



# THE CENTRE CALL

## GERMANTOWN JEWISH CENTRE

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## GRATITUDE AND GROWTH

by Ari Witkin, Rabbinic Intern

Growing up, my family took the old adage, “it takes a village to raise a child” pretty seriously. There were always a lot of people in our lives and we were, in turn, quite involved in theirs. As a kid I understood this as totally normal, and it really wasn’t until

I moved away from home that I realized how lucky I was to have been raised, not just by two wonderful parents, but a whole village of community members who were dedicated to helping me grow into a successful adult. As I look back at my youth, I can see so clearly now what a blessing that was, and how much of who I am was shaped by all those people who invested in me their love and support.

As I come to the end of my time as the Student Rabbi here at GJC, I am struck by a similar sense of gratitude for the opportunities, guidance, and encouragement I have been blessed to receive from so many members of our community. Serving as your Student Rabbi has been so much more than simply an internship; it has been an experience of tremendous growth personally, professionally, and spiritually. Over the past two years, GJC has become a place I call home and, as I look back at my time here, I am overcome by just how big a role this community has played in my life. So it feels only natural for me to affirm, on the precipice of my ordination, that, just as it takes a village to raise a child, so too does it take a village to raise a rabbi.

What a village we have. From my very first days here I have been in awe of the vibrancy of our congregation, the wealth of skills and knowledge, the passion for Judaism and community, and the commitment to living our values in service of building a more just and peaceful world. As I prepare to move into the next chapter of my rabbinic career, there are a number of lessons and moments from my time at GJC that I know will serve as foundational elements of the community member and rabbi I hope to be.

In the world of seminary education, they talk a lot about developing a “rabbinic voice.” While this means more than just the physical way in which we speak, I will never forget meeting Paul Minkoff and Marty Kaplan at *kiddush* after giving my first Shabbat morning *d’var Torah* and being told in no uncertain terms that if I was going to be the rabbi here, I would have to start

speaking like it. Though at first caught a bit off guard by this rather direct feedback, it has stuck with me as a reminder of both the importance and the responsibility of teaching Torah. More powerful than that simple moment of feedback though, is the feeling of encouragement I receive each week from these two pillars of our community.

In the winter of my first year here, Rabbis Zeff and Sklover asked if I would step in to take the lead on teaching our confirmation students. Recalling my own confirmation experience, I reluctantly agreed to spend my Tuesday evenings with our 10th graders. As my second group of students is preparing to come before the community as confirmands, I am in awe of just how incredible they are, and how much I have learned by going on this journey with them. For those who don’t know, our confirmation program invites students to explore what faith means in their own lives through a year of visiting and studying other religious traditions. In each of our visits the teens have been great ambassadors for Judaism and GJC, as well as inquisitive students of our neighbors’ religious beliefs and traditions.

Beyond the small moments of learning, the time so many of you have taken to help me think and rethink how we build community, how we could make services more accessible or create programs that more people are excited about—it has been the opportunity to be so fully immersed in community for which I am most grateful. From High Holiday celebrations to late-night learning on *Shavuot*, *brit millot* and baby namings to standing room only *shiva minyanim*, Wednesday pretzels to Sunday bagels, and countless impromptu conversations at the Co-op or in the woods, life as a member of the GJC is beautifully full.

In one of my favorite lines from the Mishna, Rabbi Nehorai says, “exile yourself to a place of Torah, and do not say that it will follow after you, that your colleagues will make it yours. Do not rely on your own understanding.” (Pirke Avot 4:14) How grateful I am to have had the opportunity to immerse myself in a community so full of Torah, to have been your teacher, but more so your student, and to have received the gift of understanding from so many incredible individuals. As Liz and I prepare to head to Detroit, I can only hope that Rabbi Nehorai proves to be just a little bit wrong, and that the beautiful Torah I have learned from this community does indeed follow me.

## SHABBAT & HOLIDAYS

### May 3 & 4

- Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday night service)
- BBMM Family Shabbat Dinner & Siyyum
- Kol D'mamah Shabbat Experience with Leah Weisman
- Dorshei Derekh w/ Charry Service: *Mazal tov to Ezra Stern, son of Richard Stern & Mindy Brown, on becoming Bar Mitzvah*
- Minyan Masorti Memorial Shabbat

### May 10 & 11: GJC Family Retreat Weekend

- Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday night service)
- Parashat ha-Shavua B'Ivrit

### May 17 & 18

- Shabbat Together (Friday night service)
- Charry Service: 6th grade Torah / 5th grade Haftarah
- Musical Marching Minyan

### May 24 & 25

- Shabbat in the Neighborhood (Friday night service)

### May 31 & June 1: Pride Shabbat

- Friday Night Pride
- Pride Shabbat

### June 7

- Shabbat Warmup Storytime @ Big Blue Marble
- Speed Shabbat

### June 8: Erev Shavuot

- Charry Service: Confirmation Shabbat
- Shabbat Sha'Baby
- Parashat ha-Shavua B'Ivrit
- Tikkun Leyl Shavuot

### June 9: Shavuot I

- Sunrise Service
- Minyan Masorti & Charry Shavuot Service
- Dorshei Derekh Shavuot Service w/ Yizkor

### June 10: Shavuot II

- Charry Shavuot Service w/ Yizkor
- Minyan Masorti Shavuot Service w/ Yizkor

### June 14 & 15

- Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday night service)
- Charry Service: *Mazal tov to Lucy Kroll, daughter of Janet Kroll, on becoming Bat Mitzvah*

### June 21 & 22

- Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday night service)
- Dorshei Derekh w/ Charry Service: *Mazal tov to Yossi Ravital, child of Ameet & Genie Ravital, on becoming B'nei Mitzvah*

### June 28 & 29

- Shabbat in the Neighborhood (Friday night service)
- Charry Service: *Mazal tov to Diana Tamir & Abi Weber on their aufruf*



## MAZAL TOV! IN CELEBRATION OF...

**Maxine Wray**, daughter of Jill Gurvey and Matthew Wray,  
on becoming Bat Mitzvah

**Toby Kessler-Cohen**, son of Gwynn Kessler and Tamara Cohen,  
on becoming Bar Mitzvah

## IN MEMORIAM

**Samuel Feinberg**, husband of Helene Feinberg

**Roselle Numerof**, mother of Brenda Laigaie z"l, mother-in-law  
of David Laigaie and grandmother of Grace and Jake

**Sonia Dishler**, mother of Dodi Klimoff, and long-time member  
of Germantown Jewish Centre

**John Phillips**, husband of Gina Michaels

**Rabbi Emet Tauber**, nephew of Judith Miller

**Marciene Mattleman**, wife of Herman Mattleman, mother  
of Barbara Mattleman, grandmother of Arielle and Max, and  
long-time member of Germantown Jewish Centre



## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Abigail Weber

Joseph and Marilyn Kushick

## ISRAELI DANCING

Sundays at 10 AM

May 5, 12, 19 • June 2, 16

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](mailto:tamarmagdovitz@gmail.com)

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Denise Wolf, GJC President



Ok, I admit it: I am an avid fan of the Little Shop. I love it. I love the items on display. I love the cheery and helpful volunteers who work there. I love how it makes me feel when I browse.

Besides the convenience of being able to purchase a last-minute birthday gift for an 8-year-old, or selecting a gorgeous Nambé bowl for my mother-in-law, the Little Shop has shared many life events with me. Through thick and thin, it has stuck

with me, and I with it. But, before I poetically reflect upon my unflappable devotion to this 560-square-foot space on the second floor of the Religious School wing, I will provide some historic context.

While doing some research for this article, I learned that synagogue gift shops first emerged on the American Jewish landscape after World War II, at a time when many Jews vacated the large cities and moved to suburban pastures and built new synagogues. According to Joellyn Zollman, who wrote her doctoral dissertation on the history of synagogue gift shops, "there was a shift of focus from Americanizing Jews to Judaizing Americans. Once Jews had successfully acculturated into society, Judaism needed to be reintroduced into their lives," with the gift shop as the primary source for all things Judaica. Once the State of Israel was established in 1948, synagogue gift shops carried items made in Israel to connect American Jews to the Holy Land. By the end of the 1950s, promoting a sisterhood gift shop was part of the national agenda for the Women's League for Conservative Judaism and Reform congregations, and to a lesser extent, orthodox synagogues. The gift shop not only became a source of revenue, but a mechanism for educational awareness and Jewish living. By offering Judaica, synagogue sisterhoods could assist in enriching the spiritual lives of American Jewish households.

