



THE CENTRE CALL

GERMANTOWN JEWISH CENTRE

Volume 27, Issue No. 5

Iyar 5780 / May 2020



ISOLATION & REVELATION

by Rabbi Adam Zeff

In these weeks leading up to Shavuot, we focus our eyes ahead to the giving of Torah on Mt. Sinai, the moment when we become free, not just free from earthly oppressors but also free to pursue

the path of doing divine work in this world. This year, given the isolation from each other that we have been experiencing, I have been thinking about the moment when God calls to Moses to leave the people at the foot of the mountain and go up, alone, to learn all the words of Torah from God. "So the people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was" (Exodus 20:18). Why does God require Moses to separate himself from the people before learning Torah? Why is Moses's isolation from others necessary for the revelation to take place?

To understand this, we need to think about not just Moses's aloneness but also God's. There is a Hasidic tale (retold by Martin Buber) that Rebbe Baruch of Medziboz once found his grandson in tears after playing hide and seek with his friends. When he inquires, his grandson recounts that he hid, but no one came to find him, leaving him all alone. The Rebbe comforts his grandson and muses that just like this child, the Blessed Holy One hides, but no one comes to seek. So the Rebbe imagines God's sadness as God, too, remains all alone.

If God is, as it were, in social isolation, then we can see God's call to Moses as an attempt to reach out and connect. Maybe the entire experience at Mt. Sinai, the revelation of Torah to the people Israel, is somehow a giant, cosmic attempt by God to bridge the gap that separates human and divine. But how can God do that? How can God make inroads into the human heart when humanity is so far from God?

In order to connect with humanity, God first needs humans to want to connect. So God takes the Israelites out of Egypt, away from the social world in which they have lived for

hundreds of years, suffering from oppression, true, but still connecting every day to the people and environment around them. By liberating the Israelites and bringing them out into the wilderness, God creates a profound disconnection between them and others. God puts them into social isolation, then leads them to a mountain where God calls their leader, Moses, to be even more isolated on the top of the mountain.

Now Moses, all by himself on the top of Mt. Sinai, starts to experience a little bit of what God experiences, the experience of being alone. Moses, like God, longs to reach out and connect, but Moses can't use the methods he would normally use to connect to a human being. He can't touch, see, smell, or taste God. All he can do is to learn how to listen, and eventually respond as God sends him messages across the immense distance that still separates them. That is what constitutes revelation: God and Moses bridging the gap that separates them to hear and speak to each other, to connect deeply to each other despite the gulf between them. Each of them, in their isolation, is comforted by that connection.

As we painfully make our way through this extraordinary time, we all feel the disconnect from our friends, families, and community, the incredible frustration at not being able to see and touch those we love. Like the Israelites in the wilderness, like Moses on Mt. Sinai, and even like the Blessed Holy One, we long to bridge the gap that separates us. When we can't use the methods we are used to, we learn how to use others, to find whatever ways we can to accompany and support each other.

Our longing to connect is holy. When we bridge the gap, when we connect deeply despite all that keeps us from each other, that is revelation. In this time when we are wandering, isolated in the wilderness, or even when we find ourselves alone on the top of the mountain, may we find comfort in that connection, with each other and with God.

UPCOMING SHABBATOT AND PROGRAMS

The most current schedule for services, holidays, and programs can be found on the GJC website at www.germantownjewishcentre.org.

Daily and weekly schedules of services and events are also sent through GJC's email distribution list.

If you are not receiving these emails but would like to, please contact Teena Robinson at office@germantownjewishcentre.org.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

(February 1 - April 1, 2020)

Isabel Cranz

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.



MAZAL TOV! IN CELEBRATION OF...

(January 28, 2020 – April 13, 2020)

Connie and Sam Katz, on the birth of their granddaughter Ameila Louise Kaplan, daughter of Elizabeth and Micah Kaplan

Elayne Blender and Itzik Lorant, on welcoming their second grandson, Samson, son of Aviva and Paul Constantine, and brother of Ronen

David and Allyson Schwartz, on the birth of their granddaughter, Sophie Rachel, daughter of Jordan and Corina

Ned & Karen Kripke, on the birth of their grandson, Leo David Kripke, son of Joe Kripke and Steph Winheld

Naomi Becker, daughter of Chip and Marta Becker, on becoming Bat Mitzvah

IN MEMORIAM

Harold Horn, father of Burton Horn, grandfather of Abby Horn and great-grandfather of Risa and Simon

Harry Terence Israel, brother of Tamar Jacobson, father of Shimon Israel

Suzanne Hyman, mother of Elana Hollo, grandmother of Matti, Naomi, and Ellie

Lita Manheim, mother of Paula Spivack, grandmother of Jacob, Daniel, and Rebecca

Dorothy Bamberger, mother of Michael Bamberger, grandmother of Ian and Alina

Eleanor Strauss, mother of Sharon Strauss, grandmother of Juniper and Oliver

Daniel Greenberg, father of Rabbi Julie Greenberg

Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin, great-grandmother of Maya

Sarah (Sala) Goldberg, aunt of Ruth Heiges, Shirley Brown, Gary Brown and Mindy Brown

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Denise S. Wolf, President



As I pen this piece, we are in the midst of the spread of the Coronavirus. The virus has upended every aspect of our lives. Terms like “social distancing,” “flatten the curve,” Zoom, N95, and #thisisnotasnowday, which had never been uttered just weeks ago, now roll off the tongue. Today, we all know someone who is self-quarantining. Dr. Anthony Fauci is now a household name.

“Remote learning” and telework have taken hold of our lives. Pelotons, *Tiger King*, and puzzles are new best friends. “Cancelled,” “postponed,” and “shut down” are the norm...and for some baffling reason, our closets are full of toilet paper.

At the moment, many of us are experiencing uncertainty, disruption and anxiety. Uncertainty stems from not knowing, or being able to control, in any meaningful way, what the immediate future holds. Making plans seems futile. One-day-at-a-time becomes a core value. Questions abound: When will my partner return to work? Will there be overnight summer camp? How am I going to survive with the whole family home hunkered down 24/7?

Disruption is the great equalizer. Everyone—all ages and backgrounds—is suffering from unwanted changes to routines. Our toddlers are no longer attending ECP; our college students are now living at home; *b’nai mitzvot* celebrations have been postponed; Women’s Shabbat and Refugee Shabbat are shelved until next year; and family trips need to be rescheduled.

Anxiety is skyrocketing. We fear for the well-being of our cherished elders, and those who are immuno-compromised or have underlying health issues. We fear for our friends and loved ones who are medical professionals working tirelessly on the front lines. We are worried about our economy. How long will a recession last? Will it decline further into a depression? Without a doubt, fiscal pain will ensue for individuals, for families, and for institutions like GJC. How much of a financial hit will the synagogue take?

There are presently no answers to these questions. We must live with the unknown.

Yet, no pandemic is strong enough to unglue GJC for very long. Several weeks, even months, of quarantine will not

undo us. Instead, we have created an epidemic of support, of connection, and of Jewish communal life. I have faith in us, in our capacity to adapt and rebound, in our big hearts, and in our thoughtful minds.

