira Goodman, until recently the executive director of CeaseFirePA, showed a short film, "A Time for Advocacy" (funded by Women of Vision, Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia). The film showed many people, from young to old, expressing their reactions to the effects of guns in their lives and the world around them. Distressing and compelling, the film stirs concern in everyone who sees it.

After the film, Ms. Goodman discussed the laws and regulations of various types of firearms in Pennsylvania, and Philadelphia in particular, because the city has regulations not in place in the rest of the state. She described trying to work with gun advocacy groups to find common ground and common sense solutions. GJC President Denise Wolf, who was in attendance, quickly went online and reported that there have been 321 homicides in Philadelphia so far this year. Homicide rates are up again in Philadelphia, with an increased number of children, including infants, killed in crossfires in the streets or in their homes.

Ms. Goodman met the challenge of answering many on-target questions from our very engaged audience. We were fortunate to have her as our speaker; it had just recently been announced that in mid-January she would become the new regional director of the Anti-Defamation League in Philadelphia.

## SAVE THESE DATES

### Women's Clothing GiveAway

On February 2, 2020 WGJC will hold its annual Women's Clothing GiveAway in the Marcus Auditorium from 11-1 PM. Co-sponsored by the Tikkun Olam Operating Committee and WGJC, proceeds from this very popular event will benefit POWER (Philadelphians Organized to Witness, Empower, and Rebuild), an interfaith organization dedicated to creating economic, social, and climate justice. The GiveAway enables women with limited incomes who come from all over the city to buy an entire wardrobe for the nominal price of \$20. GiveAway chair Genie Ravital's article in this issue provides important information about donating your gently used womenswear to make this event a success.

## The BASH

March 28, 2020 is the date of the new BASH. This is the new version of WGJC's popular Purim Bash, a Saturday night soirée in the Marcus Auditorium. Come see what's new and different about the 2020 BASH and what favorite activities remain (such as select restaurant gift certificates and the five-star auction). It should be a great night for all members, coming together to wine, dine, party and take home prized purchases, all to strengthen GJC.

## Women's Shabbat

Mark April 4, 2020 on your calendar to attend our 43rd Annual Women's Shabbat. Led completely by the women congregants of GJC, the services in the Charry Sanctuary will be followed by lunch in the Marcus Auditorium. Our speaker will be GJC member Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, archeologist, author, and Professor of Theology at Saint Joseph's University, who will give the morning's *D'var Torah* and after-lunch teaching. All are welcome. This is a great opportunity to bring your daughters, mothers, sisters, grandmothers and aunts to *shul*. Services begin at 9:30.

For a personal account of how moving the Women's Shabbat experience can be, read Cheryl Bettigole's article in this issue.

## Torah Fund Brunch

Please join us at the home of Diane Ajl at 10 AM on Sunday, May 3, 2020 when our annual Torah Fund Brunch will honor Marcy Fish. You will enjoy our legendary "Batsheva's Feast," a gourmet buffet brunch prepared by WGJC members. All are invited to attend without charge, but donations to the Women's League for Conservative Judaism's Torah Fund and purchases of the League's donor pins are welcome. Proceeds support rabbinic education and advanced scholarly study at the several schools and institutes of the Conservative/Masorti Movement's Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

## An Afternoon at the Theater

Come one, come all to the Old Academy Players in East Falls on Sunday afternoon, June 7, 2020. The WGJC has bought out the house for the matinee performance of "Company," the trailblazing musical by Stephen Sondheim that pioneered the dark comedy modern musical genre. This is our third fundraiser at the Old Academy and everyone who has attended in the past has raved about the quality of the productions at this little jewel of a theater. Tickets are \$25 each. Stay tuned for reservation details.





## MY WOMEN'S SHABBAT EXPERIENCE

by Cheryl Bettigole



When I was first asked to carry the Torah scroll for Women's Shabbat, I was happy to do it, but thought of it as being like any other role that each of us takes in the service. I had carried the Sefer Torah before, on Simchat Torah, and loved the sense of awe at being close to and holding something so ancient and

holy. But what I hadn't anticipated was the magical quality of carrying the Torah on Women's Shabbat.

