



# THE CENTRE CALL

## GERMANTOWN JEWISH CENTRE

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## SUSTAINING COMMUNITY DURING A PANDEMIC

by Rabbi Rebecca Richman



We have been wandering in the wilderness for a long time, and we are longing for each other. We are yearning for communal familiarity, song, gathering, intimacy, and steadiness. The edge of the wilderness—the boundary that might end this pandemic and carry us into a new land—seems still so far away. How do we sustain our community during a pandemic? We know we must

each keep our physical distance to survive, but how do we ensure the survival of our community, along the way?

This past spring (on Zoom, of course), many of us gathered for a six-week study of *Pirkei Avot*, a tractate of rabbinic teaching that offers insight into human relationships and communal behavior. There is a tradition of studying one chapter each week between Pesach and Shavuot, and we took that tradition with us onto our virtual platform. In the second chapter, Rabban Gamliel teaches, “*Al tifrosh min hatzibur*, Do not separate yourself from the community” (*Pirkei Avot* 2:4). The 15th century Italian scholar and commentator Obadiah ben Abraham of Bartenura comments on this verse, “Do not separate yourself from the congregation; rather, share in their troubles. For one who separates from the congregation will not see the congregation consoled” (Bartenura on *Pirkei Avot* 2:4:3-4). The message is clear: we need each other, especially in times of troubles.

For many decades, our community has heeded the obligation to care for one another. We have shown up for life cycle events (celebrating and marking life transitions from birth to death); we have cooked and delivered *chesed* meals; we have carpooled and offered rides to *shul*; we have made friendly and pastoral visits; we have reached out and offered a hand or a shoulder when a friend (old or new) needs us; we have been the tenth to enter a house of mourning and help make a *shiva minyan*; we have shown up for committee and board meetings to keep our synagogue running. We have expressed our care and made our community stronger by working hard to listen closely when we have erred in relationship, when we have fallen short in living

up to the communal ideals and obligations that keep us so closely tied. In other words, our community—always still growing and improving—has been robust.

So, what now? Are all of these avenues for connection gone, amid the pandemic? What does it look like for us to show up for one another, in our ever-changing reality? How will we sustain and grow our community when we do not yet know how long it will be until we make it out of the desert, until this part of our wandering is complete?

Although it can be uncomfortable and even awkward at times, we are blessed to live in a moment in which technology has made possible the sustenance of connection, even across physical distance. We can still connect, by phone or by Zoom. We can still write letters—the paper kind—or send email messages. We can still show up to celebrate life cycle transitions with each other, virtually. We can pray together, even in a virtual *minyan*. Some of us can, when taking all the necessary safety precautions, help each other get groceries. We can drive by someone’s house and give them a wave, let each other see the other’s face, even at distance. We can call someone to ask them to come by for a distant wave. We can have “Zoom dates” with one another, “eating” meals while talking or video conferencing. We can join support groups to connect with people who are experiencing similar kinds of challenges, forming new relationships that we might not otherwise have built. We can tell each other how much we miss one another. We can learn together. We can strategize, we can be creative. We can still grow.

Let’s be clear: it’s not the same, and it’s not what we want. Please God, we will be out of this wilderness soon, and while we wander without knowing how long the journey will be, let us not lose track of each other. We can still connect—and we must.

*Nachamu, nachamu ami*, Comfort, oh comfort My people (Isaiah 40:1). My prayer for us in this moment is that we are comforted by each other, through our connections. Together, I know we can sustain this incredible community, and I am right here with you as we journey.

## GJC IN SOLIDARITY WITH BLACK LIVES

On May 25, 2020, a Minneapolis police officer knelt on George Floyd's neck for over eight minutes, as he pleaded, "Please, I can't breathe." The murder of George Floyd at the hands of police officers sparked local, national, and international outrage at the centuries-long racism and police brutality that have left Black people fearful for their lives and grieving for the lives that are taken too soon, over and over again.

The murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and Rayshard Brooks are just a few of the Black lives for which we now collectively grieve. As our rabbis wrote to our community after George Floyd's murder, "We must listen not only to the cry of the blood just spilled but also to the cry of the blood of those hundreds of God's creatures, our fellow human beings, killed by police in just the past year, an epidemic of violence that disproportionately falls on black and brown people. We must listen because those cries confirm the awful truth that we already know: the racism that was baked into this country at its founding is still strong, white supremacy is still with us, and in the words of Heather Heyer z"l, if we are not outraged, we are not paying attention."



Rabbi Zeff at the Multifaith Vigil for Black Lives on June 14.

In early June, our rabbis held a support call with over 120 participants, in which we had the chance to hear from a diverse array of our members, ECP staff, and clergy about the impact of and our reactions to police brutality and racism in our lives. We also reshaped our PRIDE Shabbat celebration to honor the intersectionality and interconnectedness of the fights for LGBTQ+ liberation and racial justice. This is just the beginning of the work we must do.

As we work to make Germantown Jewish Centre an anti-racist community, our work will have to go deeper than making statements or putting up signs, important though they are. As we declare

"Black Lives Matter," we must also do the harder work of uncovering, challenging, healing from, and reshaping the ways that structural racism and white supremacy have made their way even into our own community.

We continue to turn to each other for support, connection, and solidarity, as we envision a world where each of us can live in peace, without fear.

### UPCOMING SHABBATOT AND PROGRAMS

The most current schedule for services, holidays, and programs can be found on the GJC website at [www.germantownjewishcentre.org](http://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](mailto:office@germantownjewishcentre.org).



### MAZAL TOV! IN CELEBRATION OF...

(April 13, 2020 – June 9, 2020)

**Rabbi Reena Spicehandler and Jeremy Brochin**, on the birth of their grandson Aviv Ezra, son of Ari Brochin and Sarah Meyer in Jerusalem

**Denis Ethan Lattanzi**, son of Haviva Goldman and Greg Lattanzi, on his Confirmation

**Oliver Lee Strauss Moscow**, son of Sharon Strauss and Dan Moscow, on his Confirmation

**Caleb Sage Shapiro Mendelsohn**, son of Mindy Shapiro and Alan Mendelsohn, on his Confirmation

### IN MEMORIAM

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

**Barry Meyer**, father of Rebecca Meyer, father-in-law of Rabbi Kevin Bernstein, and grandfather of Sophia, Molly, and Eva

**Linda Kriger**, wife of Jake Kriger, mother of Daniel and Ezra, stepmother of Rachel, Jeremy, and Mira, and grandmother of Maayan, Ayla, Neima, Neli, Adel, and Kassia

**Deborah Peled**, mother of Sarit Kunz, mother-in-law of Kenny, and grandmother of Lillian and Adam

**Erich Oppenheim**, uncle of Mindy Shapiro

**Judge Isador Kranzel**, husband of Myra Kranzel, father of Sharon and Jerry, and grandfather of Eli, Jacob, Alexander, & Jenavieve

# THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Dan Livney



Dear Community:

I find myself in the curious position of beginning my term as President in the midst of saddening and unprecedented times. Odd as it may sound, with a somewhat depressive personality style, this kind of works for me, as my family is so far safe and healthy. As I write this, it is late May, and my family, like yours, has been “physically

distancing” in our home for the past two months. We have been eagerly awaiting grocery deliveries, and wrestling with our children, Boaz and Ezra, to finish their online school work. We have also been anxiously checking in on relatives, particularly the ones who are older: my mother, living alone in Israel, Melissa’s parents who live near an early epicenter in Northern NJ, and my father and step-mother who were afraid to travel home from Florida as the full nature of this crisis set in, and they found themselves on a much longer vacation than they had anticipated.

This has been a time of many feelings. There have been moments of deep sadness as we hear of the struggles many families have faced, when we hear of Bnai Mitzvah, and other family events missed, of livelihoods lost, of relationships under strain, and of the deaths of vulnerable relatives. There have been moments, too, of joy, unexpectedly, in the midst of all of this: watching our children playing with all of the exuberant irresponsibility of childhood, as though missing so much school is the very point of all of this upheaval. We have connected with friends we see much less frequently in ‘normal’ times. I walk outside, amidst the new growth; winter aconite spills over the ground in a yellow flood, incongruously colorful and carefree in the midst of a strange, cruel spring.

Let us speak of Zoom. Our family has *Zedered* (Zoom Sedered). We have gathered around our *havdalah* candle with our Family Retreat community. With the spring air wafting through the back door into our house, we have chanted with Dorshei Derekh and with the Shabbat morning service—watching with wonder and gratitude as our Rabbi stands alone in the sanctuary, and Nina sings in her home during Kol Zimrah on Friday nights. We are gladdened by the amazingly large number of fellow GJC members filling the virtual halls of our community.