Although the doors of our synagogue building are shuttered, and we have physical space between us, we are not alone. We still have each other. We are resilient and innovative by creating new modes of connection. The energetic leadership of Rabbi Adam Zeff, Rabbi Rebecca Richman, and Executive Director Nina Peskin have seamlessly ushered us into the age of virtual connection: Zoom, live-streaming, audio streaming, Mixlr and more. Our programming and services have never been stronger. The number of participating members has exceeded all expectations.

Davening

Shabbat continues to be a special time at GJC with many offerings. On one recent Friday night, over 100 participants tuned in via Zoom or audio-stream for the amazing musical service, *Kol Zimrah*, led by Rabbi Zeff and Nina Peskin. On Saturdays, the Charry Service is both live-streamed and audio-streamed. Morning *minyan* continues to meet via Zoom at 7:15 AM, with participation soaring higher than ever. Dorshei Derek gathers every Shabbat via Zoom to daven together. Their super organizing abilities have resulted in meaningful services and Torah discussion, with participants not only here in Philadelphia, but from around the globe. At the end of the Dorshei service, everyone is invited to have some wine or grape juice at hand to say *kiddush* together and then hang out and schmooze, virtually of course. Mark Pinsky personally has delivered *siddurim* (both *Kol Haneshamah* and *Sim Shalom*) to members to enable remote participation in services. What a *mensch*!

Programming

Now is the ideal time to get more involved. It is easier than ever and, literally, a few clicks away. Participate via Zoom, telephone, audio live stream or Mixlr. Use your computer, smartphone or tablet. Chat on Sunday morning over coffee with Rabbi Zeff through video streaming. Topics are endless and of your choosing. Having kids home unexpectedly full time can be difficult. Join a Parent and Caregiver support group via Zoom, facilitated by Rabbi Richman, to find creative solutions. There is a weekly chanting group led by Nina and Rabbi Zeff on Thursdays, as well as meditations hosted by Rabbi Malkah Binah Klein and Rabbi Sheila Weinberg. Other offerings include a Healing Minhah Service with Rabbi Richman and weekly Torah study with Rabbi Fredi

(Continued on page 4)

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN (continued)

Cooper. GJC is motivated to enrich your life during this critical time.

Early Childhood Program (ECP) and Religious School/Teen Tuesday

Closed classrooms have not deterred ECP Director Michelle Bernstein and the teachers from providing rich content to the children online. Interactive programming such as singing songs, reading stories, guiding art projects, hosting cooking demonstrations, and circle time have kept our toddlers quite engaged. For bedtime, ECP teachers recorded stories. Ann Daly read *Caps for Sale*; Anna Goldberg read *How to Catch a Heffalump*, Sarah Charlick read *Be Happy* and Hannah Allen read *Sky Color*. There was Family Zoom *Havdallah* Saturday evenings with Chana Rothman and Rabbi Tamara Cohen, as well as ECP Shabbat with Rabbi Zeff on Friday mornings. We are keeping the kids connected to their Jewish community.

The Religious School, Teen Tuesday and Confirmation Class teachers, led by Ben Rotenberg, have not missed a beat. Through on-line learning, the teachers have continued to provide engaging content on Sunday mornings, Wednesday afternoons and Tuesday evenings. Some of the course offerings for the teens include *Middot + Improving Ourselves* taught by Mindy Shapiro, *Important Eras in Jewish History* taught by Melanie Berman, and *The World of Jewish Comedy* taught by Ben Rotenberg.

As a community, we will get through this difficult time. Past generations faced times of challenge, including violence and disease, and found hope in our Jewish traditions and faith, and togetherness. When this pandemic finally starts to slow, GJC looks forward to embracing you all again, in person. Until then, shalom, blessing, and health to all.

SPRING IS here and we so look forward to seeing you at THE LITTLE SHOP!

These are our plans for the near future, but all will depend on changes to the Coronavirus situation. If the Centre is open, we will be open.

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



SPRING AND SUMMER STORE HOURS:

May 1st through June 14th—Wednesday 12-7:30, Thursday and Friday 12-5, **and** Sunday 9-12:30

June 15th through August 30th—Wednesday and Friday 12-5

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

MAY and JUNE DISCOUNTS:

MAY SPECIALS: Challah boards, plates, knives and covers



JUNE SPECIAL: 10% off all items storewide !!!!!



AND take another 10% off most purchases during Early Bird Special hours of Wednesday to Friday 12-3 (usual exclusions apply*).

MIMOSA SUNDAYS: Sunday, May 17th **and** June 7th



AND ON MAY 17TH stop by the hallway outside The Little Shop for another Meet the Artists event showcasing talented GJC members.

YOU PERFORM A MITZVAH when buying at The Little Shop:

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

**normal discount exclusions are books, wine, mezuzot scrolls and tefillin.

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, and 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	Sandy & Jim Meyer
Jane & Richard Baron	Paul Minkoff
Eileen & Richard Bazelon	Martha & Chuck Schleifer
Peninah & Albert Berdugo	Allyson & David Schwartz
Harold Berger	Denise Scott Brown
Barbara Jaffe & Howard Langer	Dveera Segal & Brad Bridge
Linda & Jake Kriger	Patty & Steve Segal
Chris & Steve Levin	Stefanie & Alex Seldin
Barbara & Dick Menin	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 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
Hillary & Judd Kruger Levingston
Katie & Geof Margo
Cyrilla Rosen
Beth Rosenbaum & Noel Eisenstat
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.

GJC Pastoral Care Team

Dear GJC Community,

I hope that you and your loved ones are staying well under these difficult circumstances. While we have always been a strong community, this crisis is presenting the opportunity for us to become even stronger by sharing some of our skills. To that end, we are creating a GJC Pastoral Care Team. Our community's overall needs are higher right now, and we unfortunately expect they will continue to rise.

Please fill out the form which is available on the GJC website, or which was sent to you in email, so that we can organize congregants who have particular skills and want to offer them in a volunteer capacity.

Rabbi Beth Janus, Rabbi Marsha Friedman, and Genie Ravital, LCSW, have generously stepped up to serve as our GJC Pastoral Care Team coordinators. Based on your survey responses, they will be able to see what your skills and needs are, and do their best to match you.

Please take 5-10 minutes to complete the survey. Thank you for your commitment to our community and for letting us know how we can best meet your needs.

Rabbi Rebecca Richman

WOMEN'S CLOTHING EXCHANGE

February 5, 2020

The Women's Clothing Exchange was a tremendous success this year! We had over 20 volunteers helping to sort and staff the event and we raised over \$3400.

All who participated as volunteers and shoppers had a great time and many clothes were also shared with women who are refugees, immigrants and are experiencing homelessness.

That money collected is being used to pay for GJC's membership in POWER.



The Women's Clothing Exchange took place on February 5th. A group of volunteers gathered together on the Saturday evening before the event to sort clothing and set up the Marcus Auditorium.

TORAH FUND BRUNCH

by Women of the GJC Torah Fund Committee

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, Women of GJC cancelled the Torah Fund Brunch which was scheduled to take place on May 3, 2020.