GJC has incredibly special women who make lasting friendships, holding each other up in good times and bad, celebrating and cherishing each other in so many ways. In carrying the Torah on Women's Shabbat, as I wound my way around the sanctuary, I experienced how each woman's greeting contributed to a powerfully concentrated communal *kavanah* of warmth and love. The honor of Torah carrier became the honor of being part of our amazing community of connected and caring women.



Please Join Us for

### Women's Shabbat 2020 Saturday, April 4

Charry Sanctuary, 9:30 AM

## ANNUAL WOMEN'S CLOTHING GIVEAWAY

by Genie Ravital

### Save the Date:

**Sunday, February 2, 2020 from 11 AM until 1 PM**

*Start now clearing your wardrobes of unwanted, gently used women's shoes, sweaters, coats, jeans, dresses, skirts, blouses, jewelry, accessories, exercise gear, vests, jackets, shorts and other miscellaneous womenswear. Please bring your items to GJC during the week of January 26-31 for our annual Women's Clothing GiveAway on Sunday, February 9.*

The Clothing GiveAway is set up in the Marcus Auditorium like a giant bazaar: women from all over the city come and pay \$20 to "shop" for an unlimited quantity of your generous donations. It's a festive atmosphere, with refreshments, music, friends and a private place for trying on clothes.

This event is co-sponsored by the Women of GJC and the Tikkun Olam Coordinating Committee. This year the proceeds will be used by GJC to support its work with POWER, an interfaith organization committed to implementing systemic change for the betterment of PA communities ([powerinterfaith.org](http://powerinterfaith.org)).

When the event is over, all the leftover items are then donated to the Whosoever Gospel Mission in Germantown. This program supports people who have been homeless and have struggled with addictions, helping them get clean and sober and receive vocational training.

Some participants have said that this event is a "win-win-win!"

For more information, contact Genie Ravital:  
[geniebud@gmail.com](mailto:geniebud@gmail.com)



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Bill Kavesh  
by Linda Kriger



Bill Kavesh

Bill Kavesh is a longtime member of Minyan Masorti whose erudition in matters of Judaism is well known. Dig a little deeper and you learn how Judaism has deeply infused his entire life, as a student, as a father, and as a physician specializing in geriatrics.

Bill, now 76, grew up among mostly working-class non-Jews in Manchester, New Hampshire, where his father owned a small clothing store. Bill's parents came from Orthodox homes in the upper reaches of New England, kept a *kosher* home, and sent him to Hebrew school three days a week. Although he became *bar mitzvah* at a Reform *shul*, "my parents sent me to an Orthodox rabbi to make sure I learned how to put on *tefillin*," he said. "They wanted to make sure I had basic Jewish knowledge."

"My mother told me I shouldn't do homework on Saturdays," he said. "There were certain touches of stuff that floated down from my parents' Orthodox backgrounds. I'm told that when my grandfather sent his kids to Saturday matinee movies, he gave them the price of admission in a handkerchief, so that he and they wouldn't touch money on Shabbat."

Bill's experience in a Reform synagogue was short-lived. When he was 14 and his sister was 11, "my friend's mother put a big push to have a non-*kosher* kitchen in the *shul*. My mother said, 'That's it,' and I went from NFTY to USY." Bill experienced a religious awakening after attending a weeklong summer program sponsored by USY "which completely changed my Jewish religious outlook."

"I met this rabbi who was leading a group of volunteer campers planning Shabbat services. He created an atmosphere of openness to new spiritual approaches which blew me away. I emerged from the experience of Shabbat there thinking: 'You

have to free yourself from technology and separate yourself from the way you thought the rest of the week.'" That is how Bill has treated Shabbat since that time.

Bill's achievement in the Manchester public schools earned him admission to MIT, which actually was not his first choice of colleges. "I was interested in going to Dartmouth," he recalled. "I was accepted there, and I sent them a letter asking, 'Is it possible not to go to classes on Saturdays?'" The reply: "We have classes and exams on Saturdays and we suggest you go to a sectarian institution." He wrote back, "I'm going to that sectarian institution in Cambridge called MIT which doesn't have the problems you do accommodating the religious needs of its students."

Bill recalls, "In college, I acquired a whole Jewish skill set that other kids knew from childhood. I learned how to sing *z'mirot* and how to lead services. It was an incredible opportunity to expand my skills and knowledge."