I asked GJC member, Dr. Lila Berman, Professor of History at Temple University and renowned expert on American Jewish History, how the synagogue gift shop has influenced Jewish culture. Dr. Berman explained that "synagogue gift shops arose in exactly the same years that American Jews devoted more attention and resources to aesthetics. In the post-World War II years, they invested millions of dollars in new buildings, designed by star architects, and festooned with artistic objects crafted by some of the most famous artists of the time. The synagogue gift

shop similarly reflected concern for what American Judaism should look like, and many of the objects sold in them blurred tradition with modern forms, employing Jewish artists and creating a thriving Judaica industry. Underlying this new attention to aesthetics, however, was deep tension about living in diaspora after the Holocaust, embracing modern American consumerism and its assimilationist logic, and, also, making Jewishness visible."

Today, our Little Shop continues its legacy of bringing Judaism into our homes. It certainly has assisted my family in this manner. Our purchases contain the memories of our family. When we moved to our new home, my husband, Paul, selected a *mezzuzah* for the front entrance. My eldest son sifted through catalogues of *kippot* for his Bar Mitzvah at the Little Shop. I chose my first and only *tallis* at the Little Shop. I had never worn one before; never even considered it. Yet, volunteer Marcy Bacine encouraged me and helped me select a beautiful prayer shawl that I proudly wear. My youngest son blew many of the *shofars* at the Little Shop before he selected one for the High Holidays. (I wiped each one down with disinfectant afterwards!) Once, at a distance, I observed another woman's son purchase, with his own savings, a heart necklace for a girlfriend. I will never forget how volunteer Leslie Pontz patiently assisted him in selecting the piece and worked with him in his gift-wrapping choices, treating him with utmost respect on what was certainly an important moment in his life. Every year before Yom Kippur, I lovingly purchase a *yahrzeit* candle at the Little Shop, which I light to remember my mother, Ruth. All of my most-cherished memories are reflected within the walls of that 560-square-foot space.

The Little Shop is run by extraordinary volunteers from the Women of GJC. Connie Katz, Marcy Bacine and Leslie Pontz use their fine judgement to select items to sell: jewelry, wines, children's toys, Judaica and books. Each item is carefully considered to appeal to a range of tastes and price points. The result is a treasure trove of wares. The Little Shop is a hallmark of the Jewish seasons and its inventory updates accordingly. With just a quick glance from the entrance, a shopper knows what holiday is approaching. Fair Trade *gelt* abounds for the Hanukkah season, honey dishes on Rosh Hashanah, *matzah* covers on Passover, and groggers on Purim. "Running the Little Shop is a labor of love," explained Connie Katz, who, along with Patty Segal, reinvigorated the store in 1982. In the early years, Connie and Marcy travelled to art shows in New York City to purchase Judaica directly from artists. They would buy two of everything, reasoning that, in the event the item did not ultimately sell, Marcy and/or Connie would personally buy it!

(Continued on page 4)



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (continued)

The prices are all discounted. Because there are no overhead expenses (no wages, no rent), the prices are quite competitive, and often cheaper than what you may find in the mall or even online. All proceeds from the Little Shop are poured directly into the synagogue's coffers. Your purchases from the Little Shop positively impact our operating budget. Still, online competition poses a challenge and, in recent months, sales have suffered. But, the reality is that the Little Shop is more than a mere store and can never be replaced by the likes of Amazon.

It is a cozy place to connect with others. When a customer announces that she needs a wedding or a Bat Mitzvah gift, or a congregant needs wine for his Passover table, conversations are sparked, and laughter is often heard. For Marcy Bacine, volunteering in the Little Shop has been rewarding as it enables her to get to know the children of the synagogue and the younger families. At times, it can get quite crowded in the small space, which is certainly part of the charm.

For me, the volunteers of the Little Shop have imparted pearls of wisdom over the years, in addition to expertise on gift purchases. I can remember, as an overwhelmed mother of young kids, stopping into the Little Shop after dropping my boys at Religious School for some shopping therapy. I was not only looking for a specific item but, also soliciting parenting advice. Whether I was fretting over a child who was a "reluctant reader," or exasperated by the disorganized contents of my son's backpack, Connie Katz, with her warm smile, along with other caring volunteers, reassured me that things would be just fine as they shared their own parenting challenges, yet ultimate successes.

Every self-respecting synagogue needs a gift shop. To me, a synagogue without a gift shop is missing an essential component. A community needs a heart, and ours is the Little Shop.

## NEWS FROM THE MEN'S CLUB

by Dick Menin, President

"Even Glitches Turn Out OK."

It was planned for months. The Men's Club showed a film entitled *"There are Jews Here."* It tells the story of four communities in the United States, each having to deal with a decreasing population of Jews in the local area and trying to keep synagogues and communities together. This clearly was a note that touched many of us. More than 40 people came to the Maslow for the showing. By a quirk of fate, Susan Melnick, sister of Peter Maas, a Jewish archivist and a participant in the movie, was with us and was able to add considerable background to the story. About one quarter of the way into the show, the projector started skipping and flickering and no amount of cleaning or even changing to a spare disc allowed the film to continue. It was clearly the projector. We were doomed!

But no, the parts of the movie that had been shown and the preliminary remarks by Susan sparked a conversation by participants, several of whom came from towns with similar histories. The focus expanded into a lively discussion of common experiences. Although the cut-short movie experience was disappointing, the movie served its purpose of both education and helping us connect more deeply with one another.

I view the focus of Men's Club as being a conduit to enhance relationships among members of the shul and our guests,

women included! The best kind of programs spur sharing thoughts and experiences.

We're still looking for people to extend our monthly involvement with the Jewish Relief Agency. Look to the Shabbat Bulletin or get in touch with Jim Meyer at [jrm@meyeroneagle.com](mailto:jrm@meyeroneagle.com) or me at [meninr@einstein.edu](mailto:meninr@einstein.edu) if interested.



Susan Melnick speaks to the attendees of the Men's Club event.

# 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 members who give above and beyond, year after year. Nediv Lev, our pillar members, provides a backbone to the GJC community, and their commitment enables the shul to provide for the needs of all our members. We especially thank the following members for helping our shul 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  
Martha & Chuck Schleifer  
Allyson & David Schwartz  
Dveera Segal & Brad Bridge  
Denise Scott Brown  
Patty & Steve Segal  
Stefanie & Alex Seldin  
Elise Singer & Don Perelman  
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 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:

**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  
Paul Minkoff  
Cyrilla Rosen  
Jessica & Mathieu Shapiro  
Beth Stearman  
Betsy & David Teutsch  
Denise Wolf & Paul Rudick**

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

# TIKKUN OLAM

by Reena Sigman Friedman



## Because We Were Strangers in the Land of Egypt: GJC Leads in Building a Refugee Advocacy Coalition

They came because they each had a grandparent or parent who had immigrated to America in the early twentieth century or after World War II in search of a better life; or they came because the Torah commands us to care for "the stranger" in our midst. They came because they believe that, given Jews' historical experience of anti-Semitism and migration, we have an obligation to help other people fleeing persecution and violence. Others came because they feel compelled to respond to the struggles of refugees and asylum seekers hoping to come to the United States today.

About 60 people, from 16 synagogues and Jewish organizations throughout the Philadelphia area, attended a five-hour HIAS Refugee Advocacy Training session, held at GJC on Sunday, March 24. The three-member HIAS team provided a wealth of information about the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, emphasizing that we are now "facing the worst refugee crisis in recorded history," with over 68.5 million displaced people and 25.4 million refugees worldwide. At this time of critical need, the Trump administration has reduced the number of refugees admitted to this country and placed more administrative obstacles in the way of those seeking asylum here. The HIAS representatives made concrete recommendations for ways in which we, as constituents, can urge our elected officials to take action on this critical issue.