We know that many of you have generously pledged to buy a Torah Fund pin and we hope that, if you are able, you will still send in your contribution for the pin or other donation if you are able. The pandemic has affected every aspect of our lives, including the seminaries and students that we support every year through Torah Fund. Though the seminaries which Torah Fund supports are quickly adapting to this crisis by teaching classes remotely, they need our support now more than ever.

Next year, we will appropriately honor Marcy Fish, who was to be our honoree this year. We have scheduled Torah Fund for Sunday, May 2, 2021.

Please send all pledges and contributions to Judy Schwartz (our Torah Fund pin Chair). You can find Judy's address in the GJC Directory.

If you have any questions do not hesitate to call Judy (215) 483-5959 or Sandy Meyer (215) 915-1306.

Thank you all for your support of this project, and keep yourselves safe.

Plague and Pesach: Reflections on Community

An Update from Minyan Masorti

by Avi Decter

In recent weeks, GJC and its several communities have been wrestling with how to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. Like all our communities, the *mazkirut* of Minyan Masorti has been deliberating and planning ways to support our isolated members and to sustain our sense of community. One Minyan initiative was to convene a Zoomfest, an online gathering and conversation that took place on Sunday evening March 22nd.

At that gathering, more than 30 Minyan Masorti members shared their concerns, needs, and ideas about ways we as a community could help one another to cope with social distancing, isolation, and sensory deprivation. All of our thinking, of course, was (and is) complicated by the requirements of public health and our preparations for Pesach.

One of the most obvious “benefits” that we can “enjoy” in the midst of this crisis is an unusual opportunity for focusing and reflecting on our situation and on ourselves. Speaking only for myself, I began to feel that the moment was ripe for *heshbon ha-nefesh*, an accounting of the soul. This is a spiritual and moral exercise that Jews typically engage in during the month of Elul, before the High Holy Days begin. But in a time of communal crisis, it seems worthwhile to take a realistic, honest look at ourselves.

What are our basic motives, beliefs, commitments, and behaviors? How do these express our Jewish values? Are we living a life that matters? How can we improve ourselves? What will be our legacy? There may be no final or definitive answers to these fundamental questions, but at this point on our journeys, the questions seem especially immediate and relevant, given our feelings of oppression and deprivation.

This brings me to Pesach. Like our ancient ancestors enslaved in Egypt, we too, at this moment, are enslaved—not by a tyrant, but by a pandemic. Still, as Michael Walzer argues in his classic *Exodus and Revolution*, we as a people have it within our

power to struggle against oppression, and our struggle can help lead us to freedom. By re-casting ourselves as new, liberated people, we make ourselves fit to enter the Promised Land.

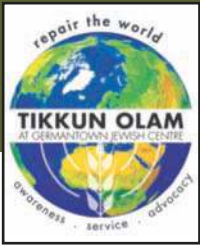
We now have the power to struggle against oppression and to make ourselves more fit. Not, of course, by breaking out of our physical isolation, but by setting out deliberately and self-consciously on a wandering journey to new insights and self-awareness. Instead of parachuting into the Pesach, we can come to the *sedarim* fortified by reflection on ourselves and our community. By taking the opportunity imposed on us by social distancing, we—as individuals and as communities—can engage in *heshbon hanefesh* and draw nearer to our *chevre* and to our own best selves and to our ancient traditions.

Minyan Masorti convened another Zoomfest on April 5th, on the eve of the festival, to continue our discussion about the needs of our *minyan* and of GJC as a whole. As we move through this difficult period, thinking about our connections, our communities, and the journeys we are taking individually and communally, can help us to move forward with strength and conviction.



THANK YOU

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



TIKKUN OLAM

A Talk with Laurel Leff, Refugee Shabbat Speaker

by Nan Meyers

The coronavirus caused us all to miss a special program about how to **Welcome the Stranger**. All is not lost, though, even temporarily. The keynote speaker, Laurel Leff, Ph.D., author of *Well Worth Waiting*, recently shared some of the highlights of her book and her presentation.

Dr. Leff is Associate Director of the Jewish Studies Program and Associate Professor of Journalism at Northeastern University. While doing research for another book she realized that the story we knew about how the United States welcomed the intellectual elite was much different than the reality. "To be hired by an American university, for example, a refugee scholar had to be world-class and well connected, not too old and not too young, not too right and not too left and, most important, not too Jewish," she explained.

"The United States' role in saving Europe's intellectual elite from the Nazis is often told as a tale of triumph, which in many ways it was. America welcomed Albert Einstein and Enrico Fermi, Hannah Arendt, Herbert Marcuse and Richard Courant, among hundreds of other physicists, philosophers, mathematicians, historians, chemists, and linguists who transformed the American academy. Yet for every scholar who emigrated and thrived, many, many more did not.

"The 1930s and 1940s constituted the first refugee crisis," Leff said. "When Hitler became chancellor in 1933, suddenly, anyone who was a Jew or a non-Aryan could not work in a university." At the same time in the United States, there was an immediate need for academics. If you were a professor, doctor or another professional, you likely had international connections. For example, a physician in Heidelberg wrote to a colleague at the University of Michigan asking for help."

Professors and clergy enjoyed the only professional privilege available under the restrictive immigration laws of the 1930s and 1940s. As a result of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924, foreign professors with proof of an American job offer could receive a "non-quota" visa, which was not subject to the United States' strict country-by-country immigration limits. It enabled universities to extend a lifeline to imperiled refugees. No limit existed on the overall number of non-quota visas that could be issued, as compared with a 150,000 annual limit for quota visas.

Refugee Shabbat was coordinated by The Refugee Committee, an initiative of the Tikkun Olam Coordinating Team. Members include people from all facets of the GJC community. Watch the GJC bulletins to learn when Dr. Leff will return to keynote the Refugee Shabbat.

You Shall Love the Stranger: Statement on Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Immigrants Germantown Jewish Centre



Our tradition repeatedly forbids us from oppressing the stranger and commands us to love the stranger. Leviticus 19:34 states, "The strangers who reside with you shall be to you as your citizens; you shall love each one as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." Exodus 22:21 states, "And you shall not wrong a stranger, neither shall you oppress them; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Throughout our history we have been strangers in strange lands. We have been persecuted. We have been refugees.

We remember the 900 Jewish refugees aboard the M.S. St. Louis who in 1939 were refused entry to the U.S. and returned to Europe. It is a betrayal of our history, holy texts, and values to stand by as people are persecuted.

Our religious and civic values require us to love and respect those who seek shelter and safety. We understand the category of "stranger" to include refugees, asylum seekers, and other immigrants. Germantown Jewish Centre supports the human rights of all refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants. More specifically:

- We support the legal right to seek asylum and access to a fair and humane asylum process.
- We support restoring the historic policy of the United States to allow asylum-seekers to enter the United States in order to state their case for asylum. We believe that is decent and humane, and honors our values as a nation of immigrants.
- We believe that those who seek a new life in this country deserve to be treated humanely, as people created in the image of God. We urge that refugees and asylum seekers be assured respect, safety and dignity as they navigate the legal process.
- We support the U.S. refugee resettlement program. In light of the over 68 million refugees in the world, we support restoring our country's refugee resettlement ceiling to at least the historical average of 95,000.
- We stand against discrimination of immigrants based on race, religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.
- We value the contributions of immigrants to our local community as well as our country.