At MIT, Bill initially planned on becoming a high school math teacher, but rethought everything when a professor said: "What are you doing at MIT if you aren't getting a PhD in math?" A close friend was going to medical school, something that hadn't been on Bill's radar at all.

Bill went to medical school at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, and after medical school, went back to Boston to be a resident with the U.S. Public Health Service. For four years he and his fellow residents took care of Merchant Seamen and Coast Guardsmen.

In 1970, Bill visited a college roommate in Berkeley, CA, where he discovered how much he had missed during medical school in the 1960's. He returned to Cambridge and redid his studio apartment with a water bed and Indian blankets on the wall.

A couple of years later, Bill visited Havurat Shalom in Somerville, a house that served as the community *davening* and social center, and had a few rooms upstairs that they rented to members. It provided intensive Jewish study and community, as well as a taste of the 1960's, extended a few years. He joined in 1973 and moved into the house. "I was practically the only person in the *Havurah*," he noted, "who had a job other than being a Hebrew teacher."

When Bill finished his medical residency in the summer of 1973, he studied at an *ulpan* at a community center in Jerusalem, where, he said, his Hebrew got somewhat better.

He returned to the U.S. and became an internist and medical director at the South Boston Community Health Center from

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT (continued)

1973-76. "Doctors in the inner city were leaving and there was little local medical care," he recalled, "so the city developed a network of community health centers." After three years, he learned that members of the health center board were "making negative comments about my being Jewish."

He left the health center and joined a practice in Chelsea, an old Jewish neighborhood just north of Boston, providing care in his office and in nursing homes. "I had these wonderful talks with old people about their experiences," he recalled.

Soon, however, other neighborhood health center doctors he previously knew enticed him to join an inner city-based group they had formed. "My job consisted of being the main internist at a neighborhood health center in Dorchester and taking care of nursing home patients, including the ones in Chelsea. We demonstrated how effective our nursing home medical care was using an innovative combination of physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants in a state-funded demonstration program. I became the director of our nursing home program, got involved in research, and got a master's degree in public health from Harvard in 1976."

Bill and a nurse practitioner colleague went to Washington, D.C. and convinced key legislators to write a bill that paid nurse practitioners under Medicare to provide medical care in nursing homes, in Bill's words, "the first time nurse practitioners were formally paid by the Federal government for anything."

Bill remained with the group until he came to Philadelphia in 1990. "I had become very involved in academic geriatrics and Jewish medical ethics," he recalled. "A colleague from Philadelphia told me about an academic job with a Jewish connection, so, I came to Philadelphia and bought the Mt. Airy house where I still live." He was Chief of Geriatrics at Einstein Hospital and medical director at the Philadelphia Geriatric Center from 1990-93.

In 1993, Bill took a year off. He interviewed his mother for family history and did a little consulting. "It was amazing that somehow, I spent this year hanging out, not earning any money, having a great time," he said. "But I knew I had to go back to work."

In the mid-1990s, Bill was named director of the geriatric unit at Presbyterian Hospital. "Two weeks before I was to start, they asked me to become the medical director of an affiliated nursing home with more than 400 patients which the Federal government was going to shut down unless someone else took over care of most of the residents," he said. "I told them to supply me with a nurse practitioner and we straightened the place out. Then I hired a doctor to become the medical director and I became the director of elderly services at Presbyterian, in charge of the inpatient unit and its affiliated nursing homes." He stayed there through August 1997.

That month, Bill was recruited to become chief of the geriatric clinic at the Veterans Administration Hospital in West Philadelphia. "Towards the end of 2012, I decided the long hours weren't good for me. I switched to the department that evaluates soldiers for pensions related to disabilities they incurred in military service."

"It's a fascinating job," Bill said. "You learn how horrific war is and how much help people need who come home with their psychological and physical conditions. I'm very happy. I work four 10-hour days and am off on Fridays."

In 1996, Bill married Karen Levitt, whom he had met at GJC. "She had very intense *davening* and I said to myself, 'This is the woman I've been looking for.'" Meira was born later in 1996, Aaron in 1999. Bill and Karen separated in 2006 and divorced in 2008.

Meira visited Israel through the Birthright Israel Foundation in July 2018. She said, "Abba, this is where I want to spend my life." and made Aliyah earlier this year. She attends a pre-Army program and will join the army in March 2020. Aaron, 20, lives at home and is deciding what he wants to do next.