These moments have made me reflect on the meaning of connection and of home. For many of us GJC is a second home. Ruby Namdar, an Israeli author, spoke at the synagogue not so long ago (though everything “before” seems so far removed). In Namdar’s reading, the word “home” takes on an expansive meaning. It comes to mean not just physical space, but encompasses belonging and connection: of peoples, partners and communities. Being home means being together under a shared roof—a roof that is made not just of shingles, but one composed of presence, in whatever way available, and in whichever way we make a choice to co-create it.

“Beit Kneset,” the word used for synagogue in Hebrew, means house of assembly, and the synagogue’s response to this crisis, under Rabbi Zeff’s guidance, has been to maintain ourselves as a house, and as an assembly, no matter the circumstances. That is the space into which I find myself entering as your new President, and with the privilege you have allowed me to serve you in this way.

A recent New Yorker cartoon comes to mind, showing a man, rowing his lifeboat alone in stormy seas. The caption reads: “I had planned on using this time to write my life’s novel.” I interpret this to mean that the future holds much uncertainty, and many of our individual plans, and of the synagogue’s plans, are now on hold. For today, our task is to respond to the wind, no matter which way it chooses to blow, and to get through, in anticipation of fairer weather to come. There is much work to be done in that regard.

Difficult discussions have been ongoing within the Executive Committee, along with the Rabbi and our Executive Director. The Executive Committee is composed of Denise Wolf, Diane Ajl, David Mosenkis, Marcy Rost, Linda Kriger z”l, Steve Levin, Jake Fisher, Barb Menin, Beth Stearman and David Hahn. Some of these people I’ve worked with for longer, some for shorter time. It is a thoughtful and a solid group under any circumstances, but especially now. I can, and am pleased to report to you that at the moment GJC is in as good a position as we can be to weather this storm, given the circumstances. This is due to long-term, stable financial stewardship, to our remarkable staff, as well as to the deep investment of our members, on so many levels, into this community. But difficult times remain ahead, of that we can be sure. But what we also know is what it will take for our community to get through this present crisis, as it has persevered through others: for us continuing to come together under our shared roof, that always covers us, without borders.



# THE GJC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

by Dan Livney

As the new President of GJC, it is my pleasure to take a moment to thank the new and on-going members of the Executive Committee (EC) with whom I will have the pleasure of serving next year. I also want to express appreciation to two members of our Committee who will be leaving us this year.

Each meeting of the EC starts with a prayer on "doing the work of the community." Our goal is aspirational. We aren't always going to be perfect, but this is a smart and dedicated group of individuals who have been chosen, in part, so that many different areas of the community are represented. These individuals really are here to work for the betterment of the community, and I want to welcome them warmly.

Senior Vice President—David Mosenkis

Vice President / Education—David Hahn

Vice President / Community—Linda Kriger z"l

Treasurer—Steve Levin

Assistant Treasurer—Jake Fisher

Comptroller—Barbara Menin

Financial Secretary—Marcy Rost

Corresponding Secretary—Diane Ajl

Recording Secretary—Beth Stearman

Immediate Past President—Denise Wolf

I am delighted to welcome Jake Fisher and Barb Menin to the EC this year. I have had the chance to get to know them through various synagogue activities and appreciate their many forms of service to our community.

I also want to thank Dr. David Fish who will be leaving us this year. I've appreciated his good sense, and excellent sense of humor over his time on the Executive Committee. For those of you who may not know, David has been on the front lines of the pandemic crisis, working as an anesthesiologist at Temple University Hospital. I recall our April meeting when David reported that he had seen a large number of COVID patients, had already worked many hours that day, and still showed up to our meeting surprisingly intact. Many thanks to you, David,

for your work here, and at Temple. Continued wishes of good health.

We are also going to miss our past-President Chip Becker. Chip has been a steady voice on the EC for as long as I have served on it. I watched him shadow Mathieu Shapiro, and then lead the synagogue through significant challenges during his own presidency. He remained a steady voice over the past two years as the Immediate Past President. I have come to know Chip as a good listener. You can almost hear the wheels turning, and when he finally speaks, I've found it a good idea for me to listen. Many thanks for all of your hard work, Mr. Becker!

Last, but far from least, I would like to thank Denise Wolf. I want to say something nice about Denise, but what can I or anyone say about her that she herself couldn't make sound much better? Denise has a way of making people around her feel engaged, supported and enthusiastic. She has lent her positive energy to the EC and to the synagogue at large over the last two years as President, and in doing so has left me outsized (and sharply stylish) shoes to fill! I am pleased to have her by my side as she continues her service on the EC in the role of Immediate Past President. On behalf of the entire Executive Committee and myself, we extend to Denise our heartfelt thanks and wishes for good health.

As for myself, my family and I have been members of the *shul* since 2010. My wife, Melissa has served on several committees, including organizing the Family Retreat, the initial year of Tot JAM programming, and on the board of the Women of GJC. Both of our children are students in the Religious School: Ezra is finishing up Kitah Aleph, and our rising 4th grader, Boaz, is a most enthusiastic member of the Bagel Cafe crew (an early sign of future synagogue leadership?), so you may have seen us dishing out bagels and cream cheese if you have been at GJC on Sunday mornings.

My time on the Executive Committee has been one of the experiences that has been a meaningful way for me to spend time at the synagogue. I am delighted and honored to be able to serve the Germantown Jewish Center in this way. I particularly look forward to serving with this team over the next two years. There is certainly much to be done, particularly during these extraordinary times, and I cannot think of a better group of people with whom to do this work. If you and I have not yet met, please do come up to me and say "hello." If we have met...then let's do so as well!

# 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  
Jane & Richard Baron  
Eileen & Richard Bazelon  
Peninah & Albert Berdugo  
Harold Berger  
Barbara Jaffe & Howard Langer  
Linda z"l & Jake Kriger  
Chris & Steve Levin  
Barbara & Dick Menin

Sandy & Jim Meyer  
Paul Minkoff  
Martha & Chuck Schleifer  
Allyson & David Schwartz  
Denise Scott Brown  
Dveera Segal & Brad Bridge  
Patty & Steve Segal  
Stefanie & Alex Seldin  
Elise Singer & Don Perelman

Joan N. Stern

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"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](mailto:director@germantownjewishcentre.org).

# Koleinu Beit Midrash at Germantown Jewish Centre

by Rabbi Rebecca Richman

*Koleinu Beit Midrash offers an exciting, traditional Jewish model for communal gathering, study, relationship building, spiritual inquiry, and creative expression. Inspired by the wisdom of our ancestors, our learning gives us language, tools, and strength to create a more just world. Koleinu is a beit midrash for each of us, one that values our life wisdom as essential to our learning of traditional text; it is one that works hard to bring in the people and voices who have traditionally been left out of the beit midrash; and it is a space where we harmonize our different voices and perspectives, honoring the Jewish tradition of sacred argument.*

Our programming only increased during our time of physical distance, allowing our community to continue connecting around learning and discussion.

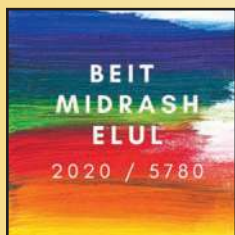
Our offerings this spring included:

- Weekly Lunchtime Torah with Rabbi Zeff;
- Monthly Daf Yomi with Rabbi Richman and Josh Davidson;
- Pre-Pesach Learning: Shir HaShirim with Rabbi Zeff;
- Weekly Pirkei Avot Shabbat Study with Serena Levingston, Rabbi Judd Kruger Levingston, Rabbi Adam Zeff, Rabbi Rebecca Richman, Sarah Braun, Rabbi Shai Gluskin, Cantor Naomi Hirsch, and Rabbi Malkah Binah Klein;
- Weekly Midrash and Conversation with Rabbi Zeff;
- Weekly Virtual Art Beit Midrash with Rabbi Richman;
- Monthly Women's Talmud Study with Rabbi Richman;
- GJCC (GJC Center City Group) Passover Study;
- Weekly Torah Study and Discussion of Relevant Sacred Times throughout the Year Cycle with Rabbi Fredi Cooper;
- Shavuot Fundamentals: GJCC Study with Rabbi Richman;
- Preparing for Shavuot with the Zohar with Mitch Marcus;
- Tikkun Leyl Shavuot: Connecting in a Fractured World with Rabbi Richman, Rabbi Zeff, and volunteer teachers Mitch Marcus, Josh Davidson, Rabbi Arthur Waskow, Lila Corwin Berman, Jared Jackson, Rabbi Avruhm Addison, Maria Pulzetti, Chava Weissler, Rachel Davidson, and Rebekka Goldsmith, Rabbi Erica Steelman;
- Biblical Hebrew for Beginners with Rabbi Fredi Cooper.