NEWS FROM THE MEN'S CLUB

by Dick Menin, President

The Men's Club had a great program planned for early April. Rabbi Howard Addison, one of our congregants, recently edited and personally contributed to the new book, "Finding Redemption in an Unredeemed World." The book includes several essays by local and distant rabbis and lay people suggesting new ways to expand our Jewish knowledge and enhance our spirituality. I've read the book and was very taken with the multiple routes on which people find themselves as they make their way to religious fulfillment. Unfortunately the COVID-19 health crisis derailed our original plans, but I hope to reschedule the presentation after life returns to our prior understanding of normal. Rabbi Addison is an engaging speaker and I hope to see you at the meeting. Details of the rescheduled meeting will be made available through email and the GJC Weekly.

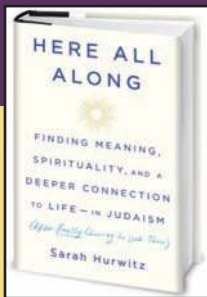
Men's Club Shabbat took place in early March. In addition to very articulate introductions to the Torah and Haftarah portions, and *D'var*, we had an excellent program after *Kiddush*. Drs. Rob Garfield and Jake Kriger revisited the subject of men's relations, a conversation that began last year. This year's discussion was entitled "Wrestling with our Dementors (you need to be a Harry Potter fan to understand the reference): Helping Men Address

Harmful Sexual Biases in the #MeToo Era." The presenters utilized a combination of program points hand-outs and *hevruta* style discussions to help make theoretical concepts easier to understand. People are complex creatures and sometimes behaviors that we are not proud of can be swept aside and not dealt with. Do we recognize any of these behaviors in ourselves? That's a hard question to answer honestly. Have we seen others behaving badly and not called them out for it? This too is an equally hard problem. Like any thoughtful program it left us with questions for future contemplation and consideration.

As you know, Men's Club has been working with the Jewish Relief Agency for several years to deliver food packages to people in the Philadelphia area who don't have enough to eat. The organization has changed its packing and delivery protocol from involving hundreds of people on a single morning, to having a few people packing for several days to reduce the risk of contagion. The Men's Club did participate on many of the days and I'm pleased to say we were able to deliver packages to more than 3500 people in late March. Once things return again to normal, please consider participating in this worthwhile project.



GJC Members who participated in the Men's Club project with JRA: Dan Plser, Sandy Meyer, Chris Levin, Jim Meyer, Linda Cherkas, Dick Menin, Jim Casey, Martha Schleifer and Chuck Schleifer



BOOK REVIEW

by Elliott Seif

Sarah Hurwitz, *Here All Along: Finding Meaning, Spirituality, and a Deeper Connection to Life--in Judaism (After Finally Choosing to Look There)*. Spiegel and Grau, 2019.

Like me, Sarah Hurwitz grew up knowing only a little about Judaism and being Jewish. For her (and for me) Hebrew School was not a great experience. She (and I) learned a smattering of Hebrew and a little about Jewish history and traditions, but mostly she was bored and disinterested. During adolescence, like many Jews, she stopped learning about Judaism and being Jewish. Then Sarah went on an American success path that took her away from Judaism—getting a good college education, going to law school, and then becoming a speechwriter in the White House for both Barak and Michelle Obama (head speechwriter!). Clearly she has had a very impressive career so far and has a very bright future ahead of her.

For Ms. Hurwitz, though, a strange thing happened along this journey. After breaking up with a boyfriend, and with a lot of time on her hands, she decided on a whim to attend a Judaism 101 course that she says changed her life. She began to learn about the thousands of years of Jewish History, the principles and ideas behind Judaism, the holidays and rituals, the ethical standards of Judaism. She was hooked!

So what does a bright, talented Jewish woman writer do in these circumstances? Write a book about Judaism, of course. The result is quite an amazing accomplishment. Sarah did exhaustive research, combing through multiple resources, talking to Jews from all sects of Judaism, and as a result writing a book worthy of a Jewish scholar though also written in a very readable and interesting style worthy of an Obama speechwriter. It is a book that takes you on her journey and, along the way, teaches you about Jewish heritage, thought, and law. It is written for someone like me, who has much to learn about the origins and principles of Judaism, and also for the convert to Judaism, someone who is already schooled in Judaism but wants to refresh and rethink aspects of Judaic scholarship and practice, and even the non-Jew who wants to learn more about Judaism.

Here are just a few of the author's key points:

- Judaism's basic tenet, written thousands of years ago, was a radical idea then and is still today: that all men and women are created in God's image, and that all men and women are of infinite worth, fundamentally equal, and totally unique—the very ideas that are the underlying principles of our Constitution.
- The Torah's true meaning is often hidden and needs to be unearthed. Thus it is meant to be interpreted, reinterpreted, and argued over. There are approximately 1.8 million words of interpretation of the Torah, compared to about 80,000 words in the Torah itself! Judaism has also

evolved away from a religion with a single Temple, high priests, the use of a goat to cast away sins, and the stoning of anyone who does not observe the Sabbath. It is now a decentralized religion of synagogues, multiple sects, and rabbis who continually interpret and reinterpret Jewish law, and it continues to evolve.

- Today Judaism contains multiple perspectives on the nature of God (or what the author also calls the Divine), the meaning and practice of prayer and worship, ritual observance, and many other aspects of Judaism.
- Ultimately, Judaism is a religion of doing. "As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel put it: 'A Jew is asked to take a *leap of action* rather than a *leap of faith*...We do not have faith in deeds: we attain faith through deeds" (p. 86). Two of its greatest aspects lie in teaching us how to have self-restraint and attain self-transcendence.
- Prayer, the keeping of the Sabbath, Jewish holidays and rituals all have a place both in Judaism and the modern world, and, once you understand them, all are important and meaningful.
- Judaism sets a very high ethical bar on how to treat others, both Jews and "the stranger." Much is focused on avoiding humiliating others, helping others, and doing what you can to "heal the world" (Tikkun Olam).

Of course, this list of key points is just a sampling of what Hurwitz has to say in 254 pages, with the addition of an appendix, an exhaustive list of resources, and a significant number of notes.

In short, this is a book about Judaism that is worth reading (more than once, for me) and pondering, discussing, interpreting, and arguing over. At the end, the author asserts that, in light of today's changing world, new knowledge, and new insights, it is incumbent upon Jews to continue to reflect on and reinterpret Judaism, keeping what is important and principled, but modernizing with the times. As Jews, we all need to find for ourselves the place to which we belong and the practices that make the most sense.

For Sarah Hurwitz, the writing of this book and the sharing of her story is an act of love. At the end, she summarizes all of the many things she has come to love about Judaism—how it empowers us, how countercultural it is, how primal it is, how it has created activists who make a difference, and how, in spite of the many challenges Judaism faces, it is a religion that has survived over thousands of years and can grow and thrive in modern times.