When Bill joined GJC in 1990, he started out attending Dorshei Derech. "We had a liberal approach to *davening*," he said. "I wasn't rigid about it even though I was traditional in my personal practices. Then, Meira discovered that all her girlfriends' families were *davening* in Minyan Masorti. So I changed my *davening* to Masorti."

"Jewishly, I always enjoy Shabbat meals and the experience of being with a group of people," he said. "I can call and ask to join friends for dinner. After the divorce I did much less cooking, so it's really nice to know that the community will be hospitable. Now I have some time off, but I don't always get my act together to invite people over the way I used to."

At GJC in the mid-1990s, Bill served on the Board of Directors and on the Religious Committee. "What I like most about GJC is being a part of such a diverse community," Bill concluded. "There are religious seekers, traditional *daveners* and academic scholars. There is a center of activists committed to *tikkun olam* and a community open to these and a myriad of other and ever-changing flavors of Jewish expression."



### 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.

# GJC's EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM (ECP)

by Michelle Bernstein, ECP Director

Our ECP revenue and operating budget have now reached new historic heights since we began as the L&D (Learning & Development) Center in 1980! For the first time in ECP history, we have exceeded revenue nosing 7 digits!

We have about 100 beautiful, engaged, happy, loving children enrolled. We have a teaching staff overflowing with excitement, creativity, dedication, and love. Our ECP community continues to grow because our loyal GJC members help spread the word about our incredible program.

## DID YOU KNOW?

ECP is a special place for young children from 6 months through 5 years of age and for their families. Through the lens of Jewish culture and tradition, our children learn about themselves and the world around them in a program which emphasizes learning through doing. The Early Childhood Program nurtures and respects individuality, while encouraging the children to develop a sense of community and friendship. The preschool follows the yearly cycle of the Jewish holidays. Jewish culture, traditions, and values are woven into our curriculum. Through *Mitzvot* (commandments), *Tzedakah* (charity), and *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world), the children learn to respect themselves, others and the world in which they live. We are committed to teaching and promoting respect and understanding of all persons. GJC's Early Childhood Program is open to all!

We want to open our doors and share our enthusiasm with everyone. Take a look at these faces and you will see curiosity, friendship, compassion, and engagement. We love to grow and learn and experience our Jewish heritage, our community, and our world, in a way that expresses and inspires sheer joy.

Registration for the 2020-2021 session has begun. Please spread the word, and let potential applicants know how much we would love to welcome family and friends to the ECP community!



Rabbi Zeff teaches our preschoolers about the miracles of Hanukah.

## MEMBER MEMORIES

by Betsy Richman

*Betsy shares an old memory...*

When our children were little, Peshe Kuriloff and I had to patch together quality preschool experiences for them in Mount Airy. Our little ones did attend a GJC morning nursery school, but then we had to scramble to ferry them to an afternoon program at Summit Presbyterian Church.

Given our shared focus on educating youngsters, it's no surprise that when our children grew, Peshe and I were appointed co-chairs of the synagogue's School Committee. What a fine coincidence that during our tenure one of our teaching staff, Ruthie Pinkenson, developed a proposal for an enhanced and comprehensive early childhood program at GJC, to be called the Learning and Development (L & D) Center.

Peshe and I had the responsibility of presenting the L&D proposal to the Centre Board of Directors. We were anxious as we anticipated considerable opposition due to concerns about fees not fully covering maintenance costs, etc. We did, indeed, face a lot of opposition to this proposal, but Peshe and I succeeded in convincing the Board, and that led to the opening of the Learning and Development Center, which is now our Early Childhood Program. The L & D Center opened in 1980. Among the first graduates were Sol Masch, Noga Newberg and Shalom Miller.

Looking back, Peshe and I realize how much our fighting to have such a program at GJC has contributed to the growth and vitality of our community. Can anyone now imagine what GJC would be like without ECP? Without our youngest charges and all of the families who have become active members through that portal?



# THE EDUCATIONAL RICHES OF GJC:

## How a Learning Community Practices Judaism

by Ben Rotenberg, Religious School Director

Dubbed “the thinking man’s synagogue” by Rabbi Elias Charry some 85 years ago, GJC continues to excel and evolve as a learning community. Rabbi Charry’s visionary plan created a congregational culture that values thoughtful action based on Jewish prayer and study. As Religious School director, I am inspired to see the energy of those children and adults who seek out learning, and proud to work with a community that uses Jewish learning to better our world.