Here are some upcoming learning opportunities you can look forward to joining:

## Beit Midrash Elul

August 26, September 2, September 9



Join us for three consecutive weeks of learning in preparation for the High Holidays: in addition to exploring themes of the season and delving into some of the liturgy that we'll encounter during the *chaggim* (holidays), we'll also have some *tachlas* (practical) training in *shofar* blowing!

## High Holidays Text Study Sessions

(During Aseret Yamei T'shuvah,  
the 10 Intermediate Days of Repentance)  
Exact Dates TBD

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we will gather for shared, participatory text study around themes of the High Holiday season, facilitated by Rabbi Richman.



## Sukkot Tisch

October 6

Sit in the *sukkah* and learn some Torah, *tisch*-style: songs and stories, little bits of Torah you want to teach, poetry you want to share—all welcome!

## Open Beit Midrash

Tuesday evenings, beginning after Sukkot  
(exact dates TBD)



This fall, we are launching what we hope will become a core program of Koleinu. The Open Beit Midrash will offer text-based, *hevrutah* (partnered)-style classes, each of which will run for three consecutive weeks. Each Tuesday evening, there will be something to learn. If the topic doesn't pull you in, just wait another three weeks for a new class to draw you into the Beit Midrash. All texts will be provided in the original language and in translation, giving each *hevrutah* (learning pair) the ability to learn at their own level and pace. Stay tuned for details about offerings and dates!

If you haven't already had the chance to do so, check out our new webpage: <https://germantownjewishcentre.org/koleinu-beit-midrash/> for an up-to-date list of offerings.

Questions?

Contact Assistant Rabbi and Beit Midrash Director, Rabbi Rebecca Richman: [beitmidrash@germantownjewishcentre.org](mailto:beitmidrash@germantownjewishcentre.org).



# Shout Out to Our Wonderful Staff Team

by Nina Peskin, GJC Executive Director

This period of time has been incredibly challenging for all of us. It has been anxiety-producing, isolating, and filled with loss. But there are reasons to be grateful. I am so proud of the commitment of our staff, who are working hard behind the scenes to continue moving our work forward and continue serving our community. I want to thank them publicly so you can share in my appreciation of the work they are doing:

- **Eric Word, Jose Toro, Hakim Fisher, Ralph Brown, and Dwayne Hawthorne**, for readying our building for our Early Childhood Program's reopening in June. The staff members are training in new cleaning procedures and will be making it possible for the ECP to operate;
- **Teena Robinson** for coordinating Zoom meetings, sending daily reminders with Zoom links, and mountains of other administrative details for our community;
- **Rebecca Paquet** for going into the office twice a week to process checks and payroll, assisting in our state and federal security grant applications, and almost all aspects of our development work;
- **Kate Lawn** for planning and managing the huge volume of online programming we are currently offering, updating the website to reflect this new programming, and monitoring online Shabbat services every other week; our online presence is strong in large part because of her efforts;
- **Michele Stulman** for her incredible outreach work on behalf of our rabbinic staff and coordinating everything related to Rabbi Zeff's incredibly busy schedule, enabling him to serve our congregation;
- **Kelsey Shea** for making sure the ECP's and the Religious School's online programs launched and continued smoothly, outlining all the ECP planning for reopening, and monitoring Shabbat services every other week;
- **Gloria Geissler**, a magician with numbers, who configured and reconfigured our budget based on different possible scenarios, filed successfully for our Paycheck Protection Loan, and who will be helping to ensure that GJC's finances stay on solid footing as we navigate this uncharted territory;
- **Michelle Bernstein** for wading through the incredible amount of guidance on how to reopen our preschool safely and preparing her staff for the daunting task of implementing entirely new procedures while maintaining the educational quality and creativity of our program;
- Our amazing **ECP teaching staff** for providing rich, online, daily content for families during the quarantine, and keeping the ECP community connected;
- **Ben Rotenberg** and the wonderful **Religious School faculty** in moving the entire Religious School program online, reacting on about a moment's notice, and working to create a positive and meaningful learning experience for our students;
- Our wonderful clergy, **Rabbi Zeff and Rabbi Richman**, who have done a huge amount of outreach, produced phenomenal learning opportunities, regular times to connect to community, have re-thought services in ways that enable us to stay as connected as we can, all while continuing to serve our congregation's pastoral needs.

Germantown Jewish Centre is so fortunate to have this groups of dedicated, talented individuals serving in the roles we do. Thank you for taking the time to read this piece and sharing in my appreciation for all the work they do, seen and unseen.

## Editor's note:

Thanks also to you, Nina, for all that you do.



## Member Memories

### THOSE WERE THE DAYS....

by Eve Plinkenson

When I first came to Germantown Jewish Centre, the synagogue used to produce an amateur musical every year. At that time, GJC had three very talented Centre members who would create a story, and then write new lyrics to famous songs: Joe Schneider, Millie Behrend, and Billie Fisher were our authors. Billie also directed the shows, and Marcy Landisberg was our very talented pianist. We rehearsed most weeknights for a few months, and then performed several performances. The cast members were the members and staff of GJC.

It was such great fun. The first show I was in was called "...And The Streets were Paved with Gold" and it told the story of Jewish immigrant life in America...sort of a *Fiddler on the Roof* take off.

These are some of my earliest memories of GJC. I so enjoyed myself and the whole process. I got to sing, to meet new people, sing, have fun, sing...

For a long time, I've thought about pulling together some of the memories we have of those shows and those experiences. If you, too, participated in those shows, and remember the names of any of the shows, the plots, or the participants, I'd appreciate it if you would reach out to me and share your memories. If I can accumulate enough material, I'll write an article about that era for a future issue of the Centre Call. You can reach me at [epinkenson@comcast.net](mailto:epinkenson@comcast.net)

## GJC Pastoral Care Team

by Rabbi Rebecca Richman

As the COVID-19 pandemic pushed our synagogue to close its physical walls and initiated a long period of keeping our community members physically separate from one another, many of our members reached out to offer support to our clergy and staff. With an outpouring of support, we moved quickly to create the GJC Pastoral Care Team.

Thanks to the incredible work of Genie Ravital, Marsha Friedman, and Beth Janus (our Pastoral Care Team Captains), who surveyed the community to capture the needs and capacity of fellow congregants. After reviewing survey data, we launched three teams and initiatives.

Some volunteers are calling congregants to check in and offer pastoral support. Others have offered to step in to offer their skills and training for end of life care, *shiva minyan* leadership, and even funeral officiation, if needed. In mid-May, we launched eight following support groups, led by volunteer facilitators:

- Healthcare Professionals Support Group, facilitated by Naomi R. Klayman, PhD, Social Communication and Beth R. Rosenbaum, LCSW, Psychotherapist
- Nonprofit Leader's COVID-19 Support Group, facilitated by Adina Abramowitz, President, Consulting for Change
- Support Group for People Living Alone, facilitated by Andrea Jacobs and Neil Beresin
- Healing Ourselves: A Group for People with Medical Challenges, facilitated by Rabbi Fredi Cooper, EdD, and Irene McHenry, PhD

- Parenting and Caring for Teens During COVID, facilitated by Ann Itzkowitz, MA, and Richard S. Stern, PhD
- Caring for Our Parents, Caring for Ourselves, facilitated by Linda Hahn, MSW, and Rabbi Dayle Friedman, MSW, MA, BCC
- So You're Missing Your Grandchildren, facilitated by Sandi Cohen and Rabbi George Stern
- Facing Job Loss or Financial Insecurity, facilitated by Martha, LCSW, and Rabbi Elyse Wechterman

The outpouring of volunteer support to launch and participate in our new Pastoral Care Team reflects Germantown Jewish Centre's core value of *kehillah*, community. Even in this time of physical distance and immense communal strain, we continue to strengthen our community through mutual support.

To find an up-to-date list of support group offerings, visit our Pastoral Care Team webpage:

<https://germantownjewishcentre.org/pastoral-care-team/>

If you'd like to learn more or are interested in volunteering, please contact one of our Pastoral Care Team Captains:

- Genie Ravital—[geniebud@gmail.com](mailto:geniebud@gmail.com)
- Rabbi Beth Janus—[bannejanus@me.com](mailto:bannejanus@me.com)
- Rabbi Marsha Friedman—[rabdoc@aol.com](mailto:rabdoc@aol.com)

For more detailed information about the support groups, turn to page 9.