Merrill Zack, HIAS's Vice-President for Community Engagement, explained that HIAS was founded in 1881 to support the migration and resettlement of Jewish immigrants. In the last 25 years, the organization has assisted mostly non-Jewish refugees around the world, including Iranian refugees in the Resettlement Support Center in Vienna, African asylum seekers in Israel and Venezuelan refugees across Latin America. Meggie Weiler, Policy Officer for HIAS, focused on HIAS's efforts to press the administration to adhere to its stated goal of admitting 30,000 refugees for fiscal year 2019, increase that number to at least 75,000 for fiscal year 2020, and support "administrative policies that uphold the fundamental right to seek asylum" while opposing those that do not. Rebecca Kirzner, Director of Grassroots Campaigns for HIAS (and a member of GJC), outlined principles of community organizing and effective advocacy—providing information, making specific requests, and maintaining relationships. Participants later divided into smaller groups to

discuss specific strategies for approaching their particular congressional representatives.

In addition, Cathryn Miller-Wilson, Executive Director of HIAS Pennsylvania, described her organization's activities, and urged participants to check the HIAS PA website for ways in which they can get involved on the local level. (HIAS PA is separate from national HIAS, but works in partnership with it.) Dveera Segal, President of HIAS Pennsylvania and Judith Bernstein-Baker, former Executive Director of HIAS Pennsylvania, also attended the session.

HIAS staff members told the group that similar trainings had been held in nine other states, indicating that a grassroots movement on behalf of refugees is growing in the Jewish community nationwide. They added that ours was the largest such training to date. They emphasized the critical importance of grassroots advocacy in supporting the work that HIAS does, and assured participants that they will continue to provide resources and guidance, as needed.

Sunday's program grew out of a series of meetings of GJC members, spearheaded by Seth Lieberman and Joyce Lieberman, that began in the wake of last October's Refugee Shabbat. Some members of that group devoted themselves to advocacy and planned Sunday's gathering as a first step in that process. Another subgroup is engaged in direct support services to immigrants in our area and some are working on actions to support refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers including opposing family separation and other injustices.

The training session was free of charge, the costs having been borne by HIAS and GJC. Many thanks to GJC for hosting the program, to HIAS for an outstanding training, and to the Centre's Men's Club for providing the food. GJC volunteers pitched in and took on many tasks to help coordinate the training.

As the program concluded, Seth Lieberman expressed his hope that members of other congregations and Jewish organizations will join GJC in the leadership of this emerging refugee advocacy coalition, which will meet regularly. He challenged participants to take the information gleaned from today's session and schedule meetings with their elected representatives in the next four to five weeks.

## TIKKUN OLAM (continued)

Those attending the session were sobered by descriptions of the formidable challenges facing refugees and asylum seekers today and were eager to take action in support of them. One participant commented that this is a "very emotional and intense subject," and another appreciated the factual content and discussion of ways to move forward.

Merrill Zack reported that HIAS has created a Haggadah focusing on the global refugee crisis, available on the HIAS website. (See [www.HIAS.org/Passover](http://www.HIAS.org/Passover).) As mentioned during the training, the Exodus is the Jewish people's original migration story; we are enjoined to care for the stranger "because we were strangers in the land of Egypt."

To join our GJC initiative, please contact Seth Lieberman ([s.lieberma@aim.com](mailto:s.lieberma@aim.com)) or Joyce Lieberman ([rejoice34@gmail.com](mailto:rejoice34@gmail.com)).

To find out about other volunteer opportunities through HIAS PA, see [www.hiaspa.org](http://www.hiaspa.org), and click on the volunteer button.



Attendees at the HIAS Refugee Advocacy Training, held in the Temin Canteen Room

### We are eagerly waiting to see you at **THE LITTLE SHOP!**

We are your one-stop shop for all your gifts for yourself and others. We have wonderful gifts for Mother's Day, Father's Day, graduations, and anniversaries, as well as beautiful hostess gifts, Judaica, books, toys, candles, and so much more. Check out of brand new inventory of jewelry, scarves, wine, and serving ware.



#### **Special May and June Discounts**

Add another 10% off during Early Bird Special times of Wed-Fri 12:00-3:00 pm (usual exclusions apply).

#### **MAY Specials**

Challah boards, plates, knives and covers



#### **JUNE Specials**

**10% off all items!**

(Can be combined with our Early Bird Special)



#### **MIMOSA Sundays**

May 19 and June 2



#### **SPRING AND SUMMER STORE HOURS**

**May through June 9 • Wednesdays 12:00-7:30, Thursdays & Fridays 12:00-5:00, and Sundays 9:00-12:30**  
**June 10 through August • Wednesdays & Fridays 12:00-5:00**

Contact Connie Katz or Marcy Bacine, they can accommodate any Little Shop purchases you might want outside of store hours.

**YOU PERFORM A MITZVAH** when buying at the Little Shop; all profits go to support GJC programs.

\*Usual discount exclusions are books, wine, mezuzah scrolls and tefillin.



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Ellie & Elliott Seif

by Linda Kriger



Elliott and Ellie Seif in Denali, Alaska, 2014

Ellie and Elliott Seif sat in their light-filled sunroom, exchanging glances, adding to each other's sentences, laughing together, and completing each other's thoughts, just as you'd expect a couple married 55 years to do.

Both were born and grew up in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, about a mile apart, and met at Brooklyn College as undergraduates. Ellie received an elementary education degree from Brooklyn College, a master's degree in educational media at Temple, and, some years later, a school principal certification from the University of Pennsylvania. She taught elementary school for several years, and then, in the Philadelphia and Montgomery County public schools, in the gifted program. She became a principal and served for four years at the Bridgeton and Tinicum elementary schools in Bucks County, and then for 15 years at the Blair Mill Elementary School in Montgomery County.

When asked what kind of principal she was, Ellie brought out a hard-covered blue book called *Forever Friends* that was presented to her when she retired. In it, every student in the school wrote a loving letter with a drawing for her. One of the things that her students loved and remembered was her frequent reading challenge to them. She challenged them to collectively read a million minutes or more, telling her students that if they met the goal, she'd do magical things. "One year I was on the roof of the school in a gorilla costume and threw a baseball back and forth to students below," she recalled. "Another year the entire school and I danced the Macarena with the Philly Phanatic. Two other challenges resulted in my being cut in half by a magician and wearing a boa constrictor around my neck!"

After graduating from Brooklyn College, Elliott went to Harvard University and earned a master's degree in social science education. He and Ellie married in 1964, and lived in Boston during his last year at Harvard. They moved to Freeport, Long Island, where Elliott taught social studies in middle school/high school. He then entered a PhD program in education at Washington University in St. Louis. In 1970, he was hired to teach in the education department at Temple University. "We wanted to come back east," Elliott said. "Our family was in New York City."

Elliott taught at Temple for 12 years and became a full professor. He left during the upheaval at Temple when 48 tenured faculty members were laid off. He then took a job in the Bucks County Intermediate Unit as director of curriculum and instruction services "to provide staff and curriculum development to Bucks County educators," he explained. "Working with all twelve of the county's school districts was initially very hard, but it was one of the best things that ever happened to me. I loved my job. It bridged the gap between the idealism of a university professor and the practical reality of collaborating with people who were working with children. I happily remained at the Intermediate Unit for 20 years."

"Elliott's a phenomenal writer," Ellie said. "He's published several books and published lots of articles and blogs about education. He's also conducted workshops for educators all over the world." Elliott added that he's now writing a book about the kind of rigorous education children need to live well in a 21st century world.

The Seifs came to GJC when they moved to Philadelphia and became friendly with a number of families who belonged to GJC. They went on a GJC retreat in the summer of 1971, and Elliott recalled that "out of that retreat a *havurah* was formed," which included twelve families, all with young children, both GJC and non-GJC members. "We created alternative High Holiday services, and met in the synagogue," he said. "Once a month on Friday nights, our families all gathered together on the bimah in the Charry Sanctuary at 6 o'clock before the regular service and used our own Friday night service, with alternative music and readings. Then we went down to the canteen room, danced to Israeli music (Elliott played the accordion) and had dinner together."