The teachings of our rabbis during this year’s High Holidays exemplify how Jewish text study enhances our perspective on social change. At the Charry Kol Nidrei service, Rabbi Zeff examined contemporary restorative justice forgiveness programs in light of the steps of *t’shuvah* set forth in Moses Maimonides’s 12th century treatise, “The Laws of Repentance.” At Rosh ha-Shanah Yom Sheini Charry services, Rabbi Richman unlocked the power of modern women studying Torah by way of Merle Feld’s 20th century poem, “We All Stood Together.” Please revisit and enjoy our rabbis’ important messages on the GJC website: <https://germantownjewishcentre.org/hh5780-talks/>.

Everywhere throughout GJC I meet people who are looking to improve our neighborhood, our city, and our world through action. How do we begin to meet their needs? Those who enter GJC are blessed to turn and find in each corner of our building some of the best Jewish thinkers, storytellers and educators in the country. We have open-minded teachers, committed and proud students, content that inspires, and a strong and vibrant *kehillah* that cares for students and society. Examples abound of the fruit this bears.

Spearheaded by Dasi Weinmartin as her Bat Mitzvah project, our teens have started a Northwest Philadelphia hub for the Sunrise

Movement, a youth-led effort to reverse climate change and create large-scale employment for green job workers in our country.

The new Sunrise environmental initiative group puts into action the stirring thoughts, “From Despair to Awakening,” shared by Ameet Ravital at the Dorshei Derech Kol Nidrei service.

Recently I asked my mother, Sally Rotenberg, what inspired her to be involved in our synagogue. Every week she meets with other adult women in the community to study Rabbinic legends, *Sefer ha-Aggadah*. She said has been able to connect directly to her Jewish culture through deep Jewish learning. By struggling to study texts through *hevruta*—partnership study—she has built new friendships.

Here at GJC we are blessed to be exploring new modes of prayer with The Rising Song Institute, a *shaliach tzibor* training program co-directed by Joey Weisenberg and Josef Goldman that unleashes the spiritual energy of singing. Erev Shabbat services in the hands of their gifted students become a creative adventure that takes our souls to new places. This brings our *davening* to the cutting edge of *tefillah*.

The poem I mentioned by Merle Feld carries a powerful call for community through inclusion. It ends with the lines,

*If we remembered it together  
We could recreate holy time  
Sparks flying.*

As we look for great ideas in Jewish education, let’s be confident that our collective work can make sparks fly.



### ISRAELI DANCING

Sundays 10:00 AM

January 5, 12, 26 | February 2, 9, 16, 23

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

For more info, contact Tamar Magdovitz at [tamarmagdovitz@gmail.com](mailto:tamarmagdovitz@gmail.com).



# NEWS FROM HAZAK

(55+ programming)

by Coleman Poses and Helen Feinberg, Co-Chairs

Would you rather have your head chopped off or be burned at the stake? The answer to this perennial question had eluded philosophers for years. Finally, it was indisputably resolved in the mid-twentieth century by the famous Jewish philosopher, Lev bar Shlomo Natan HaLevi (born Jerome Lester Horwitz, a/k/a Jerome Lester Howard) whom most of us know simply as "Curly," of the Three Stooges.

HAZAK joined forces with a group of Boomer singles to explore such questions with a trip to the Stoozeum, a museum dedicated exclusively to the films and other artifacts by, about, and of the Three Stooges. The tour was organized by GJC member Penina Hoffnung. We began our evening with dinner at the Saffron Indian Restaurant in Ambler before proceeding over to the museum in Blue Bell.

Our book group has also been exploring other sets of philosophical questions posed most recently in *Sapiens*, a work by Yuval Harari, which explores the various evolutionary stages of thought and the tools that have emanated from human ideas. Our next book will be *The Overstory* by Richard Powers. We are changing our meeting day from the second Wednesday of the month to the second Tuesday of the month. The meeting time will continue to be 2 PM, and we will continue to meet at the Centre.