## SUPPORT GROUPS

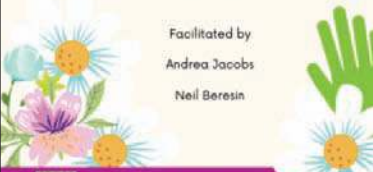
# Caring for Our Parents, Caring for Ourselves

Facilitated by  
Linda Hahn  
Rabbi Dayle Friedman

Hebrew Care Team, German-Israeli Jewish Center

# Support Group for People Living Alone

Facilitated by  
Andrea Jacobs  
Neil Beresin

The slide features decorative elements including a cluster of colorful flowers (yellow, purple, and blue) on the left side and a green hand icon on the right side. At the bottom, there is a small logo on the left and the text 'Practical Care Team, Georgetown Search Centre' on the right.

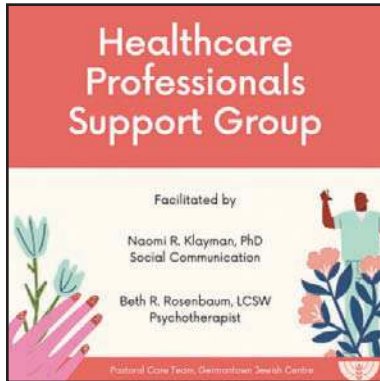
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### Healthcare Professionals Support Group

Register at [https://zoom.us/join/join?jts=1&from=addon\\_bookmark](https://zoom.us/join/join?jts=1&from=addon_bookmark)

**Tuesdays, 6:00-7:00 PM**

*Facilitated by Naomi R. Klayman, PhD, Social Communication  
and Beth R. Rosenbaum, LCSW, Psychotherapist*



The term, Healthcare Professional refers to anyone who provides direct care or facilitates access to care for patients and their caregivers. The goal will be to provide you with a few moments to take a deep breath and unload some of your stress among peers who appreciate the burden you are carrying. Beth Rosenbaum, MSW, LCSW, is a Clinical Social Worker with over 30 years experience as a psychotherapist, working with individuals, couples, families, and groups. Naomi R. Klayman, PhD, is a consultant in social communication. Her career consulting to pharmaceutical and

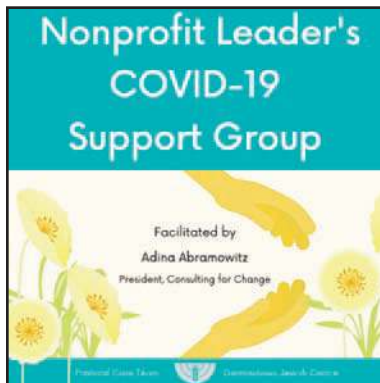
healthcare companies included conducting thousands of one-on-one interviews and focus groups with healthcare professionals, patients, and caregivers.

### Nonprofit Leaders' COVID-19 Support Group

Register at [https://zoom.us/join/join?jts=1&from=addon\\_bookmark](https://zoom.us/join/join?jts=1&from=addon_bookmark)

**Tuesdays, 7:30-8:30 PM**

*Facilitated by Adina Abramowitz, President, Consulting for Change*



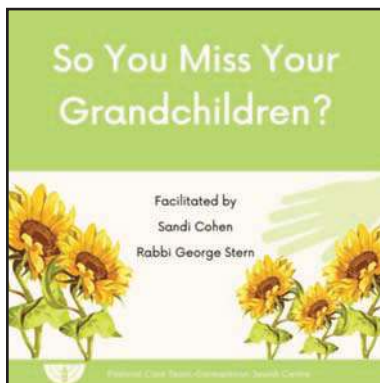
This is a support group for leaders of nonprofits. Leaders include Executive Directors, Program Managers, Financial Managers, and anyone who manages people and/or budgets. Adina Abramowitz has provided consulting and executive coaching to nonprofit organizations and their leaders since 1997. Her practice focused on community development organizations and she provides a variety of management consulting services including strategic planning, market analysis, and executive coaching.

### So You Miss Your Grandchildren?

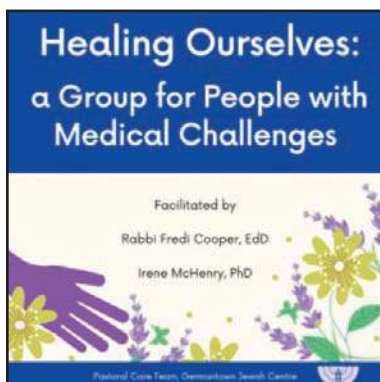
Register at [https://zoom.us/join/join?jts=1&from=addon\\_bookmark](https://zoom.us/join/join?jts=1&from=addon_bookmark)

**Wednesdays, 2:00-3:00 PM**

*Facilitated by Sandi Cohen and Rabbi George Stern*



This group will bring grandparents and great-grandparents together to support one another and talk about how they're feeling as the pandemic separates them from their grandchildren. We'll share what we've done to maintain contact and what resources we've used, and brainstorm new creative ideas. George Stern is a retired rabbi and nonprofit leader. He serves on GJC's Tikkun Olam Coordinating Team. He's the proud grandfather of two wonderful girls. Sandi Cohen has a Doctorate in clinical Social Work. For over 25 years she has offered Spiritual Companionship at two Jewish seminaries. She is the grateful grandma of 15 and great-grandma of 8, the youngest born in early May. Her website is [eldertoelder.com](http://eldertoelder.com).



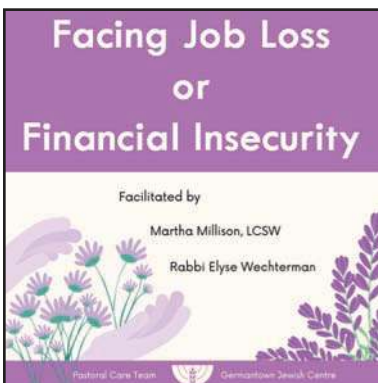
### Healing Ourselves: A Group for People with Medical Challenges

[https://zoom.us/join/join?jts=1&from=addon\\_bookmark](https://zoom.us/join/join?jts=1&from=addon_bookmark)

**Wednesdays, 4:00-5:00 PM**

*Facilitated by Rabbi Fredi Cooper, EdD, and Irene McHenry, PhD*

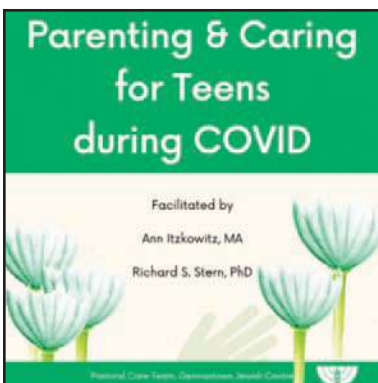
This is a support group for GJC congregants who have health conditions that make them feel especially vulnerable during this current time. Fredi Cooper is a retired rabbi, teacher, therapist, mother, wife, friend, and mentor. Her passion both inside and outside of the Jewish world is cooking. Irene McHenry, PhD, is a licensed psychologist in private practice, a consultant, teacher, author, school founder, wife, mother, grandmother, and lover of nature.



### Facing Job Loss or Financial Insecurity

Register at <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEtdemsqzIsHgWvNYYP7o-hkbFHvBnOkrrhu>  
**Thursdays, 10:00-11:00 AM**  
 Facilitated by Martha Millison, LCSW, and Rabbi Elyse Wechterman

We are here to support one another through the challenges presented by job loss and transition. This is a gently facilitated conversation among peers. Martha Millison, LCSW, a longtime member of GJC, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with over 20 years of experience working with children and families. She is currently the school counselor at Green Woods Charter School. Rabbi Elyse Wechterman is the Executive Director of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association and served as a pulpit rabbi for 13 years in Attleboro, MA. She is a graduate of the RRC (2000).



### Parenting and Caring for Teens During COVID

Register at <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJotcOigrDgrHNOEoLOp9nuGW68MY5IRAGsG>  
**Thursdays, 1:00-2:00 PM**  
 Facilitated by Ann Itzkowitz, MA, and Richard S. Stern, PhD

This is a support group for sharing stories and strategies about the joys and challenges of parenting and caring for adolescents when spending so much time at home. We'll explore the challenges of work versus family life boundaries, discipline, family fun and activities, chores, moods, emotional climate, and more. Ann Itzkowitz, MA, is a licensed psychologist and marriage and family therapist with 50 years of therapeutic experience working with children, adolescents, and adults in individual, couples and family therapy. Richard S. Stern, PhD, is a licensed clinical psychologist with more than 25 years of experience serving children, adolescents, young adults, and families. He has lectured widely on attachment-based and emotion-focused treatment, men's issues; and Jewish identity.

### Calls to Congregants:

Interested in helping to make check-in calls to fellow congregants? Please contact Beth Janus: [bannejanus@me.com](mailto:bannejanus@me.com).