WOMEN OF GJC

by Vilma Lieberman and Linda Cherkas, Co-Presidents

As we write this article, it is nearing the end of March, and like everyone else, we are wondering how long the quarantine, fear, and illness will go on. Although GJC is closed due to COVID-19, we are doing our best to stay connected.

Two of WGJC's annual spring events have been cancelled, but we would like to share with you some important news about each. Although Women's Shabbat was cancelled, we are hoping that Liz Bloch-Smith will be able to be our speaker next year.

Women's Shabbat has become an opportunity to honor and remember remarkable women from our community, and we do not want to let this year go by without noting the wonderful women we planned to honor this year. Eve Pinkenson shares her Women's Shabbat comments.

Honoring Cheri Goren



In 2011, Cheri and her husband were profiled in the Member Spotlight column of the Centre Call. The article began, "Cheri Goren is a woman of prodigious energy, and she's not done yet." Almost 10 years later, it is obvious that not much has changed.

Cheri joined GJC in 1957. At the time, she and Joe wanted their children to grow up under the influence of Rabbi Charry (z"l). Cheri retired from working at age 68, and made GJC a second career. Over the years she has volunteered in many ways, including being in charge of programming for Women's Club/ Women of GJC for 10 years.

In the 1990s, HAZAK was started by Rhea Shils (z"l), and when Rhea died Rabbi Gordon asked Cheri to take over the leadership. Being very keen on programming, Cheri started planning outings like the Mural Arts Program. After Rabbi Gordon left GJC, Cheri was instrumental in luring him back to as the speaker for one HAZAK Shabbat. Actually, Cheri was the impetus behind HAZAK Shabbat.

It wasn't enough just to lead HAZAK...so together with Sonia Dishler (z"l) and Sam Feinberg (z"l), Cheri started the book group.

Did you know that Cheri recently wrote a book? The book is called "Leaving Memel," and it's her memoir of leaving Poland at the start of World War II. She spoke about her book a few years ago, and then, in the fall of 2018, Cheri's nephew Fred Finkelstein showed the film he had made based on her book at a Sunday morning program. We learned a lot about Cheri that day.

Cheri is one of the gems of Germantown Jewish Centre. She has a big heart, a delightful attitude, an indomitable spirit, and is known always for being stylish. She's funny and she's smart. Cheri

is a model of what many of the younger women want to be when we reach her age. Talking about age, you should know that Cheri turned 95 in March. Cheri, to 120.

On behalf of the Women of GJC, we thank you, Cheri, for all that you've done for GJC, for all that you've given, and for gracing us with your charm and presence.

A certificate of appreciation and honor has been created for Cheri, and will be given to her once the health crisis is over.

* * * * *

In Memoriam

Each year, we have taken a few moments on Women's Shabbat to remember the women who are no longer with us.



Maxine Feldman—It's hard to think of Maxine without tearing up. She was a most amazing woman: strong, independent, fun, funny, a giver, a survivor. When thinking of Maxine, three things come to mind: how much she loved her family, how much she loved working, and how much she loved GJC. She was so devoted that she served more terms as Women's Club president than anyone else ever. She also organized more Torah Fund brunches than anyone ever.

She and Maurice were practically lifetime members of GJC; they raised their children here, and she was so thrilled and proud when Adam and Lauren had their B'nai Mitzvah here. It was just so perfect that her funeral was in this very room.

During this first year without her, every event is bittersweet. While she is mentioned specifically today, we will miss Maxine for a long time.

Jeanette Dudnick—Jeannette fit the definition of a "lady." She was generous and kind, a lovely woman. Jeanette and her husband joined GJC in the 1950s, and they, too, raised their family here. She attended and supported Women's Club meetings and events. Years ago, we used to hold meetings in different women's homes, and after Jeanette moved to Cathedral Village, she hosted a Board meeting there at Cathedral Village, complete with tea and coffee and cake, all arranged by Jeanette. She was also a member of the HAZAK book group.



Jeanette was just a special person, and is missed by many.

WOMEN OF GJC (continued)



Leah Mandelblatt was the third woman we lost during this past year. It's especially sad to remember Leah today because she and Cheri were best friends...Leah would have loved to have been here to honor Cheri. Leah was a long-time member, having joined GJC in 1957. She participated in Women's Club, HAZAK, and the HAZAK book club. Another lovely woman. GJC has

been very fortunate to have such wonderful women as active members.

May all their memories be a blessing.

* * * * *

A surprise honor had been planned to honor and thank someone who has been an important part of Women's Shabbat for a number of years.

Starting many years ago, **Joan Silver** attended Women's Shabbat, just to be there. Then when she was Vice President for Programming she



participated in the Officers' *aliyah*. Somewhere between 10 and 15 years ago, Joan took on the responsibility of arranging for the *kiddush* luncheon that WGJC provides. If you've liked the food, thank Joan.

Also for a number of years, Joan has had the responsibility of engaging our speaker. She researches who might be a good speaker, she talks to them, meets with them, and finally introduces them to us on the day of the service. Without Joan's help these many years, this event would not be as stimulating or enjoyable as it has been and continues to be.

In your honor, Joan, the Women of GJC have planted a number of trees in Israel in your name.

* * * * *

Old Academy Players

No decision has yet been made about the spring theater outing to the Old Academy Players. Look for updated information in the GJC Weekly for a new date and the name of the rescheduled play.

Stay safe; stay healthy!

CHESED COMMITTEE

by Peninah Berdugo and Gena Epstein, Co-Chairs

I sit to write this at my home computer while sheltering in place during the Coronavirus outbreak at the end of March. I would love to fill you in on the Chessed Committee's plans for the future, but it is difficult to do so with the uncertainty caused by the current pandemic. I will tell you what we have in the pipeline and future dates will have to remain TBD—To Be Determined.

A Cook-In—We need to replenish the supply of meals that we keep on hand for distribution to GJC members experiencing health challenges or life cycle transitions. Not only is this a big *mitzvah*, but also a fun communal experience for participants. Notices will appear in the GJC Weekly and sent to prior volunteers once a date has been set. If you have not volunteered in the past and would like to be added to the list, please notify Peninah.

The Committee was about to launch its **Friendly Visitor Program** when the Coronavirus hit. We could use additional volunteers who would be willing to do 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. There is currently a greater need than there are available volunteers, so your participation would be very welcomed. Guidelines and ongoing support will be provided to volunteers. Note: We will not be initiating any part of the Chessed Committee's programs until given the all clear from Rabbi Zeff.

If you are interested in becoming involved in any component of the Chessed Committee's activities (cooking or home visiting), please send an email to me at peninahberdugo@gmail.com. In your email, please include your name, phone number and the activities in which you are interested. Similarly, 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 me an email.

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

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

MARIA PULZETTI

by Linda Kriger



Maria Pulzetti

Morning *minyan* on Thursdays has often been led by Maria Pulzetti. This is significant since Maria doesn't live around the corner. Before the pandemic-induced physical distancing, Maria took a bus from Queen Village to Mt. Airy, and after services, she took a bus to her job in Center City. During the physical distancing, Maria works at home, taking care of her two young children, occasionally leading morning services on Zoom.