Although some synagogue members objected to our separate services and to non-members using the synagogue facilities, Rabbi Charry supported and welcomed us," Elliott said. "Unfortunately, this *havurah* broke up in 1975 or 1976, but we joined a second *havurah* that met outside the synagogue and have been part of that *havurah* ever since."



## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT (continued)

Ellie added, "I think that the creation of the first *havurah* and its connections to the synagogue opened GJC up to becoming a community of communities. For my master's thesis, I made a 10-minute documentary about our *havurah* and what it represented for its members and this very diverse community."

Elliott and Ellie have two daughters, Karen and Deborah, each of whom celebrated a Bat Mitzvah at GJC. Karen and her wife, Christine, recently moved from Boston to Wisconsin, where they both work at Carthage College, Christine as a vice president and Karen in the counseling department. They have two sons. Deborah and her husband, Joshua, live in Staunton, Virginia. Deborah was an actor and director in Philadelphia for many years and she is now an artist and works in social service.

Karen grew up being very active in the Habonim movement, and she was also one of six girls who gender-integrated Central High School in 1983. Two of the other girls were Jessie Bonn and Rachel Gafni, whose families are also members of the synagogue.

Both Ellie and Elliott retired in 2003, and have remained busy and active. Elliott has played the accordion since he was eight years old. In high school, Elliott was one of 40 accordion players who played classical music in an accordion symphony that performed at New York's Town Hall. He was also part of an accordion quartet that won many competitions, and even performed at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia. He now plays the accordion with the GJC band G'vanim, which has given many concerts at GJC and made its first album, *Singing before the Gates*, which can be downloaded from CD Baby and iTunes.

Elliott has also played the accordion for many of GJC member's children's Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations, both solo and with the Philadelphia Klezmerim, a trio founded with Marty Millison and Eve Pinkenson. The Philadelphia Klezmerim also toured the Soviet Union in 1989, and performed *klezmer* music for *refuseniks* in four Soviet cities.

Besides his musical life, Elliott's interests now reside firmly in social action. Currently, he serves on the Tikkun Olam Coordinating Team (TOCT). "It consists of a wonderful group of people who promote *Tikkun Olam* in our synagogue," he explained. "We help to support GJC members who are involved in homeless initiatives and in tutoring children in local public schools. We encouraged GJC to become a member of POWER. We have a strong Fair Trade initiative, and we are starting an initiative in adult literacy." All very exciting!

Since his retirement, Elliott has also been involved as a volunteer in the Parkway Northwest High School for Peace and Social Justice, a Philadelphia public school. He has served on the school's

Community Advisory Board for over ten years and has been the Chair for the last five.

Asked what GJC means to him, Elliott replied, "For me, Germantown is a community of people we've known for many, many years. But the two special things for me are G'vanim, which provides me with the ability to perform Jewish music from all over the world with very talented musicians, and being involved in Tikkun Olam, with the wonderful group of GJC members who work to serve others."

Ellie's creative spirit these days emerges from her photography. "When our daughters were children, she was the neighborhood photographer," Elliott said proudly. "Many people still have her photographs of their children when they were young hanging on their walls." In retirement, she has gone back to her photography, doing landscapes, street photography, and special themed photography. An exhibit of her recent photographs, called "Faces of Philadelphia," was shown this February and March at the Highpoint Café on Carpenter Lane. She added, "I also make greeting cards and sell them to benefit the Picasso project, sponsored by Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY), which provides grants to teachers to bring art, music, and drama projects into classrooms in the Philadelphia School District."

Ellie also does volunteer photography work for Habitat for Humanity, Weavers Way, G'vanim, and the synagogue as a whole.

She is also very politically active. "I'm in a women's group that meets monthly to strategize and take action to turn Pennsylvania from red to blue." She is also engaged with NW Philadelphia Indivisible, a political action group that advocates for progressive causes.

Another very special group that Ellie is involved in began seven years ago when she started taking a course called Growing Older: Provisions for the Journey, designed and led by Rabbi Dayle Friedman. "It was a one-year course that has lasted for seven years and is still going strong. Rabbi Dayle led the group for five years, and in the last two years Rabbi Marjorie Berman has been our leader. There are 12 women in the group who have gained knowledge, strength and wisdom from both rabbis and from each other."

When asked what GJC means to her, Ellie said "For me, GJC is history, friendship, and community. I feel like I have a Jewish home here."

...One more thing: Ellie is an avid pickle ball player.

# WOMEN OF GJC

by Sandy Meyer & Vilma Lieberman, Co-Presidents

## Purim Bash

Once again this year's Purim Bash proved to be an extraordinary event. Well over 200 people attended—the largest crowd yet for the Purim Bash. The event brought together so many people from



our Community of Communities at GJC. From the various ages represented, we could say that the Purim Bash ran the gamut of alphabet soup: from Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, to Gen Z. The Purim Spiel, dancing, and the restaurants, vacations and services offered through the auction made this year's Bash the most financially successful one to date.

"What I love about the Purim Bash is that it brings together all of our community to party, to pick up great restaurant gift certificates, trips and, as always, a trip to the Super Bowl," said Marilyn Kraut. "We just have a lot of fun. People have asked for more dancing, and we decided to work that into the schedule," she added. The Super Bowl tickets were won once again by Sam Magdovitz.

"The Bash is by far the biggest thing we do all year," said Vilma Lieberman, co-president of Women of GJC. "The money goes directly back to the synagogue. We give to the operating budget and to the Religious School; we run the Little Shop and all income goes directly back to GJC."

This year's Purim Spiel was "The Megillah Man," which was based on "The Music Man," with witty lyrics by Chuck Schleifer and Helen Feinberg. Rabbi Adam Zeff was the Music Director, and the incomparable GJC Choir, who spent many hours rehearsing for this performance, sang it beautifully.

This year's live auction featured two tickets to *Tootsie*, the new play on Broadway. (Synagogue members Betsy and Theodore Hershberg's daughter, Jessica, is married to the lead, Santo Fontina.) There were trips to the Scottish Highlands, to Tuscany, an African adventure.

"Marilyn Kraut organized the dickens out of this," said Vilma. Many other volunteers helped. Dena Lake was in charge of the restaurant silent auction. Nan Myers did publicity; Alisa Kraut created the Bash poster; Nan Daniels handled registration; Connie Katz and Marcy Bacine secured the 5-Star and live auction items while also soliciting a record number of patrons and sponsors. Elana Emas was our auctioneer. Marcy Fish planned the themed decorations and with a small team of Women of GJC board members, created imaginative, colorful, festive environments for the Bash. Barb Menin, Sandy Meyer and Yona Dansky prepared the program booklet and description sheets.

Barb Menin prepared the bid sheets, Joan Silver and Maxine Feldman worked with Centre Catering to create a delicious menu; Sandy Meyer handled the bid management team and Rebekah Krantz Nielson organized the teen volunteers for the Bash. Vilma and other volunteers completed the final checkout. Rabbi Alanna Sklover and Marilyn set up childcare for the evening and Michelle Bernstein organized the ECP raffle baskets with the help of ECP parents.

The Purim Bash was a great success due to the many volunteers who worked on this event for months leading up to it. The office and maintenance staff and Centre Catering do everything in their power to make this a fun and successful evening. A special thank you to Eric Word for his exceptional problem solving powers.

You, the attendees and contributors all make this important event a success. The result of everyone's hard work: GJC President Denise Wolf was handed a check for \$26,000 to support the synagogue's budget. We thank everyone for their participation!!

## Women's Shabbat

Women's Shabbat, another yearly highlight of WGJC activities, was once again well attended and a real treat for all. Rabbi Annie Lewis, our former Assistant Rabbi, gave a provocative d'var and teaching session on "Jewish Feminist Theology of Liberation," a very timely subject.

## Torah Fund

Torah Fund Brunch was Sunday, May 5, and this year's honoree was Yona Diamond Dansky, our WGJC Past President, resident photographer, Israeli Dancer supreme and overall nice person. Torah Fund appreciates the efforts of all of our many volunteers and attendees who help to support the Jewish Theological Seminary in several countries through their contributions to this yearly event. This year's speaker, Elaine Culbertson, Program Director, Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Teacher's Program, is a former high school English teacher and school administrator. She is the Chair of the Pennsylvania Holocaust Education Council. As every year for Torah Fund Brunch, everyone is welcome to attend at no charge (however, contributions are happily accepted).