### End of Life Care:

Our clergy are joined by volunteer members (some of whom are, themselves, clergy) to provide end of life support to our community. If you are interested in learning more or offering this type of support, please contact Marsha Fried-man: [rabdoc@aol.com](mailto:rabdoc@aol.com).

### Pastoral Care Team Captains:

We are so grateful for the incredible support from our team captains. Their diligence, care, and thoughtfulness helped us launch this team midst the COVID-19 pandemic and help us provide an invaluable asset to our community.





# NEWS FROM THE MEN'S CLUB

by Dick Menin, President

Several years ago, when I was contacting new members of GJC to welcome them to the shul and, when appropriate, invite the males to take part in Men's Club programs, I was asked "What is your purpose? Why should I participate?" Fortunately, I had been thinking about this exact question shortly before our contact.

When I was new to the *shul*, 20 some years ago, I went to my first Men's Club meeting because membership was included, at "no additional expense" with synagogue dues. I went because it was there. I'm not sure what I was expecting. The meeting was awful! Some guy from the regional Men's Club organization was there and berated the members about how many people were at the meeting (about 12) and that we were not doing enough. This was an uncomfortable experience for me, especially as I knew only one or two of the members there. But somehow I developed a kinship to the fellows there—almost like the *raison d'être* of military boot camp philosophy: when you are subjected to a common uncomfortable experience you develop a bond because of it. Fortunately, my subsequent adventures were much more congenial. You don't need pain to gain.

So my response to this fellow on the phone was that the club is a fellowship organization, period. Although we do fund raising and provide service to synagogue projects these are really ways to get people together. We have all joined GJC for different reasons

but we share a common draw to Judaism. The Men's Club activities are a way to get people together, learn more about one another and create friendships. Speaking for myself, it has been successful. Much of my circle of friends is made up of GJC members, most of whom I developed a relationship with through the Men's Club. Although the forced isolation engendered by the COVID-19 pandemic makes programming a challenge the relationships have held and, I think, deepened.

We are working on some Zoom-mediated programs which will be announced as soon as they're finalized. We're looking at events that have a general appeal. "We" refers to the Men's Club board made up of treasurer Ed Lake and members Dan Bacine, Justin Fink, David Fish, David Kraut, Peter Maas, Jim Meyer, Chuck Schleifer and Ken Weiss. We've had several virtual meetings and I appreciate their input.

Despite the quarantine there is need to help feed the less fortunate. We continue to work monthly with the Jewish Relief Agency to deliver food throughout the city. The system has changed somewhat to ensure the safety of all concerned. If anyone is interested in helping with this worthy endeavor please contact me.

Be safe, be happy, and be kind to one another.



## From all of us at THE LITTLE SHOP

*We miss you and look forward to seeing you once it is safe to open again.*

We thank those persons who have reached out to us about purchases during this unprecedented public health crisis. We look forward to sharing news about when it will be safe for our customers, store volunteers and GJC staff for us to be operational again.

We miss seeing you all and hope that you are keeping safe and healthy. In the interim,  
*we are keeping our wine cool and spirits positive!*



**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.

# WOMEN OF GJC

by Vilma Lieberman and Linda Cherkas, Co-Presidents

Thanks to the winter's weather, the blooming flowers and trees have given us a glorious spring. It is a spring we will never forget, but surely not for its beauty. In 2020 so many *simchas* have been cancelled or postponed. WGJC had to cancel Women's Shabbat and the Torah Fund Brunch, two rites of spring on our annual calendar that we all enjoy so much. Just like every other group around the world, we at GJC had to reinvent ourselves in order to survive and fulfill our missions, and we can all be proud of Rabbi Zeff, Rabbi Richman, Nina Peskin and all the others who worked so hard to ensure uninterrupted worship services, and educational and pastoral opportunities to keep our community connected to GJC and to each other. In such difficult times it is important that GJC be a source of solace and help for our members. With that in mind, the WGJC donated \$5000 to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund as the most direct way to aid our community's needs. Also, anticipating there will not be a traditional High Holiday experience this year, WGJC is donating the \$2000 usually used to underwrite the Rosh HaShanah Kiddush to the High Holiday Appeal instead.

WGJC has embraced Zoom, just as the rest of the world has, to maintain connections and get work done. On April 29th, Women of GJC sponsored a webinar together with the GJC Israel programming committee entitled "From the Kibbutz to the Big City Tel Aviv, the History of Israeli Fashion." It was a great change

of pace, and was very well attended, attracting women (and men) who may never have attended a WGJC program before, since it was on Zoom and was held during the day. The program was presented by Liraz (Liri) Cohen Mordecai who was calling from her *moshav* (settlement) in Israel. She is the founder of Fashionating, a social enterprise created to tell the story of Israel from a perspective of fashion and to promote Israeli fashion designs and brands. Liri was an engaging speaker who brought to life the history of Israeli fashion from the chalutzim (pioneers), to the *tzahal* (the Israeli Defense Forces), and the Arab/Bedouin influences, up until Tel Aviv today. There was time for questions and answers and a lively discussion after this engaging presentation. The WGJC are planning more Zoom webinars in the future.

WGJC has some new board members to meet the new challenges of 2020. Linda Cherkas continues as co-President, and is joined by Marilyn Silberstein, who replaces outgoing President Vilma Lieberman. Additional new board members include Addie Lewis Klein, Ronnie Rubin, Latifa diPaola McLeary, Maria Pulzetti, Sheila Erlbaum, and Shari Feldman. We welcome these women to the board and look forward to working with them in the coming year. We send best wishes to all new and continuing officers and board members!



## PRIDE 2020

by Donna Tartasky

Larry Kramer, the AIDS activist, died last week at the age of 84, following years of health problems. The numerous obituaries about him paint the picture of a man almost born into controversy.

Following in the footsteps of his father, older brother and other relatives, Larry attended Yale where he felt he did not fit in. This was most evident when he took an overdose as an undergraduate. Later, before starting his career as a writer he served in the US Army Reserves.

Almost from the beginning he won acclaim for his work, but he became most famous for his work as an AIDS activist. In 1982, after observing a new weird disease in many of his friends, Kramer founded the Gay Men's Health Crisis. Yet a year later he

was ousted from this group for his outspoken militancy. He went on to write *The Normal Heart*, a highly acclaimed play about the lives of gay men.

Shortly after he founded the protest organization AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), and specifically chose government agencies and corporations as targets in order to publicize the lack of treatment and funding for people with AIDS, Kramer went on to write and speak and became a leading figure in the AIDS epidemic and was himself HIV positive. He called AIDS a holocaust.

Susan Sontag said at one time that Kramer was one of America's best troublemakers. Perhaps he should be best remembered not only for his accomplishments but as a rabble rouser who put a face on the AIDS epidemic. May his strong voice still ring out in our minds and hearts.

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## LINDA KRIGER: AN APPRECIATION

by Rachel Gross, Former GJC Executive Director



Linda Kriger

Linda and I were *hevruta*. We studied together, learned together, grappled together.

Each week we started the same way, with a blessing: *Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu la'asok b'divrei Torah*.

We started learning together about 15 years ago in Linda and Jake's kitchen, looking out over the garden. When I moved to Maryland, we continued by Skype. Video calling technology doesn't allow us to bless with one voice, so saying the blessing became a call and response. But the thing about *hevruta* is that when it works, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. For us, the blessing was lengthened, doubled, echoed.

We read in English. We read about prayer, meditation, spirituality, the *parasha*. We talked about gratitude...and God...a lot.

One of our favorite authors was Alan Lew. After we first read *This is Real and You are Completely Unprepared*, we fell in love with those words and came back to them each year. Linda sometimes tucked this book into her *machzor* and read from it during the High Holidays. Maybe you saw her surreptitiously reading a deep truth about the season.

Lew's central metaphor is that of a house, a place we think of as strong, sheltering, secure, but is in fact fragile, a construct that can't actually protect us. He writes, "Every moment of our lives, the sacred house of our life—the constructs by which we live and to which we hold on so fiercely...falls away...the houses we live in never afford us real security. Their walls and roofs are never complete—they never really keep us from the world or from harm, and it is only when we realize this that we are truly home."

We took to heart the imperative to be awake and aware, to know truly that we are vulnerable, fragile, transient...to know that our

lives are constructs that we create and recreate every day. But as I read these passages again, alone, I can't help but think of all the homes that Linda has created. The homes of bricks and mortar and the homes of the heart, to which everyone was welcome. We really had no idea how impermanent they really were. This is real and I am completely unprepared.

Linda and I were reading Sarah Hurwitz's book, *Here All Along*, when Linda died. I had already read it and wanted to read it again, together with Linda. Hurwitz is a writer's writer, and Linda was a writer. So we read out loud to each other, stopping at sentences that captured so clearly the complex ideas that we had been grappling with for over a decade.