Maria, 42, was born in Lawrence, MA. She attended public schools through 8th grade and then commuted to the private Phillips Academy for high school, where she found "a great place for kids who loved learning. It wasn't uncool to like school." After high school, Maria was offered "an amazing scholarship that covered everything" at the University of Virginia. "It was in a part of the country where I hadn't lived before. It radicalized me, but I was ready to be radicalized."

"I came out my first year of college," she explained. "I became very involved in activism, which might not have occurred if I'd gone to a school where my identity wasn't an issue." Maria graduated from Virginia in 1999 with a double major in History and Russian and a minor in Women's Studies.

While at Virginia, she created the Day of Silence, in which students would spend a day in silence to protest the silence created by homophobia. "I came up with this idea my first year in college," Maria explained, and the concept later spread across America.

Although Maria is no longer directly involved with the project, it has spread to elementary, middle and high schools. "My daughter, Risa, experienced it in her public elementary school last year. Her grade did three minutes of silence which is about as long as kids that age can maintain it," she said, smiling.

Between college and law school, Maria worked for Human Rights Watch in New York, and later for the Russian Justice Initiative, when she lived in Russia for 2½ years. Putin had just become President and Maria represented Chechens who suffered abuses at the hands of Russian forces.

"Human rights work at that time and to this day is dangerous in Russia," she said. "We brought the first torture case to the

European Court of Human Rights. Several people we worked with were later assassinated.

Back in the U.S., Maria started Yale Law School in fall of 2003, focusing on working with prisoners on death row. "I came from the human rights model," she said, "so it was a logical path."

Maria handled appeals in death penalty cases for eight years as a Federal Public Defender in Philadelphia, but found she wanted to have a broader practice. She then worked as an appellate public defender in non-capital crimes cases for four years, handling direct criminal appeals in the federal system.

Now she works at Community Legal Services, which provides civil legal aid in Philadelphia. "I focus on food stamps, Medicaid and cash assistance, when people have been cut off or denied these benefits. That is what keeps me up at night these days, making sure people aren't cut off at this critical time."

Asked how she ended up in Philadelphia, Maria explained that in law school, she met her wife, who is from Philadelphia. Rabbi Lina Zerbarini (a former member of GJC) presided at their wedding. After settling in Queen Village, they attended high holiday services at Dorshei Derech on Rabbi Zerbarini's recommendation and felt welcomed there. They joined GJC.

"When our daughter was a toddler, we began going to GJC Shabbat services and started meeting people," Maria said. "Rabbi Zeff taught a class in 2013 and I was in a cohort with people who are still my friends in *shul*. The next year, we went to a Jewish wedding of a friend from law school," she continued. "I felt more in than out. It was sudden. It wasn't something I was planning or thinking about. I realized I wanted to be part of the Jewish community."

Maria had made a shift. As a lawyer she had focused on a secular notion of individual rights. "Now as a Jew, Torah brought me to a different understanding of our obligations to each other and the role of God as a transcendent experience in our lives," she said.

She told her wife she was ready to convert. Holding her second child, Simon, she met with Rabbi Zeff, who suggested she study with him. "He had me read Abraham Joshua Heschel and I can still picture staying up really late at night, reading. It was a beautiful experience." Rabbis Tamara Cohen, Annie Lewis and Adam Zeff made up Maria's Bet Din in May 2016. "It was very meaningful," she said. "They asked me to explain in my own words why I was taking such a step."

Today, leading services "feels like sharing something very intimate in a way to bring us all together," she said. "When I was

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT (continued)

studying with Rabbi Zeff, I didn't know the prayers. I had to learn the prayers literally word by word. I started praying a few words every morning.

"Some people meditate," she said. "Prayer turned out to be a centering thing for me. I get up very early and pray before the rest of the house is awake. Before I went to the *mikveh*, I started coming to *minyan* on Thursdays. In January 2019, I had my Bat Mitzvah. It was so much fun," she said, delight clearly in her voice. "I learned to lead *Shacharit* for the Bat Mitzvah, so now I *daven* it when I have the opportunity."

Maria's volunteer work at GJC has focused on the Retreat Committee. "The family retreat was the way our family built stronger relationships and made us want to be in the building

more because we had friends," she said. "I became co-chair of the committee and I learned about how people can contribute to the community. It's been really special to build that event for four years." This year would be the 10th retreat.

"We have 30 families a year who spend a whole *Shabbaton* together at the Malvern Retreat Center, a wonderful space in the woods, with trails where the kids can ride their bikes," she said. "The retreat community has become so strong that families with older children have not wanted to leave the retreat." Because of COVID-19, it is unclear whether the retreat will take place this year, but the relationships fostered by the retreat continue to strengthen. "Last Shabbat, we had 19 families on Zoom to do *Havdalah* together," Maria said. "We want to maintain our connection, and we will continue to do that."

GJC Visits Barrack Academy by Maria Pulzetti



On February 13, several GJC members participated in Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy's quadrennial Politics Conference (Politicon), an event that students organize during Presidential election years. Denise Wolf, Brad Bridge, Ron Eisenberg, Maria Pulzetti and Dveera Segal all made presentations to the students. Minna Ziskind, history teacher and faculty advisor of the Political Action Club, worked behind the scenes in organizing the event with the student Political Action Club. Other program speakers included Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice David Wecht who was the keynote speaker, Attorney General Josh Shapiro, State Senator Katie Muth, and Shira Goodman of the Anti-Defamation League. Per our non-scientific survey, GJC contributed more speakers to this event than any other synagogue!



Maria Pulzetti, Ron Eisenberg, Dveera Segal, Denise Wolf.
(Not pictured: Brad Bridge)

Akiba/Barrack has been hosting this politics conference since the 1980s, and it is part of a day-long event that has also included either a mock primary election or a mock political convention. The purpose of the day is to celebrate and promote civic participation and political awareness among students and staff. For the conference, students chose to attend a variety of workshops that dealt with topics pertaining

to government, law, politics, or media. The school is proud to be able to bring in so many experts in these fields to enlighten and inspire students. Minna is grateful to members of the GJC community for being so generous with their time and talents.

GJC members spoke on topics as varied as: "An Overview of a Federal Prosecutor" (Denise Wolf); "Miranda Revisited:

You have the right to remain silent but the court may or may not appoint an attorney to represent you" (Brad Bridge and Dveera Segal); "The Little Sisters Case: Health Care and Religious Liberties" (Ron Eisenberg); "Zooming in on Mass Incarceration: Racial Injustice, Listening and Dissent" (Maria Pulzetti).

Barrack students from grades six through twelve attended the workshops. It was a particular pleasure to see some of my GJC friends' children in the

classroom. In my sessions, I was impressed with the challenging and thoughtful questions the students posed about mass incarceration, racial justice and the death penalty. The goal of the conference is to introduce students to civic engagement. Judging from all of the energy and conversation in the building, it was a big success!

GJC'S EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM (ECP)

by Michelle Bernstein, ECP Director

More than bricks and mortar.