# 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).**

**May 7**

*The German Girl*  
by Armando Lucas Correa

**June 11**

*The Weight of Ink*  
by Rachel Kadish

*People of the Book takes a summer break, but keep reading great books! The book schedule for the 2019-2020 year will be posted during late summer, and can be found by visiting GJC's website at [www.germantownjewishcentre.org](http://www.germantownjewishcentre.org). Happy summer reading!*



## MEMBER MEMORIES

### *Fringe Benefits*

by Susan Weiss

While sitting at Shabbat services, I asked my friend if she had a tissue. She opened her *tallit* bag and first unloaded her house and car keys, then a bag full of candy, extra *kippot*, hair clips, and finally a full package of tissues. Have our *tallit* bags become our new pocketbooks? Are we not only ready for prayer but for any needed family or friend emergency? I looked into my *tallit* bag. I had my car and house keys, an extra *kippa* clip, my father's *tallit* clip, lipstick, and a nail file. Never know, might break a nail as the *hagbahah* (Torah lifter) or *golelet* (Torah dresser). This got me thinking: What do other women have in their *tallit* bags? Are our *tallit* bags the go-to utility drawer? Are we not only wrapping ourselves in a tool that reminds us of God's commandments but carrying a toolbox to care for others?

I grew up in a synagogue where women did not wear *tallitot*. When I decided to continue my Jewish learning as an adult, I wanted to participate more fully. One of the actions I took was to wear a *tallit*. I went to the Little Shop. That experience in the Little Shop still remains one of my most loving memories as a member of GJC. There were several women shopping in the Little Shop that day, and they noticed I was trying on different *tallitot*. When they inquired and I told them I was looking for my first *tallit*, the selection became a group process. What doesn't at GJC? They searched with me, gave opinions on how each looked and supported my decision. That was more than two decades ago. I think about that day and those women every time I wrap myself in my *tallit*. However, I never thought my *tallit* bag would become a tool kit. Just as our *tallitot* nurture our souls, the contents of our *tallit* bags can support and strengthen the bonds between us.

Next time you are at Shabbat services, take a moment to ask those seated near you, "What's in yours?" Open your *tallit* bag, then share and connect. There are fringe benefits to be explored.

PS: King Saul's daughter Michal wore a *tallit*. Wonder what she carried in her *tallit* bag...camel snacks?!

## THANK YOU

Germantown Jewish Centre  
extends thanks and gratitude to the

**Wolfe Family Foundation**

for generously supporting and  
making our programming possible.





# PRIDE SHABBAT

May 31-June 1

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## Friday Night Pride with a Farewell to Rabbi Alanna Sklover

5:30-7 PM Face Painting, Photo Booth, LGBTQ+ Book Nook & More!

6-6:30 PM **"Through the Rainbow": Family & Kids' JAM with  
Drag Queen StoryTime & Pride Parade**

with Rabbi Alanna Sklover, Chana Rothman, Philly Drag Queen Eric Jaffe, and a host of musicians. Look for them under the rainbow!

6:30-7:30 PM **Sh'BBQ Potluck & Picnic**

with hamburgers & hotdogs & vegetarian options | Grills under TKS | A selection of sides by by Centre Catering (TKS) will be available. Please bring a pareve-only dish to share!

7:30-8 PM **Farewell to Rabbi Alanna Sklover**

Join us as we offer appreciations of Rabbi Sklover and blessings for her journey ahead. Together, let us all express our gratitude for the many ways Rabbi Sklover has served the GJC community during her time here. We join Rabbi Sklover and her family in looking forward with excitement to this next chapter!

8-9 PM **Kol Zimrah Under the Stars (musical service)**

led by Rabbi Adam Zeff & Nina Peskin, with G'vanim

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## Pride Shabbat with Laynie Soloman

Director of National Learning & Talmud Faculty at SVARA

Join us for Pride Shabbat, where we will honor and celebrate the vibrant queer thread that runs through the beautiful tapestry that is our community of communities. Laynie Soloman will give the d'var Torah in the Charry Sanctuary. Following services, we invite you to continue the joyful feeling with an outdoor kiddush by Centre Catering with a centerpiece that celebrates the fact that love is love. Laynie will be leading a Pride Shabbat learning experience during the kiddush.

**All are welcome. Come as you are!**





For eighty years, Germantown Jewish Centre has been the anchor of progressive Jewish community and values in Northwest Philadelphia. Since its founding, GJC has valued diversity and inclusion, emphasizing a welcoming environment for everyone, regardless of race, religion, gender, or sexual identity.

GJC's inaugural Pride Shabbat took place over the weekend of June 15 and 16, 2018. A celebration of LGBTQ community at GJC, it was an instant success and epitomized some of GJC's core values: diversity and inclusion. Under a rainbow balloon arch, members and guests of all ages enjoyed a potluck and picnic with a "Through the Rainbow" JAM (Jewish Arts and Movement) program and Pride Parade. Shabbat morning began with an inspiring service that brought together all three of our prayer communities in the sanctuary.

Soon after the Pride weekend, long-time GJC member Michael Beer decided to share his good fortune after an uptick in his business. "I wanted to give to the synagogue," he said simply. "It's my home and my community and I support everything we do there." When asked if his donation could be directed towards the second Pride Shabbat weekend, it was a no-brainer for Michael. "I think it's important for the synagogue to support [Pride] and for me to support this. It resonates with me." Michael's older daughter has a female partner and his younger daughter identifies as queer. "[My younger daughter] is actually going to come with me this year."

Pride Shabbat is one of the rare issues around which our diverse community is so united that we join together for services and kiddush. Michael's gift helps provide necessary funding for GJC to make the public commitment to the values of inclusion and LGBTQ pride, and spurred engagement in our community around this issue. By supporting Pride Shabbat, Michael says he's able to support inclusiveness. "I'm so happy the synagogue is doing this and I fully support it. The fact that [GJC] is an inclusive place is really important to me."

This year's Pride Shabbat will be celebrated Friday, May 31 and Saturday, June 1. We hope to see you there!





# GJC's EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM (ECP)

by Ariel Cohen, Lead Teacher of the Chaverim Class

Part of the curriculum in the Chaverim Classroom (Infants) focuses on sharing. This includes helping friends and learning through fun craft experiences. The children painted a canvas over the span of three weeks, alternating painting by themselves and painting with a friend from the Gesher Classroom (2-3 year olds). The older students learned the importance of helping their

younger counterparts get paint on a brush from a bowl of paint or holding the canvas while their friend was painting. Throughout the course of the project, the children learned to make wide paint strokes and dotting techniques, and what happens with a little vs. a lot of paint. This project was a great way of having the younger children interact with the older children in a creative environment.



## 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 they live in. We are committed to teaching and promoting respect and understanding of all persons. GJC's Early Childhood Program is open to all!

## 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.*







hebrew language

Building blocks of grammar:  
Hebrew roots  
Prefixes and suffixes  
Singular and plural

ritual

Our 5th graders participate in **Havayah: a Community Experience**, studying the theme of "Sacred Space, Sacred Time" through a project-based approach.

Germantown Jewish Centre

prayer

Core Prayers:

Mi Chamocha  
Avot V'imahot  
Gvurot  
K'dushah

Haftarah Trope

grade 5

sacred space - sacred time



torah

Tanakh is a compilation of the core texts of the Jewish people. Tanakh along with Talmud and Midrash are the basis of our textual tradition.

Explore Jewish history through the eyes of children living at various times and places through Jewish history. We also study our own family stories.

history & community

Understanding the history of our holidays and sharing our family traditions enriches the ways we celebrate them now and how we will pass them down & innovate them for the future.

holidays



Sitting at the intersection of **tradition, innovation, and community**, the Religious School at GJC is committed to educating a new generation of kids for our evolving Jewish world. Our program urges students to **get curious about their Judaism** and integrates cutting edge teaching methods like Hebrew Through Movement. As they learn and explore, students build **confidence** in their knowledge and connection to our tradition, **competency** in prayer and ritual skills, and a strong sense of **Jewish identity** and connection.