You are probably waiting for the answer to our original question: Would you rather have your head chopped off or be burned at the stake? The answer comes from *Restless Knights*, the Three Stooges film from 1935. When asked the question, Curly answers that he would rather be burned at the stake, because, as we all know, "A hot steak is better than a cold chop." Nyuk, nyuk, nyuk.



Sam Magdovitz, Jim Meyer, Sandy Meyer, Jon Moselle, Linda Cherkas, Tamar Jacobson, and Chaim Dworkin all enjoyed our visit to the Stoozeum.

## 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, and several times a year 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.

## PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

**Tuesdays at 7:15 PM  
in the Quitman Library**

*People of the Book reads fiction and nonfiction books of Jewish interest mostly written by Jewish writers and chosen by the group. Volunteers lead the monthly discussion. Join in!*

**For more info, contact Nan Myers  
at [nanbmyers2@gmail.com](mailto:nanbmyers2@gmail.com).**

**January 14**

*Lioness: Golda Meir and  
the Nation of Israel*  
by Francine Klagsbrun

**February 11**

*The Last Watchman  
of Old Cairo*  
by Michael David Lukas

**March 3**

*The Family Tabor*  
by Cherise Wolas

**April 21**

*Button Man*  
by Andrew Gross



# AN ONGOING AND PRODUCTIVE ISRAEL DIALOGUE... IT IS POSSIBLE!

by Rabbi Fredi Cooper, Israel Committee Chair

For the past five years I have been privileged to chair the Israel Committee at Germantown Jewish Centre. This committee has been quite successful working well together to assure that a broad swath of issues related to Israeli society are discussed at GJC each year. You may already be aware of our annual Yom Ha'atzmaut program of an Israeli film, Israeli dinner and film discussion.

What I appreciate the most about our committee is that the eight members who attend planning meetings regularly are not of one voice or of one opinion about our relationship to Israel. The committee members are Dveera Segal, Rena Friedman, Pearl Raz, Louis Walinsky, Rabbi Robert Tabak, Rabbi Zeff, Kate Lawn, and me. Each member has his or her own unique connections to Israel: some of the members have studied its history and the history of Zionism academically; most of the committee has either lived in Israel for extended periods or have visited frequently. Two of the members of the committee have children living in Israel. So there is a rich tapestry of knowledge, experience and connections that we call on as we sit together and plan for a year of Israel programming. There is also very

deep sensitivity to hearing the perspective of the other and not dismissing out of hand an idea without really considering all of the possible benefits of bringing a proposed program to our community. We strive to use the conduct of our committee meetings as a model for the learning and tolerance we want our GJC programs to foster.

We are very fortunate that the Stern/Gafni Endowment for Israeli Engagement has provided the funding that makes our programs possible. We are also deeply grateful for Rabbi Zeff's invaluable knowledge about Israeli organizations and opportunities to engage their representatives who might be travelling to Philadelphia. Additionally, Kate Lawn's great skills promoting and organizing our events contribute greatly to their success.

Soon you will begin seeing announcements about our spring offerings and we look forward to your attendance at our programs. We will add two parlor meetings at the home of a member. We also welcome your suggestions for future programs. Please contact me at: [rabbifredi@comcast.net](mailto:rabbifredi@comcast.net).

## THE LITTLE SHOP IS HERE TO MEET ALL YOUR HOLIDAY AND GIFT NEEDS!

**Wow! It is hard to believe that Thanksgiving and Hanukah have come and gone  
and now we have to remember that it is 2020!**

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### WINTER STORE HOURS:

Wednesdays 12-7:30 PM • Thursdays 12-5 PM • Friday 12-4 PM **and** Sundays 9 AM-12:30 PM

### Special January and February Discounts:

**JANUARY Specials:** 20% discount on all items (usual exclusions apply\*\*) **AND** Early Bird Special discounts of 10% when you shop weekdays 12-3 PM. These two specials can be combined for a 30% reduction!



**FEBRUARY Specials:** Jewelry and Ahava Products  
**AND 20% off all items on Sunday** (usual exclusions apply\*\*)



### MEET THE ARTISTS –

Meet GJC artists in the hall outside The Little Shop on Sundays during January and February (dates and artists to be announced)

### MIMOSA SUNDAYS:

Sunday, January 26  
Sunday, February 16



### PERFORM A MITZVAH AND SHOP AT THE LITTLE SHOP!!!

50% of your purchases at The Little Shop go right back to support all of GJC's wonderful programs.