That phrase has been repeating in my mind for the past several weeks. To say that ECP has gone through some unprecedented change is an understatement. Never in my career as an Early Childhood Director would I ever have imagined leading ECP online. Our world has turned upside down, inside out, forward, backward and all over again. We have, and continue to be tried, tested, and stressed. We crave the day we return to normal, even though I think we all know that when that time comes, it will never be a normal such as that we once knew—and what was so abruptly taken from us—whiplash included.

However, we didn't take this pandemic as an opportunity to put ourselves down. We didn't quarantine ourselves and hide from each other and forget each other's existence. The minute we were mandated to stay home, we formulated a plan that would keep us connected as the beautiful ECP Community we are.

Zoom became our lifeline, as it did for millions of others.

We started online daily programming for the children and their families. How do we do this with babies, toddlers, and preschoolers...the exact age of children we don't want exposed to screens? We did—and continue to do as I write this article—what we do best: care for our children.

We read stories. (We even have a YouTube channel, "ECPTV," that offers "ECP Bedtime Stories" recorded by the ECP staff and parents.

We cook.

We create art.

We celebrate Shabbat with Rabbi Zeff.

We celebrate Havdalah with ECP teacher and Curriculum

Coordinator, Anna Goldberg.

We dance.

We talk.

We listen.

We love.

Nothing will ever get in the way of our community. In fact, if anything, this experience has provided us with new connections, new understandings, and new appreciations for everyone. We didn't realize how many silver linings would emerge and evolve out of this trying time. Families have bonded with staff in new ways; parents have bonded with their children in new ways. Our families have opportunities to meet and spend (virtual) time in classrooms other than those of their own children. Staff are brainstorming and sharing new ideas with one another. Most of all, we have become tighter...and stronger. One day soon we will be opening the doors to the ECP, hearing the laughs, singing the

songs, and enjoying the story times as always. When those doors open, we will know they were never really closed. They were just open to a new experience: one that will join us together in the strongest way possible, through our hearts.

Be well. Be safe.

* * * * *

Thank You!

Since GJC and the Early Childhood Program have been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several parents of ECP children have donated all or a portion of their tuition installments since the closure to support the beloved ECP teachers. We are so grateful for the following families who have been able to support the ECP in this way:

John Autin & Kristine Len

Alex & Jessica Gurvich

Shawn Hesse & Lauren Fisher

Chad Hill & Kate Yun

Ron Jones & Lynne Kaplan

Adam & Naomi Kramer

Brandon & Katie Martin

Jonathan Mitchell & Ariel Wolpe

Betsy Reese & Darla Himeles & Evelyn Reese Himeles

Yoni & Aviva Reinfeld

Mary Sellmyer & Evan Pruitt

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

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!

INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK AT GJC

Hospitality Network Hosting Families in June

by Debbie Stern

The next rotation of homeless family guests at GJC will take place

Sunday June 14 – Sunday June 28



Debbie Stern

Debbie Stern has been serving as the chair of the Hospitality Network for more than five years and will be stepping down at the end of June. Both Debbie's tenure and GJC's almost 30 years of participation in the Interfaith Hospitality Network will be marked at the Shabbat service during Sukkot next fall.

GJC congregant Nan Ides will be working with Debbie in June and then assuming leadership after that. Nan, who has been a member of GJC for a little more than two years, recently retired from the Environmental Protection Agency where she worked in communications for 32 years. Since her retirement, Nan has become more active in several community outreach efforts with the public and would like to be more hands-on. Using her organizational and communications skills (BA from University of Delaware, MS in



Nan Ides

Information Management from Drexel University), Nan will be taking over as chair of the GJC Hospitality Network.

Nan is also the author of two mending and sewing books and loves to discuss sewing with others. Hopefully, in the near future, she will be able to teach some cost-saving basic mending skills to members of GJC.

We are grateful that she has stepped up to help our synagogue community fulfill the mitzvah of *haknasat orchim*—welcoming guests into our synagogue home.

* * * * *

New volunteers are welcome and much needed to help move the families in and out, cook a dinner meal, shop for groceries, serve as evening and weekend hosts, and sleep overnight at the synagogue when our guests are here. If you would like to be a new volunteer contact Debbie Stern, at debstern502@msn.com or 215-848-9503.

NEWS FROM HAZAK

by Coleman Poses and Helen Feinberg, Co-Chairs

HAZAK is on hiatus due to the COVID-19 crisis. Please watch your GJC emails and the GJC website for future activities.

Be safe. It will be nice to gather together again when we can.

* * * * *

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.

ISRAELI DANCING

and

PEOPLE OF THE BOOK



Usually this space provides information about the Israeli Dancing Schedule, and the list of books and meeting dates for People of the Book.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, both of these programs are in hiatus.

Please watch for information about the resumption of these activities.

We look forward to dancing and reading with you again.

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH OUR BUILDING? PART 6

by Sherman Aronson

As volunteer members of our House and Design Committee we continue to keep you posted about the preservation, renovation and design efforts that are underway at the time of this writing.

The GJC building sits on a remarkable site. Anyone who has walked around the neighborhood and taken a stroll on all sides of our site sees very different views from each street.

- On Ellet Street we have the driveway at one end and the small triangular area leading to the Ellet Circle at the other end.
- Between are the grand lawn of the Sanctuary, the sloped lawn of the School Building, and the raised Playground.
- Along Lincoln Drive you feel the dramatic slope of the land as you travel from Ellet Street to Sedgwick Street. The east side of the School Building peeks out from the tall trees of the sloped woods and the "back" of the Sanctuary, and rises up like Mt. Sinai, set behind a worn grassy slope.
- The Sedgwick Street portion is short but from here you look up through trees to the edge of the parking lot that borders on the neighboring houses between Ellet and Sedgwick Streets.
- Each of these perimeter settings helps form the overall impression of GJC as part of Mt. Airy.

The H&D Committee formed a sub-committee to begin thinking about the best ways to appreciate all parts of our campus as well as how to improve them. Improvement can mean many things: enhance security, lighting and visibility for the entrances and the playground; reduce the need for mowing and maintenance; introduce more regional plants; fix paving and drainage in the parking lot; make better use of the outdoor spaces, especially along the "front" on Ellet Street; types of gathering places can be incorporated along the front areas; and consider how to transform the lower lobby into our main, welcoming and inviting entry with access for all members and guests.

Our sub-committee agreed that we need design assistance from a landscape architect to help sort out our goals and enable a vision for the future. Working with the Executive Committee and the Professional Staff we have received funding for the first steps. We issued a Request for Proposals from several firms, selected a stellar local firm called Studio Bryan Hanes (SBH), and developed a detailed Prospectus of issues, goals and desires for each of the places around GJC. We also asked that

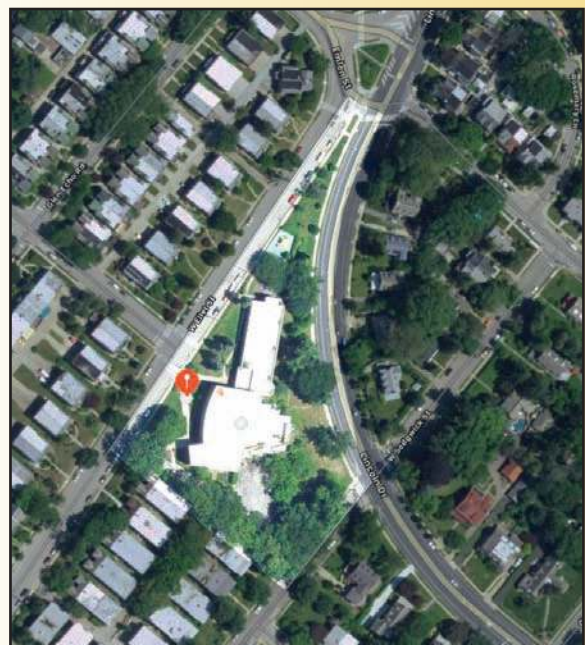
each of these potential improvements should work together as a whole with complementary uses, plantings, paving, lighting and seating.