# GJC Religious School

get curious!

215-844-1507 x24 • [www.germantownjewishcentre.org](http://www.germantownjewishcentre.org)



hebrew language

Basics of Hebrew dialogue  
Torah trope

ritual

Understanding Jewish prayer: form & function, the order of the service, evolution over time, modes of prayer, differences across the Jewish spectrum.

Germantown Jewish Centre

prayer

Core Prayers:

Ein Kamocho  
Av Harachamim  
Ki Mitziyon  
Shema/ Gadlu  
L'cha Adonai  
Y'halleilul/ Etz chayim

grade 6

my Jewish voice



torah

**Halakha** (Jewish law) is dynamic and evolving, and is an **intergenerational discussion through text** from the rabbinic period through our own time.

The Holocaust is both a defining period in Jewish history and an example to humanity of what happens when prejudice and hatred go unchecked in a community and become accepted.

history & community

History of the Jewish Holidays and how I understand the commandments and Jewish observances of the holidays in my life.

holidays



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# GJC Religious School

get curious!

215-844-1507 x24 • [www.germantownjewishcentre.org](http://www.germantownjewishcentre.org)

# NEWS FROM HAZAK (55+ programming)

## We Remember Them....

by Helen Feinberg & Coleman Poses, Co-Chairs

When we were asked to chair HAZAK, we did so with a good deal of trepidation. Most of the active members were many years older than we, and as upstarts to this organization, we lacked a certain credibility necessary to carry on its success. What we did have, however, was **Sam Feinberg**, who was ready and able to help us to bridge our initiatives with HAZAK's past accomplishments. For years, HAZAK's signature program was "Opera under the Stars," held every August at GJC. Sam hosted this program, which included his commentary on film clips—sometimes rare archives—of his favorite operas and voices. With his *haimish* style, he was able to make this highbrow art form accessible to GJC audiences. Nor was Sam's knowledge confined to opera. He was an expert on wine, Sherlock Holmes, World War II, and a number of other subjects. He was always eager to impart his knowledge and theories, and to listen to the opinions of others, while continuing to expand his interests and knowledge into new areas. Sam continued to work with us on his opera programming, while encouraging us to take HAZAK into fresh territory, and, although we were the youngsters in the group, he always treated us as grown-ups. We will miss Sam deeply as we endeavor to fulfill his vision for HAZAK.

It is hard to say goodbye to **Sonia Dishler**. As her son Lou said recently, "She was a force of nature." Up until the end of her life, she was fully involved, certainly in the life of HAZAK at GJC. Just two months ago she recommended a book to the monthly book group. She hadn't read it, but because Sonia recommended it, we

agreed. She wasn't at the February meeting when we discussed the book, but all who read it thought it was a really interesting and thought-provoking novel. That was Sonia: a curious, funny, honest, provocative, hard-working woman who did everything. She read Torah, she read Haftarah, she sang in the GJC Choir, she spearheaded the HAZAK book group for years. Always dressed in the latest attractive garments, always put together. She didn't complain; she celebrated all that life offered and made the best of everything. We will miss her.

We will miss them both.

### 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.

## A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON WOMEN'S SHABBAT

by Wendy Weingarten

The annual Women's Shabbat, which took place on March 30th, was powerful and poignant. I felt moved by hearing so many women's voices joining together in prayer, words of Torah and song. The title of Rabbi Annie Lewis' inspiring talk at Women's Shabbat, "*More Power to You: Brokenness, Beauty and Breaking Free*," echoed many of the themes of Passover (breaking of the middle matzah, the power of families coming together and of course the Exodus and our breaking free from slavery). The talk also related to the Women's service itself. Many of the women who participated were not familiar with some of the rituals of the Torah service, so there were slight missteps from time to time. For me, this illustrated our humanness, our "brokenness" and it was uplifting to feel the acceptance and support from the

*kahal* (congregation), with the subtle reminder that we can be kind to ourselves when we don't live up to our own ideal image.

When Rabbi Annie spoke about Moses shattering the tablets of the Ten Commandments and that the whole and the broken pieces of the tablets were carried together in the ark, it was a reminder that all parts of ourselves, the whole and the broken, belong together and are holy. She also referenced the Japanese art form, *kintsukuroi*, the practice of putting together that which is broken "using gold or silver... to create something stronger, more beautiful, than it was before." Women's Shabbat, with our strength, talent, beauty and brokenness visible, was a celebration of joy and the power of all of us coming together.





# GJC ALUMNI

## Our Israeli Families

by Norman Schwartz

In 1960, Leah and I were newlyweds, living in Baltimore. One evening we saw the movie *Exodus*, and after the movie was over I told Leah that I would like to do post-doctoral research in Israel. Although she didn't think I was serious, with the help of my doctoral advisor, it happened. In 1962, we spent a year living in Haifa while I did post-doctoral work. It was a wonderful year; we loved living in Israel and made many friends. Little did we know at that time that our connection to Israel would involve the lives of our sons and our grandchildren.

In the early 1980's, Raphael was dating his childhood sweetheart, Tanya Fiederer, who was also from West Mt. Airy. While Raph was attending Drexel University, Tanya took a trip to Israel to visit her father, who was on sabbatical from Temple University and had recently returned to Orthodox Judaism. While Tanya was in Israel, she, too, decided to become *frum* (religious). She told Raph she would marry him only if he would become *frum*, too. When Raph realized she was determined to follow a *frum* life, he spent his third and final Drexel University coop period attending the Aish Ha Torah yeshiva in Jerusalem. On returning to Drexel in his junior year, he resided in the Lubavitch House on the University of Pennsylvania campus.

Raph (age 21) and Tanya (age 19) were married in an orthodox ceremony at the Lower Merion Synagogue in September, 1986. During the first year of their marriage, Tanya gave birth to their first child (Bayla Esther). The family made aliyah shortly after Raph finished his graduate studies.

While living first in Bnai Brak, where he attended a *kollel* (a yeshiva for married men), Tanya and Raph had two more daughters (Chanah and Elisheva). They then moved to Kiryat Mattersdorf in Jerusalem where their family increased with addition of their first sons (Yehuda Leib and Yaacov Yosef). Raph continued his kollel studies in Jerusalem and Ramot. In 1993, they moved to Telz Stone, six miles west of Jerusalem. Telz Stone, named after philanthropist Irving Stone, is an orthodox community established near the biblical town of Kiryat Ye'arim. Mr. Stone had purchased this large area from the neighboring Arab town of Abu Gosh. Telz Stone has a large Anglo-Saxon community, mainly from South Africa and United States.

Raph obtained *smicha* (Orthodox Rabbinical Certification) and was a part-time Talmud teacher and lecturer. He also was able to do part-time computer work. While living in Telz Stone, their family grew again: Shlomo Zalman, Moshe Aaron, Shifra, Naomi, and Israel Meir.

Raph took a full-time position with an Israeli start-up company which marketed e-cigarettes, mainly in China. The company was purchased by the US tobacco company Altria, which grew its



Raphael Schwartz and his sons



Joel Schwartz and his family

business further and then decided to close their Israel subsidiary. So, after about a dozen or so years of full-time employment, Raph is now collecting a decent severance package. Tanya, in addition to being a wonderful mom and *bubbe*, has become a physical fitness instructor and wellness counselor for Orthodox ladies in Telz Stone. Five of Raph and Tanya's children are married and four of the couples now have children. So Leah and I are now blessed with great-grandchildren in Jerusalem, G'vat Zeev, Rehovot and Ramat Beit Shemesh.