Over the years, any time we read a passage that anthropomorphized God, Linda would comment that she just didn't buy it. God doesn't have a face or a body. I, on the other hand, love anthropomorphizing anything, including God. We had this conversation every time God popped up with a body, hands, face, or emotion...every time.

Hurwitz writes about the Mourner's Kaddish: "...perhaps the Kaddish isn't a prayer about praising God at all, rather a prayer to console God....With the Kaddish, perhaps we are acknowledging that God is grieved and diminished by the loss of our loved one, just as we are, and we're praying for God to be restored. Understood this way, the Kaddish implies that we and God are mourning together." I'm sure Linda would have something to say about whether or not God grieves and mourns, but I am comforted by this image. God and I share the knowledge that the world is profoundly diminished without Linda in it and we mourn together.

Linda and I always ended our learning the same way—saying the *shema*, thanking each other, and sending love to each other's families.

Rabbi Laura Geller writes of the Shema: "For me, God is not a person, but rather a sense of connectedness, and I am more in touch with that connectedness when I get out of my own personal dramas, when I'm not the center of the world....The *Shema*, when it really works, reminds me that everything is really God—not me, but God." Prayer, Linda would say, is what interrupts me out of my self-absorption. I always thought it didn't make sense that you could say *Shema* by yourself. Of all the prayers, this one calls on us to listen, signifying that we are not alone.

So I end the way Linda and I ended our weekly *havruta*.

*Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheynu Adonai Echad.*  
Thank you, Linda.

Love to Jake, love to Daniel, and love to Ezra.



# The Search for Solid Ground

by the Minyan Masorti *Mazkirut*

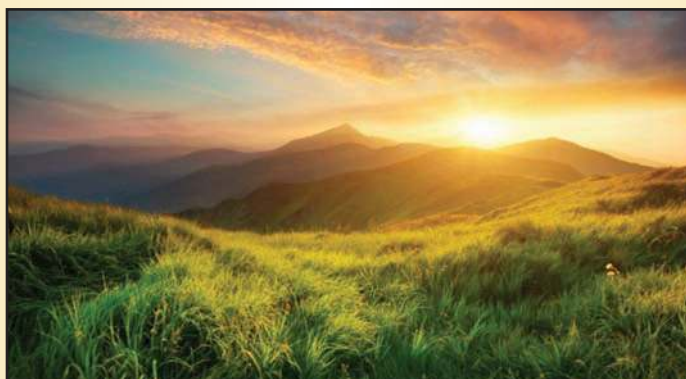
Chava Bonn, Lawrence Charap, Avi Decter, Eli Havivi, Cynthia Kravitz

When the current Minyan Masorti leadership took office in January, the advent of a new global pandemic was still just the stuff of fiction—unexpected, unimaginable. Yet, just months later, our GJC congregation—and congregations of every stripe, color, and creed—are contending with a crisis of historic proportions. Every aspect of our normal lives has been affected: our eating, sleeping, and exercise, our work lives and home lives, our social and spiritual connections.

The burning question for all of us has been “What is to be done?” Fortunately for GJC, our rabbis, administrators, and lay leaders have reacted with decisiveness and vigor. A glance at the GJC webpage (not to speak of a steady flow of emails, phone calls, etc.) shows a congregational life filled with prayer, study, concern, and social connections, many initiated and led by Rabbis Zeff and Richman.

Thanks to this tireless duo and many GJC members, regular Shabbat and Festival services have gone forward via streaming and social media. Dorshei Derekh members have also been able to sustain Shabbat services and also daily gatherings to count the Omer. A recent survey conducted by the Minyan Masorti *Mazkirut*, shows that many of our *minyan* members have availed themselves of the Charry and Dorshei Shabbat services, and even of those offered by a variety of other congregations and communities across the continent.

For the leadership and members of our *minyan*, the current crisis has spurred our thinking about the kinds of spiritual and social



activities we can, or could, sponsor to sustain our distinctive sense of community—without competing with ongoing GJC programs. Using Zoom, we have convened several informal check-in conversations, readings of Shir ha-Shirim and Ruth, and six weekly study sessions on Pirke Avot. A number of *minyan* members have also organized informal Shabbat dinners together. All of these have been important vehicles for maintaining communication, a sense of solidarity, and reassurance to our *minyan*.

Still, this may not be enough. Just recently, based on our survey of Minyan Masorti members, and in consultation with Rabbi Zeff, we have decided to experiment with organizing Shabbat services for the first time in two months. Our decision to offer Shabbat services with full *shacharit*, *musaf*, and a full Torah reading raises technical and *halachic* questions and, in some instances, personal concerns, as well. But having achieved a provisional balance among many competing considerations, we have decided to conduct services for a few weeks, followed by *kiddush* and conversation.

Neither the *Mazkirut* nor the Minyan members who are coordinating and leading Shabbat services knows how our initiative will play out. But at a moment when “everything solid melts into air,” we at the Minyan Masorti, like generations before us, are embarked on a search for solid ground on which to retain and renew our community.

## THANK YOU

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

# PINAT HA-HINUCH ~ EDUCATION CORNER

by Abigail Weinberg

*Shalom Haverim!*  
Hello Friends!

First—Please join me in taking a breath and reciting the “shehechyanu” prayer to thank God for keeping us alive and sustaining us until this moment in which I am writing my first column as Education Director at GJC!

I am very excited to be taking on this new role at GJC. I am eager to:

- collaborate with the amazing Religious School faculty who have been working tirelessly to transition to online learning since the beginning of the “stay at home” order;
- learn with our wonderful young people and create a school in which everyone’s Jewish skills and identity can grow and flourish;
- work with the Religious School Committee and all parents who provide crucial support for every aspect of the school;
- partner with the many facets of our “community of communities” to make the GJC experience as meaningful, connected and stimulating as possible.

Of course, as many of you know, my association with GJC goes all the way back to 1977. My mother, brother and I had just moved to 6909 Greene Street on the advice of Michael Masch who described the promising Jewish community that was developing at GJC. At seven years old, I became one of the youngest members of The Germantown Minyan and felt immediately embraced by the warmth and spiritual audacity of the community. I was honored to be among the first to celebrate my Bat Mitzvah in the Minyan, choosing Adina Abramowitz, Ruth Lachman, Arthur Waskow and several other current GJC members to lead parts of the davening in the Marcus Auditorium.

In 1994, several years after graduating college, I decided to return to Mt. Airy and to GJC on my own. (My mother and brother had moved to Massachusetts several years prior.) I was now in my early 20s and quickly became a regular attendee and leader of Friday night services and soon thereafter was appointed treasurer of Dorshei Derekh. After teaching at Akiba (Barrack) Academy and Solomon Schechter (Perelman) for several years, my interests turned to the field of Jewish social justice...which led me to assume the role of Chair of the GJC Social Action Committee, (and, while I was at it, join the Board as well). I learned so much in those years, while deepening relationships throughout the GJC community.



Abby & Nathan’s  
Charry Sanctuary Wedding

I remained in Mt. Airy until I met my husband, Nathan, and we married in the Charry Sanctuary in 2005. Fourteen months later, our first daughter, Hadassah, was born and her baby naming was held in an overflowing Canteen Room. Nathan had just graduated from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and found a job in Michigan. It was so hard to move away just one week after that amazing gathering, but the Midwest was calling and off we went.

Luckily, just four years later, we found ourselves back in Mt. Airy, with a new addition: our nine-month-old son, Yehuda. The first thing we did was register both kids at the ECP where we found the most welcoming and close knit community of parents imaginable. The blessings of ECP literally continue to effect our lives on a daily basis as many of our closest friends were made in that downstairs hallway and on the GJC playground.

At the same time we were settling back into our latest Philadelphia incarnation, I was given the privilege of being the interim Executive Director at GJC when Nina Peskin went out on maternity leave. I was blessed to work with many of the GJC professionals who are still here today, and even led the committee which organized the installation of Rabbi Zeff when he officially took on the mantle of rabbi. In the nine years since then, I’ve watched Hadassah and Yehuda make their way through the GJC Religious School, celebrated Hadassah’s Bat Mitzvah (with many of you!) and developed the key relationships that sustain me and my family.

Becoming the Education Director at GJC is not only an exciting challenge, it is a fulfillment of the amazing energy I have invested in and gained from this community. Over the 43 years I have been a part of this congregation, much has changed—at GJC, in my life and in the world. Our response to the current pandemic, quarantine and social upheaval is only the most recent example of how GJC’s creative resiliency allows the institution to evolve. I am thrilled to take my place beside the dedicated lay leaders and staff and to work together with them to strengthen our shared home for many years to come.