We held a series of meetings with the GJC Staff and key volunteer committees. We had a group site walk-around with the design team. SBH then provided a package of images of outdoor spaces, types of grasses and plantings, seating and ideas that could be considered as we work together on the design. At the time this Centre Call is published, we expect to have an initial presentation of design concepts by SBH to share with the overall GJC community. We then hope to absorb feedback and input, and start on a cohesive landscape design master plan.

Ultimately the goal will be to seek funding for specific projects around the site on a priority basis. As each project is identified and given the go-ahead, the sub-committee will work with SBH to prepare bidding documents so the landscape work can be pursued in a professional manner.

During the initial planning in February and March, some specific projects came forward from the leadership as needing quick attention. We were able to ask SBH for guidance and work with our Facilities team to make selections for materials, placement and installation.

For the next edition we hope to present a new landscape design master plan that will be developed from this process, with your input, and with a clear vision to improving our campus in the near future. Once again, stay tuned.



Aerial View

MEET THE ARTISTS: Yona Diamond Dansky and Susan Weiss Discuss Their Work

Last year, the Little Shop instituted a Sunday morning series, **Meet the Artists**, to highlight artists and artisans who are members of GJC. Yona Diamond Dansky and Susan Weiss were two of the artists who participated in December.

Mooshu Worries
by Yona Diamond Dansky
Author/Illustrator

In May 2010, Yona's daughter Mia Blitstein (and her husband, Dan) got the shock of a lifetime in the form of a diagnosis of non-Hodgkins lymphoma. Mia's parents, Howard and Yona Diamond Dansky, many friends, and family focused on supporting Mia and Dan, including the care and feeding of grandson Judah, and grand-dog Mooshu. Mia has been in good health since 2010, and most triumphantly, Mia and Dan welcomed their second child, Zevi, now five years old.

During treatment, Yona and Howard became a regular part of Mia's family life. Judah, three years old, was trying to cope with the ever-present reality that "mommy has a boo-boo on the inside." Yona would often read books to him, but was frustrated when she and Mia—both educators—couldn't find age-appropriate books that addressed a young child's ambient insecurity about these scary changes in Mommy in a helpful and comforting way.

Yona, a lifelong educator, determined to fill that gap in the literature herself, and created *Mooshu Worries*, her first children's book. She imagined that seeing the household chaos from a dog's perspective would be comforting and provide a way to be in the moment, without promises about the future. There were many drafts and the whole family provided feedback. She went to conferences for children's book writers and illustrators.

This project took nine years to complete. "Once I reduced my workload," Yona said, "it was easier, though I still had a lot of caregiving to do, as my parents' health was declining and they needed a lot of my attention. I had to be patient and work on this project when I found time. I was satisfied with small increments of progress as I'm a very persistent person!"

"I found a small company, Owl Publishing House which was willing to accept, tweak, and publish *Mooshu Worries*."

This book is for every child, as we all get sick. It is most appropriate for children ages three to eight, and especially children in a family where a parent or other family member has a serious or chronic illness. We often focus on the person who is ill, and the children and care-givers are overlooked.

"Now I'm working on two other books, *Mooshu Sniffs*, and *Delicious Knishes*."

For more information about *Mooshu Worries*, including resources for families and downloadable suggested activities for parents and teachers, please visit www.mooshustories.com.

Becky's Braids
by Susan Weiss

Illustration by Deborah Gross-Zuchman

I love to bake *challah*. Adding complex twists to the traditional three strands is a great kitchen challenge. Even more enjoyable is teaching *challah* skills to friends and baking with my twin granddaughters, Ever and Simone. It was during one of the baking events that the idea for a children's book began to rise.

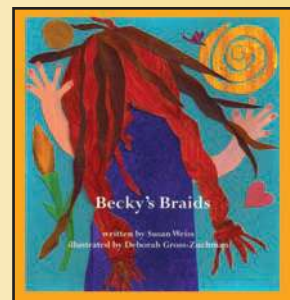
I braided their hair to hold it in place and out of the dough. I thought that a story about messy hair and *challah* would be wonderful to read to kids and a nod to two of my loves, cooking and my granddaughters.

Becky's Braids was raw dough that needed work. I like to write and have written professionally and been published before, but never took on a children's book. Telling a story that appeals to children and thinking of how an illustrator might enhance was an unfamiliar world.

Around the time I completed the final draft, I needed to purchase additional *haggadot*. We had been using the *The Essential Seder A Contemporary Haggadah*, written and illustrated by Deborah Gross-Zuchman. Deborah is a Philadelphia painter, poet, and retired art teacher. She uses the technique of collage: painting on paper and cutting up the papers to create interesting and surprising effects. I called Deborah and told her I needed to order more *haggadot*. She invited me to her home. While at Deborah's home, I mentioned I had the text for a children's book and was searching for an illustrator who might like to work with me. Deborah read the story of *Becky's Braids*. To my delight, Deborah offered to illustrate it. In that moment, a wonderful collaboration and friendship was born.

We put the pages and her beautiful hand-painted paper collages together. *Becky's Braids* was complete and went into print in 2017. Since then, Deborah and I have visited numerous Jewish religious schools to read it, talk about writing and illustrating, collaborative work and, of course, *challah* braiding and baking. Over the past year, we have received letters and cards from fans of *Becky's Braids*.

Deborah and I have a second book completed. *A Light for Meira* is a story of a little moth who is afraid of the dark. Meira learns the Chanukah story and finds the place in a synagogue where the light always shines. We are on to our third book. If you would like to purchase a copy of *Becky's Braids* please contact me. Slw6809@comcast.net.



June 5-7 is GJC's PRIDE Weekend!
Stay tuned for news on special programs
and services, and look for the new
LGBTQ+ PRIDE page on our website!

We can't wait to celebrate!



TODAH RABBAH!

CONTRIBUTIONS from JANUARY 16, 2020–APRIL 6, 2020

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

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	Gary Stein & Ellen Reese	in memory of Suzanne Hyman, mother of Elana Hollo
	Carol Kaplan	in memory of Samuel Pinn, father in memory of Bette Sinett, sister
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	Rivkah Walton	in appreciation of the GJC rabbis and staff, for their caring and creative response to the COVID-19 crisis
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If you are interested in writing for The Centre Call, we would love to hear your ideas! Please contact Kate Lawn at program@germantownjewishcentre.org.
The deadline for every issue is the 1st of the previous month.



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