Our youngest son, Joel, like his brother Raph (and Raph's wife, Tanya) attended local Philadelphia public schools. Raph and Joel both attended GJC Hebrew School, and both became Bar Mitzvah here. Raph also was confirmed at GJC. Raph treasures his memories of his Bar Mitzvah training from Cantor Benny Maissner. Joel has a special memory of his Hebrew School class trip to Boro Park in Brooklyn to visit the Bobover Rebbe and his followers. One lovely note: Joel, who knew Tanya from school, invited her to his GJC Bar



## GJC ALUMNI (continued)

Mitzvah party, and that is where Raph and she met. She was 14 years old and Raph was 16. That was the beginning of a beautiful and productive relationship—*Baruch Hashem!*

Joel graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and Southwestern Law School in Los Angeles. After graduation from Law School, he practiced entertainment law in Los Angeles. Two years later, in 1996, he went to visit his brother and family in Israel. Subsequently, he decided to give up his law practice in California, and to study at the Machon Shlomo yeshiva in Har Nof, Jerusalem. The *Rosh Yeshiva* there, Rabbi Berel Gershenfeld, was from Philly and he was a very positive influence on Joel. He encouraged his students to return to their secular professions after two years of yeshiva studies or to continue with their non-yeshiva education. Joel decided to stay in the *frum* world, and had an opportunity to attend the Jerusalem College of Technology. This college was started by the Israeli government and a group of *yeshivot* to train young men with an interest and aptitude in the high-tech computer area. This helped Israeli high-tech companies to obtain skilled Israeli employees, instead of importing non-Jewish high-tech job-seekers from third-world countries.

In 1999, with this training, and his previous American college and law school education, Joel obtained a job at an Israeli start-up involved with satellite TV. Around this time Joel decided to begin the process of *shidduch* (arranged) dating. During his interview with his *shadchun* (matchmaker), he let her know that it was important that his future wife be American, and have had attended an American college fraternity party and an American rock concert!

After many unsuccessful *shidduch* dates, Joel met his *basherte* (intended one), Sydney Cooper, from Scotch Plains, NJ. Sydney was ready to return to the States after a year of study at the Neve Yerushalaim women's seminary in Jerusalem, when Joel proposed to her and she said yes. Shortly thereafter, they had their engagement party in Scotch Plains, and in December 2000, Joel married Sydney at a beautiful wedding in Mevaseret Zion.

The newlyweds lived in Har Nof and their first child, Esther Bryna, was born in 2002. They moved to Ramat Beit Shemesh and their children Dovid, Yaacov, Ashira, Hoodie, and their youngest Meir (now age 3) followed.

Our oldest son, Paul, was born in Israel way back when Leah and I were first there. Like his brothers, he went to Philadelphia public schools and what is now Philadelphia University. He was athletically inclined and earned his certification as a lifeguard. One summer a woman at a pool on the Main Line approached him and said, "Boy, do I have a nice girl for you!" When Paul and Ava Sonnenthal started to talk, it turned out they were both students at the same school. Paul and Ava married in 1993, and in 2004, had a daughter, Lily, who was enrolled at ECP for a time. Unfortunately, Paul's story ends sadly, as he died of cancer in 2011. But Ava and Lily live in Mt. Airy, and we get to see them often.

May Hashem continue to bless our Israeli and American families and also the State of Israel.

## MINYAN MASORTI MEMORIAL SHABBAT

On Shabbat morning, May 4, 2019, Minyan Masorti hosted a Memorial Shabbat to remember minyan members who have passed away since the minyan's origin in 1981. Rabbi Tsurah August, as guest speaker, gave a *d'var Torah* and spoke after the service on "Preparing for the End of Life: Navigating the Spiritual, Practical, and Emotional Landscape for Life's Final Journey."

Rabbi August is staff chaplain for the Jewish Family & Children's Service of Greater Philadelphia, and a member of the Board of Rabbis of Philadelphia and the National Association of Jewish Chaplains. For the past 20 years, she has guided, supported and comforted families during their times of loss and bereavement, integrating her background in the arts into her work. She is also creator of "A Loving Good-bye," which offers individual counseling for families and their loved ones to find peace and meaning at end of life, funeral and memorial planning, and bereavement counseling.

Minyan Masorti has been meeting since 1981, when it was established to offer an intimate, lay-led, traditional egalitarian minyan that includes a full Shabbat morning (or holiday) service with full Torah reading, *d'var Torah*, and Musaf service. The members met for several years in Room 206 (originally called the "206 Minyan") until it outgrew the space and subsequently moved to the Canteen Room, where it remains.

Over the years, the Minyan Masorti has evolved, but has maintained its original purpose of offering traditional egalitarian services and study. Many early minyan members continue to be regulars, but naturally, over the decades, we have lost many members to geographical relocations, changing circumstances and minyan choices, and of course to illness and death. As we missed the participation of early minyan lay leaders, we were determined to memorialize in a meaningful way those members who had died, and a memorial recognition event was born in 1998, when a memorial Shabbat service was held for beloved member Marty Weingarten. In the next few years, Bill Lakritz and Dan Kamesar were also remembered. A fund was established, and a new ark, *shtender*, and Torah reading stand were commissioned. In subsequent years, a Memorial Shabbat service has been held, and a booklet of biographies of deceased former minyan members compiled.

This year's program included a choral performance of Herb Levine's poetry set to music by the late David Barcan and completed with the help of minyan member Mitch Hirsch. A minyan pot-luck lunch, supplemented by Centre Catering, followed the service. For more information, contact Wendy Weingarten, at [wend53@gmail.com](mailto:wend53@gmail.com).

Contributions to GJC for "MM Memorial Shabbat" are welcome.

# INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK AT GJC

by Debbie Stern

## GJC Hospitality Network Holds a Workshop on Confronting Family Homelessness in Philadelphia

Our current Hospitality Network volunteers have expressed a desire to be the best possible hosts, and to achieve a deeper understanding of the homeless families we host twice a year. In response to this request, a hands-on workshop was convened on March 31. The workshop was led by Rachel Falkove, GJC member and director of the Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network (PIHN), together with Nzingha Reed, a former alum of the program. They provided participants with insights into the many challenges homeless families face, as well as offering tips on how volunteers can sharpen their skills to best assist our guests while they eat and spend overnights at GJC. Volunteers also had the opportunity to network with one another, sharing their own experiences and suggestions for "best practices."

The workshop was also opened up to those interested in possible future volunteering and to those simply wishing to deepen their

understanding of homelessness. We heard from the workshop leaders about strategies to prevent homelessness and ways, other than volunteering at GJC, to be involved in these efforts. Thanks to the leaders and participants in the workshop!

- **The next rotation of homeless families at GJC will be from Tuesday evening, June 11 – Sunday morning, June 23.**
- **New volunteers** are always welcome to help in moving our guests' possessions in and out of GJC, grocery shopping, cooking dinners, being dinner hosts, and sleeping overnight at the synagogue when our guests are in residence.
- **Please contact Debbie Stern**, GJC Hospitality Network chair, at [debstern502@msn.com](mailto:debstern502@msn.com) or 215-848-9503, for more information or to volunteer.





# WHAT'S GOING ON WITH OUR BUILDING? PART 3

by Sherman Aronson

As a volunteer member of our House and Design Committee, I will try to keep you posted about the preservation and renovation efforts that are underway at the time of this writing.

During the winter, we have been planning repairs to the Marcus Auditorium. As you may remember, last summer was especially hot and humid for several weeks. This humidity took quite a toll on the flooring in the Marcus.

The Marcus is a great room and we use it for many kinds of activities. There is not much demand for the space during the summer months and the air conditioning does not usually run, except for special events. Parts of the AC system are nearly as old as the building and the controls are very simple, so it either runs full tilt or is set to "off." Meanwhile, when we use the AC in the Charry Sanctuary under the Marcus (yes, the auditorium and stage are built just above the back of the sanctuary space), we get cold air below and hot humid air above.

Over the years, this has caused many of the small wood parquet floor panels to absorb moisture and come loose. In 2018, it was especially bad and large areas of the floor had to be removed and reinstalled.