The Weinberg / Martin family

# GJC ALUMNI

## Samara Gordon and Ronya Gordon



Ronya and Samara at Ronya's January 2020 wedding

*We are delighted to be checking in with you as GJC Alumnae. Thank you so much for inviting us.*

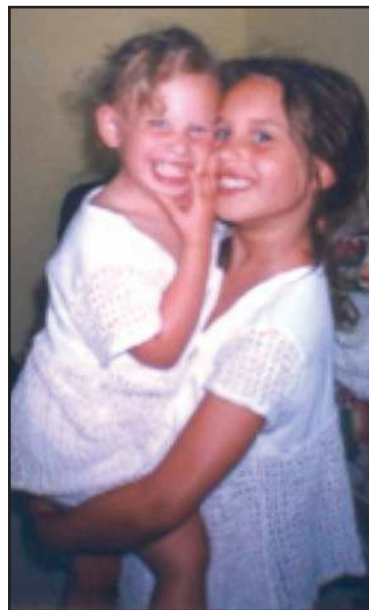
When we first received the invitation to write this column, it was close to Hanukkah, and the first memory that came to us was the Hanukiyah on the GJC lawn, and the year Hy Zerkowitz had a group of us kids lie on the ground to have our bodies traced for his design. As rabbi's kids, we felt like we belonged to the whole congregation (though we suspect all GJC kids feel that way!). We remain grateful for all the love that GJC and Mt. Airy poured into us.

When our parents abandoned us in Philadelphia in 2010 to move to Boston, Samara began studying at the University of Pennsylvania, where Harriet Joseph took on the role of surrogate mom/advisor in the University Scholars program. Ronya also stayed in Philadelphia working at the Philadelphia Museum of Art until moving to New York in 2012. For the past six years, she has been with the Jewish Museum in various roles (from education to events), and is currently the Senior Development Officer doing major gift fundraising. Ronya and her husband Mickey Roth live on the Upper East Side in an apartment overlooking the East River. Mickey, originally from New Jersey, is the Vice President at a litigation support firm. They met years ago when each had a side gig teaching Hebrew School at the Park Avenue Synagogue. Fast forward: the wedding took place there on January 19, 2020, with Rabbi Zeff and our dad as co-officiants.

Samara, meanwhile, graduated with a degree in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics, and moved to Boston, where she

worked in a FinTech start-up. She tried her hand at a start-up of her own, and then moved to the East Village to work for a European consulting firm, starting their New York office. We really liked those years of being in the same city! Just over a year ago, Samara moved to Boston to return to startups from the other side of the table, as a Venture Capital investor at Hyperplane, one of the firms that she had pitched as an entrepreneur. She is learning a lot and working with brilliant innovators and new technologies every day. Her walk-up apartment in Back Bay has a nice Charles River view, and is not too far from mom and dad, which makes them happy and Ronya jealous. We both love our jobs and the lives we are building.

We have also both had nice opportunities to travel, including to Israel at regular intervals, where we each have friends from high school and college. Samara has done strategy consulting everywhere from Brazil to Hong Kong and traveled in recent years with young Jewish groups to South Africa, Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Austria, and Germany.



1994: the year the Gordons came to GJC

One of Samara's earliest memories is sitting on the floor in a circle in the ECP classroom at GJC while our father read to the class. Samara's best memories include the mother/daughter book club that went on for lots of years with that same group of ECP friends, most of whom are still in her life. Now, most of our reunions are at weddings. Our other fond memories include the Weavers Way Food Co-op, Allen's Lane, *tashlich* in Carpenter's Woods, and ice cream at Bredenbecks. Some of you remember our (then) new puppy, Jesse (grand-puppy to Kevin Bernstein and Rebecca Meyer). At fourteen, she is doing great and enjoying having her humans working from home.

We miss you! Sending love. Stay well.



# NEWS FROM HAZAK

by Helen Feinberg and Coleman Poses, Co-Chairs

COVID-19? Well, we all are beginning to know a little more about it now, and it's very hard not to be able to take a trip or get together to watch and discuss a film, as we had planned. But, COVID-19 or no COVID-19, our rejuvenated and extremely active HAZAK Book Group continues to meet once a month, via Zoom, or course. In these wildly uncertain times, our monthly get-togethers have taken on a really vital role in our social and intellectual well-being.

A little background is in order. Last year, the book club found itself without focus when our beloved founding members Sam Feinberg and Sonia Dishler died. We therefore put together a short but efficient survey which went out to the entire HAZAK-eligible GJC population (anyone over 55 years of age). Armed with the data, we determined to re-group. First, we chose an afternoon time to meet. This was a very attractive change that brought in several new members, who had a lot of ideas about books to read and ways to engage with each other in bigger conversations.

So for the past year, we've been tweaking things to be most responsive to group members' needs and ideas. The meeting day changed a couple of times, and now we are firmly established on the second Thursday of each month, at 2:30 PM (right after Nina's and Adam's Chanting service). Irene McHenry volunteered to serve as book manager, so she collects ideas and sends out the long list; the members vote for their top three choices, and Irene then lets us know what they are. At the next meeting we decide in what order to read these books. Also, one person volunteers to facilitate the discussion of a particular book, which means doing a little extra research and thinking about good discussion questions. The results have been terrific. Our discussions are more thoughtful, lively and deeper than ever, and we really enjoy each others' approaches to ideas, characters, and themes.

Our Chief Zoom Officer is Naomi Klayman; she invites the group and has given Zoom tutorials to get everyone up to speed so everyone can participate.

Here are our upcoming books:

June 11 – *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich

July 9 – *Paris in the Present Tense* by Mark Helprin

August 13 – *The Time of Our Singing* by Richard Powers

If you would like to learn more or join the group, please email [helen@feinberg.net](mailto:helen@feinberg.net) or [Cposes1@gmail.com](mailto:Cposes1@gmail.com).

Meanwhile, we hope everyone stays well and keeps safe.

## 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.

## HOUSE AND DESIGN COMMITTEE

by Leslie Pontz

Hi everyone! The House and Design Committee wants to let you know that we are busily working away, even though we are all in quarantine. All I can say is: Thank Heaven for Zoom. You will recall that we engaged Studio Bryan Hanes, a local landscape architecture firm, to help us develop plans for developing the GJC grounds. That firm has presented us with some terrific initial ideas and drawings. We've seen thoughtful sketches of an enhanced main entrance, an excellent new concept for the side entrance addressing its new importance in access to our building, and a re-imagined rear of the building, as well as a revised parking area. All of these have been reviewed several times by both the committee and the GJC staff, and now we are sending Bryan feedback. Studio Bryan Hanes will take our feedback and continue moving forward with revisions and refinements. The Committee is eager to share the designs with you as they progress further.

The areas that we are working on are key not only to the appearance of our exterior campus, but also to the many new uses of our outside spaces. The designer is taking care to respond to the needs of our ever-growing community, and its need to gather—not only inside our beautiful building, but more and more outside, as we are gather there for events and religious celebrations. The new security issues have forced us to rethink the use of our entrances, as well as the need to make the synagogue more accessible to people with physical challenges. The morés of 2020 make us aware of preserving and protecting. So we are trying hard to be responsible with ecological updates like rain gardens and pervious surfaces. We are so grateful to be able to support our community as it grows both in size and direction.

We are very excited! Keep a look out for designs to come!

# GJC AND THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORY PLACES

by Sherman Aronson

Last year the Board of Directors of GJC approved advancing the nomination of the Germantown Jewish Centre to the National Register of Historic Places. This is an opportunity for recognition of the quality of our community's home, the leading role that its architecture played in the development of post-war religious architecture, and our history as stewards of this building. This level of recognition is a great honor.

We have been fortunate indeed to have benefitted from the volunteer services of Herb Addison, not a GJC member, but a retired business person with a lifelong interest in architectural history. Herb has been working with our Executive Director and the House and Design Committee for several years to research, photograph, draft and prepare the written nomination documents. This process includes a detailed description of the entire building, exterior and interior, and a discussion of its

historical significance, design and ongoing presence in the community.

This summer, 2020, the nomination will be taken up by the Pennsylvania State Historic and Museum Commission and when approved, will be moved to the Federal Department of the Interior for national certification. It does not limit our ability to improve and adapt our building to meet current and future needs, and there is no added review of plans or permits. The Board decided not to pursue the local certification at this time, through the Philadelphia Historical Commission. That recognition does bring along local reviews and approvals for major and minor changes to the building's exterior.

We will keep you informed as this process proceeds.