\*\*normal exclusions from discounts are books, wine, mezuzot scrolls and tefillin



# CHESED COMMITTEE

by Peninah Berdugo and Gena Epstein, Co-Chairs

The Germantown Jewish Centre Chesed Committee offers members numerous opportunities to perform *mitzvot* by caring for those in our congregation in need of support. These acts of kindness strengthen our community by building relationships between people who might otherwise not connect with each other.

Until now, the activities of the Chesed Committee have been focused on its **Kesher** program, the preparation of meals for distribution to members experiencing health challenges or life cycle transitions. Cooking skills are not required to participate. Our last Chesed "cook-in" took place in mid-September when 16 volunteers came together to bake *chalog* and make hearty vegetable soup and kugels. The volunteers enjoyed the fun and the friendly camaraderie of the communal cooking experience while knowing they were fulfilling a big *mitzvah* at the same time.

At this time, the Chesed Committee is looking to expand its scope in two ways:

1) We are looking for volunteers who would be willing to deliver meals *on occasion* within Mt. Airy as well as in

surrounding neighborhoods and in Center City. If you sign up to participate, you would be notified by text when there is a need, and would respond if you are able to make that particular delivery.

2) We are also looking for people who would be willing to make ongoing friendly home visits one to two times a month to members of the GJC community who are ill or homebound and could benefit from more in-person contact. Rabbi Zeff would match volunteers to visit recipients.

If you are interested in becoming involved in any component of the Chesed Committee's activities (cooking, delivering meals or home visiting), please send an email to [peninahberdugo@gmail.com](mailto:peninahberdugo@gmail.com). In your email, please include your name, phone number and how you want to help. If you would like to receive a meal on occasions such as a new baby, illness/surgery, or death of a family member, please send an email to Peninah.

We welcome your participation in GJC's Chesed Committee's work.



Pesha Leichter and Paula Spivack



Joan Groner and Liz Bloch-Smith



Nan Myers and Deb White

## ARTISTS IN OUR MIDST: Nina Gordon and Sonia Gordon-Walinsky Discuss Their Work

Nina Gordon has always created and worked with her hands, sewing, quilting, carpentry and gardening. A native New Yorker, Nina began making pottery in junior high school and immediately loved it. She went on to study ceramics in many New York venues, including Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Greenwich House Pottery, the 92nd Street 'Y', the Brooklyn Museum Art School, and SUNY/New Paltz. Nina continued her studies in Philadelphia at the University of the Arts and Arcadia University, where she earned her master's degree. She became a career art teacher, giving pottery instruction to many children and adults in her Germantown studio, at GJC's religious school, in the Philadelphia public schools and throughout the region. Following many years of pottery sales in her home, Nina now sells her functional pottery at the Weavers Way Mercantile in Mt. Airy.

Sonia has also always created and worked with her hands, learning immeasurably from her mom, often working by her side. "As a child, my mom's clay studio was a very special place to be. I had access to huge amounts of clay and tools, and I would go to her clay classes with my friends or play while she worked. I was mesmerized watching the clay transform as she 'threw' a ball into a plate, bowl, mug, vase... whatever she was working on."

"It was near the end of my time in the Drisha Institute for Jewish Education's Arts Fellowship program in New York that I was fortunate to be introduced to Tobi Kahn. A friend from Drisha invited me to attend a lecture of Tobi's at the Skirball *Beit Midrash* for Artists at Temple Emanu-el in Manhattan. Tobi spoke richly about the building of the Biblical *Mishkan* as an artistic endeavor. It was eye-opening and thrilling."

"I eagerly signed up for the Skirball course taught by Tobi and Rabbi Leon Morris, and it was easy to convince my mom that the class was worth commuting to every week! We attended in the Fall of 2008. In the class we studied Jewish text, interpreted it through art, and had our first experience of exhibiting our collaborative work. It was the first time since I was a child that Mom and I worked together with clay. It was transformative to experience our relationship as partners. Over the last decade our work has been exhibited in a number of venues, including Tobi's artist-in-residence program at the Jewish Theological Seminary."