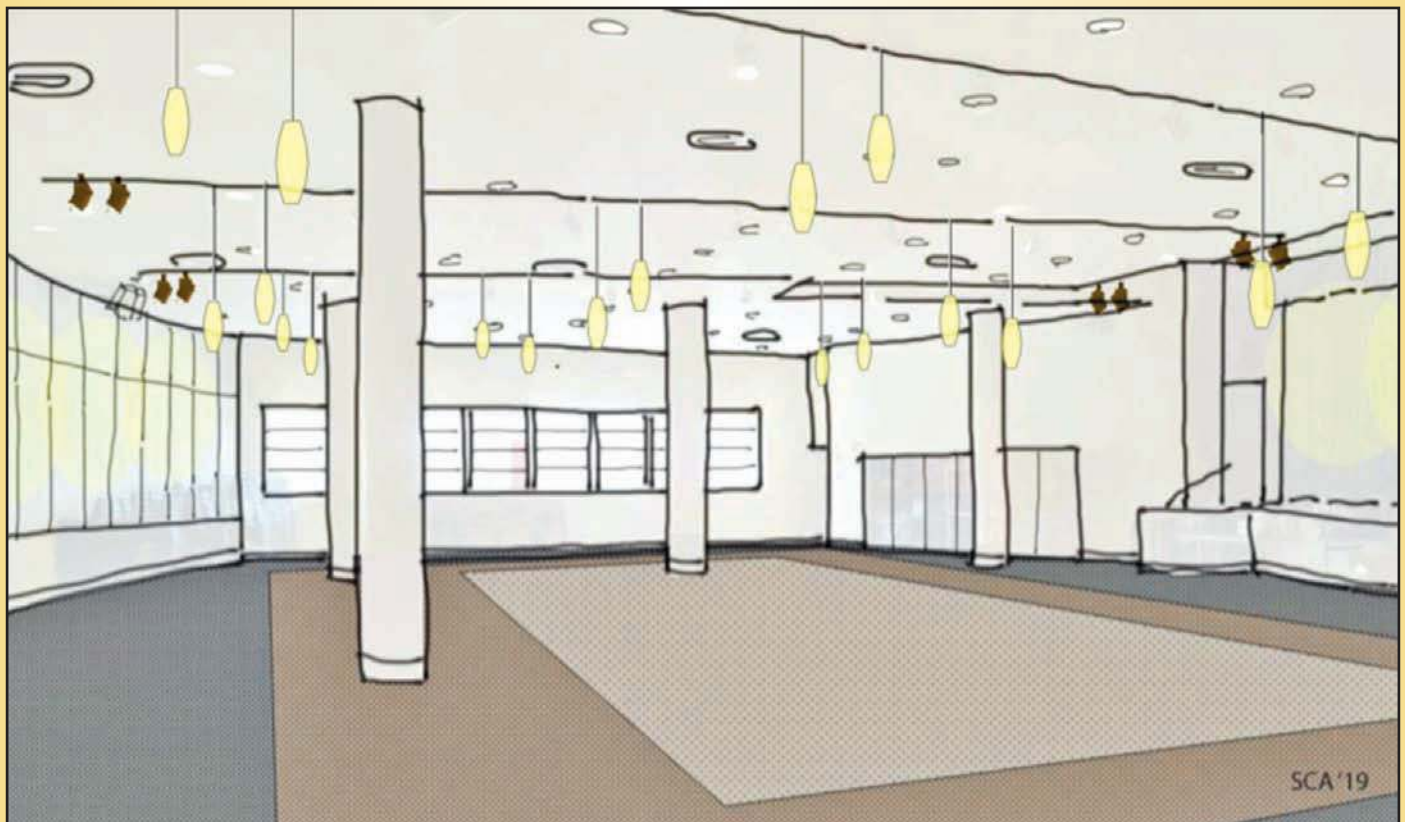
It was decided to investigate options for the floor. After lots of

study, research, samples, and discussions, we settled on a plan to install a new floor. The material is an economical, composite resilient floor tile in larger panels and will be glued down. It will be impervious to moisture, easy to clean, and easy on the feet. The new flooring will also provide a new look to the room.

In addition, we are adding pendant light fixtures from the existing light track on the ceiling. This is an inexpensive way to provide lots more options for how to light the room. They are movable and can work in conjunction with the spot lights already on the tracks, and with the recessed downlights. All the light bulbs have been replaced with high efficiency LED lamps—using a fraction of the electrical power and providing a clean white light while saving money. They are all on dimmers and can be adjusted for meetings, parties, events and carnivals as needed.

We are looking forward to attracting even more activities, events, and uses in the great Marcus Auditorium with the improvements. The sketch below provides a rough idea of the new improvements, and if it stays on schedule, the work should be done about the time this article is printed!

What's next? We move on to repairing and painting the GJC School windows.





# THE FREEDOM SEDER'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

by Elliott Seif



50 years ago, as a 35-year-old, Rabbi Arthur Waskow, founder of the Shalom Center in West Mount Airy, created the Freedom Seder to honor Martin Luther King, Jr., who had been assassinated in April of the previous year, and also to create a new type of Seder that was relevant to the challenging times of the 1960s. You can imagine how, in the mind of a young Jewish man, the story of Passover, from slavery to freedom, connected to that moment in history, when we Americans were living through the tumultuous times of assassinations, protests, Vietnam, the civil rights movement, violence in the streets, and political chaos.

The original Freedom Seder, written 50 years ago and originally published in *Ramparts* magazine, was used by thousands of Jews as an alternative *Haggadah*, because it had direct relevance to the times, and spoke to three issues facing America—racism, militarism, and materialism.

Now, 50 years later, I, my wife, and many other members of GJC, including Rabbi Zeff and his wife Cheryl Bettingole, were blessed with the opportunity to attend an event that celebrated the 50th anniversary of that first Freedom Seder. Unfortunately, many of the same plagues that existed 50 years ago are still with us today. As was written in the program:

"Fifty years later, we are in crisis again, facing four aspects of tyranny: the onslaught of racism, hatred of foreigners, and religious bigotry; of militarism at home and overseas; of worsening poverty and overweening materialistic greed that extends even to wrecking all Earth for the sake of hyperprofits; and sexism—official and unofficial efforts to subjugate women and LGBTQ+ communities. Our challenge to these tyrannies carries Dr. King's clarity, his courage, and his commitment to new worlds of freedom, bringing to birth the Beloved Community we all call for."

The Seder was held in the Masjidullah Mosque, which ironically was Temple Sinai at one time, and was attended by people of all faiths and colors. The Seder was updated to not only include racism, materialism, and militarism, but also sexism.

So what did we do at the Seder? After a dinner attended by over 200 people, 200 more joined in for the Seder rituals and speakers. The program called for us together to ask the traditional Seder question, *Why is this night different from all other nights?* But instead of the traditional responses to this question we together read the following:

*On this night we share our joy and love of one another and for the natural world.*

*On this night we share our pain and sorrow for the sufferings of each other and the Earth.*

*On this night we open our eyes to new ways of seeing what's true.*

*On this night we define our commitment to act for justice, peace, and healing.*

In pairs we shared the good things in our lives and ate *charoset* to remind us of the sweetness of life, but we also ate horseradish to remind us of the sufferings of people among us. We heard from Chantay Love, who lost her son to gun violence. We listened to beautiful music played by the *Children of the Adam Band* from Masjidullah, by Shawn Zevit, Rabbi of Mishkan Shalom, by Hazzan Jack Kessler, and by the Reverend Rhett Morgan. We said the blessings over grape juice (in the spirit of the Muslim ban on alcohol) in many languages, including Hebrew, Arabic, and Spanish. We heard the Muslim call to prayer, beautifully sung and translated into English. We heard rousing speeches about anti-Semitism, sexism, racism, anti-gay attacks, unequal school funding, and the military-industrial complex. The final "prophetic charge," given so movingly by the Reverend William Barber, called for a new war on the poverty of millions of Americans, with a special event on June 5, the day after the end of Ramadan—a march on Washington—of 1000 clergymen of all faiths. Taking a piece of *matzah*, we were all asked to "act urgently and together" to turn *matzah* from the bread of the poor into the bread of freedom for all. We ended by all singing "Go Down Moses" and saying together "Next year in a world of freedom!"

The program's written remarks by Rabbi Waskow, entitled "Moving Always Forward, Never Turning Back" ended with the following:

"Let us turn the hearts of the Elders and the Youth toward each other, bringing new life and energy into our varied religious, spiritual, and ethical communities, and renewing a planet, a climate, as life-giving for our grandchildren as it was for our grandparents!"

With blessings of *shalom, salaam, paz, peace.*"

Amen.

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



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