Before Sonia and her family moved to Philadelphia, Sonia and Nina worked long distance. "I schlepped ceramic bowls and other vessels to Sonia and Mordechai's apartment in New York City...and then to the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center in Falls Village, Connecticut. The bowls were leather—hard, yet still soft enough for Sonia to carve into them. I drove back to Philly, very careful not to hit any potholes," Nina added.

"I've been interested in ancient incantation bowls for many years," said Nina. "I inspired Sonia and we took off on our interpretation of the ancient vessels, creating what we call 'blessing and mindfulness bowls'". Sonia explains further: "Liturgy and life always inspire new ideas for our next project. There's never a dull moment. A few years ago we started an Etsy shop online called, PasukArt. *Pasuk* is Hebrew for "verse" and our artwork is inspired by and often includes a verse from *Tanakh*, liturgy or other Jewish

texts. It's a lot of fun being in business together and now that we're both living in Mt. Airy, we have many more dream projects that we can finally dive into full force," Sonia said.

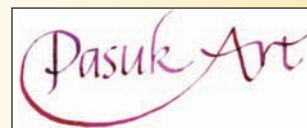
Sonia and Nina's newest project is needle-felted wool figures in combination with clay forms. "This started while we were still living long distance. My mom had the idea for a woman figurine breaking the bounds of her metaphorical box. We tried a clay figurine in a clay box but it didn't quite work. Independently, I was needle-felting wool dolls for the love of it. Then it clicked that these dolls would go perfectly with the clay. The contrast of materials would be really dynamic and express the hardness and softness of life. I asked my mom to try some cocoon-like vessels and I got to work making a few gray-haired dolls. When I visited Philly we ripped the vessels open—which was really cathartic—and situated a doll in each vessel so that she was emerging, as if from her cocoon, symbolic of a woman transforming into the fullest version of herself at later stages of life.

"Our society is hyper-focused on the transformations that occur in youth, and too often older people are portrayed as static. Along these lines, I felt compelled to create dolls of women at younger stages of life too, appreciating that we are all a part of a continuum of aging. I found wool of different textures and gradations of brown, gray and white. I made the older women dolls with long gray and white braids showing their vitality."

"This project is very personal and universal at the same time. It reflects our intergenerational dynamic and our feelings about humanity. I have always encouraged women—both my peers and elders—to ignore the narrow messages about beauty from mainstream culture and to appreciate their individual beauty and strength. Now we are expressing this in our artwork."

"Our artwork is continually evolving and expanding. This spring I brought what I felt was an unfinished doll to Tobi's artist-in-residence class at JTS. Tobi thought the doll was finished, giving me the perspective to see the doll with a different end-point. Through our conversation I developed a clear vision of our next piece: seven flesh-toned dolls of no particular gender. I was so excited I called my mom as I walked to the subway. I really appreciate that she was on board right away. We both keep feeding each other ideas and running with them. We made a 4-foot wide by 18 inches-high slab of clay and attached the dolls to the clay. This piece, which we titled 'Intertwining 7,' is on exhibit in the JTS Student Life lounge through Spring 2020."

"We're now expressing what we see as the fundamental commonalities between people regardless of physical, religious, ethnic, racial, political and other differences. Our pieces celebrate human connection, movement, hope and optimism," said Sonia.





# TODAH RABBAH!

## CONTRIBUTIONS from SEPTEMBER 18, 2019–NOVEMBER 15, 2019

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

FUND	BY	OCCASION
Adult Education Fund Bess Schick Memorial Fund	Joyce Videlock	in memory of David Zeff, father of Rabbi Adam Zeff
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		refuah shleimah to David & Marilyn Kraut, for a speedy recovery
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	Rachel Breskman	in honor of the Tuesday Morning Meditation group
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		in appreciation of the GJC community
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	Tracy Nathan	in memory of David Zeff, father of Rabbi Adam Zeff
	Jeffrey & Linda Needleman	in honor of Teena Robinson & the GJC staff
	Lauren Ouziel & Justin Bekelman	in memory of Seth Chilton, brother of Peninah Berdugo
	Pearl Raz	in honor of Gert & Myra Jacobsohn, on their special birthdays and milestone anniversary
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<b>Rabbi Zeff's Discretionary Fund</b>		

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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](mailto:program@germantownjewishcentre.org). The deadline for every issue is the 1st of the previous month.



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A community of communities

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