## ARTISTS IN OUR MIDST:

Nan Ides

Nan L. Ides, new (about two years) member of GJC, is the author of two published mending and sewing books, as well as a designer/creator of her own clothes. Nan comes from a sewing family; one set of grandparents owned a dress factory. Growing up, there was always a sewing box and sewing machine threaded and ready for use. Nan was shocked when she learned how much others paid for simple mending jobs, such as replacing a button or hemming a garment. Nan's goal is to teach as many people as possible to do simple mending jobs themselves—to save money and for self-satisfaction.

Being petite, Nan always had to hem or alter almost all of her store-bought clothes (petite clothes didn't exist until the 1980s!) and sometimes, it was just easier to design and sew her own clothes. Nan's sewing passion led her to study with nationally-known designers and sewing instructors. Her trend is taking simple patterns and adding her own styling. Her teaching experience began when people asked her to sew on a button for them. Instead Nan would respond, "I'll charge you \$10.00 to sew on the button, or I'll teach you how to do it for free."

Nan recently retired from the Environmental Protection Agency and had numerous activities planned, including international travel, but since that has all been put on hold, she has been busy making cloth masks for local hospitals and medical facilities.

Nan's first book, *Hand Mending Made Easy*, was specifically written for the non-sewer. "I developed the book to show people

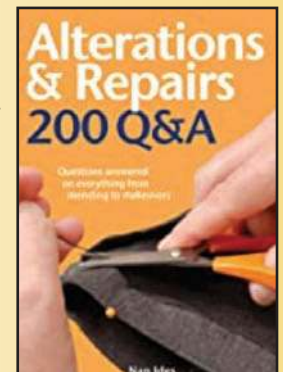


who don't really want to learn to sew, or how to mend their own clothes." The book begins with lessons on how to hold a needle, how to thread a needle, how to knot the thread, and continues with how to sew on buttons, snaps, hemming, fixing little holes in clothes, ironing techniques and much more.

Her second book, *Alterations and Repairs: 200 Q&A*, covers questions and answers on everything from mending to makeovers. This book discusses hand mending in the first half of the book and then continues with basic machine fixes, as well as altering thrift and consignment buys.

Nan has taught hand mending for community groups in the Philadelphia area and would love to teach a class at GJC.

Her books are available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



## ARTISTS IN OUR MIDST (continued)

### Mindy Shapiro and Eve Pinkenson Discuss Their Work

#### My History as a Self-Taught Artist

by Mindy Shapiro

As a child, I was lucky to attend Camp Louise during the summers, starting in 1971. It was there that I cultivated my love of creativity through theater and leather craft. While my desire to be an actress ended my freshman year of college, my love of crafts did not. In fact, for one summer post-college (1984-ish) I was invited back to camp to run the art department when the long time head was unavailable. After that summer, I stopped doing art and focused on graduate school and then my career as a Jewish communal professional.

During the early 1990s I went to an herbalist who recommended herbal treatments for my aching back and offered the unsolicited advice that I should start creating art. Eventually, I took his advice and in December, 1995, I attended the Catskill-based winter Yiddish folk festival known as Klezkamp (may it rest in peace). I took the paper cutting course and the rest is history, as they say.

After ten years as a Hillel Director, I took a break in 1995 so I could have time to do a lot of paper cutting. People started to commission me for invitations, special event plaques, birthday and anniversary presents, *ketubot*, etc. In 2000, I went to Israel for a few months to study Hebrew calligraphy to enhance my skills, and I discovered the amazing Jewish paper cutting archives at Hebrew University. I never felt confident in calligraphy so when it was needed in a *ketubah*, I collaborated with my teacher Izzy Pluwinski (<http://www.impwriter.com>). He simply is the best in the world.

A number of months after I returned from Israel, I took a job as Founding Director for *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* and had fun creating the papercut logo for the program. During the seven years as director, I did not have as much time to papercut and certainly not in the immediate years after our son Caleb was born in 2004. Eventually I returned to my favorite art form.

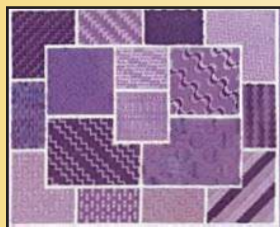
I am strongly influenced by the Jewish tradition of paper cutting and am also inspired by nature, yoga and the shapes and colors I see in the universe. Most of my work is one of a kind although I did two laser series: one is of a *mizrach* and the other is a *middot* tree inspired by years of study and teaching *Mussar*. I have also designed and created cards for various occasions.

In 2012 I took a Zentangle class and in 2014 became certified as a Zentangle teacher. These days (well not during COVID-19) I teach both paper cutting and Zentangle at Fleisher Art Memorial, Main Line Art Center, Cheltenham Art Center, Mt. Airy Learning Tree and one off classes for synagogues and whoever else hires me. I do commissions (please keep me in mind for your *simcha* or other events). Currently, I am the president of our Guild of American Papercutters. This is a real honor: it is like volunteering to be an executive director except the hours are reasonable and everyone else volunteers; everyone wants to be involved and everyone is really nice.

You can see my work on my not-up-to-date website: [www.personalizedpapercuts.com](http://www.personalizedpapercuts.com)

#### Needlepoint by Eve

by Eve Pinkenson



As a child, I learned to do embroidery, knit sweaters and crochet. In my twenties, I did a lot of crewel work. I've always enjoyed working with my hands, and I've always enjoyed the creative process. In my younger days, I purposely stayed away from

needlepoint because at the time, needlepoint involved only one stitch. "Boring," I thought.

Then almost 30 years ago, I was encouraged to create a needlepoint bell pull to be used to fill a specific piece of wall space in our home. I learned that needlepoint had begun incorporating fancy stitches. So I purchased a lovely piece, had the store select threads for me, and decide what stitches I should use. I was ready to go...except for one thing: I had no clue how to start! When I asked the saleswomen how to proceed, they laughed at my naiveté. They got me started, and then week after week I went back for some one-on-one help. I absolutely loved it. I eventually bought myself a good needlepoint book, and began to try stitches on my own, and remain mostly self-taught. Needlepoint is creative, calming, challenging, fulfilling. I've made pillows, pictures, bell pulls, picture frames, even

Christmas ornaments for friends. After a number of years, I found I was no longer finding commercially prepared pieces that I wanted to do. On a whim, I decided to do a sampler which I designed as I went along. I selected threads in the colors in my bedroom and went from there. I love the creativity of deciding which stitches to use in what spaces.

Each of my original geometric pieces is unique; no two designs or color combinations are ever the same. One of my favorite things to do is to ask a woman what her favorite colors are, and then design an "EP Original" in those colors.

Several GJC members have my pieces in their homes, and I used to offer my services at the Purim Bash auction. Over the past few years I've taught Beginners' Needlepoint at the Bala Cynwyd and Ludington libraries. I love teaching someone to do something that I love so much myself. I started a Needlepointers Group which meets at the Bala Library twice monthly. It's a small group, but lots of fun.

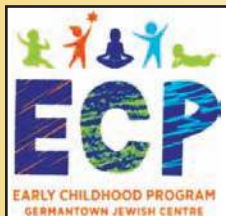
I often do needlepoint pieces upon request. I will do a commercial piece or create an original piece. If interested, let me know. I'd be thrilled to share my work with you.



# Update on GJC and the Virus

by Rabbi Adam Zeff and Nina Peskin

## ECP is Open



Due to the intense efforts of ECP Director Michelle Bernstein and her staff as well as the hard work of Eric Word and the Maintenance Department, GJC's Early Childhood Program re-opened to children in June.

Child care facilities during the Yellow Phase were permitted to open only because they are subject to stringent requirements for screening staff and children, masking, constant cleaning and disinfecting, and isolating anyone who may become sick during the day.

Despite these challenges, ECP families have returned to our school, and it is so good to have the children back in our building.

\*\*\*\*\*

## The GJC Building is Still Closed to the Public

Although essential ECP and Maintenance staff have returned to the building so that ECP can operate, we are still asking GJC members and the general public not to enter the building. Even ECP parents are not entering the building, and are dropping their children off outside to reduce the risk of infection. GJC's administrative staff and rabbis are following the recommendations of public health officials by continuing to work remotely. We ask that you please continue to be in touch with our rabbis and staff via email and phone.



\*\*\*\*\*

## Weekday and Shabbat Services and Programs Continue Remotely



Due to conditions in our region, the guidance we have received from the Philadelphia Department of Public Health recommends not holding religious services or other gatherings of any size during this Yellow Phase. We will continue to use Zoom and other media for our services and programs until we receive further guidance. We acknowledge that while remote services serve many people, they pose their own challenges to access, especially for those of us who do not use electronics on Shabbat. We are committed to finding other ways to serve all of our members as soon as it is safe to do so, perhaps including small, outdoor, in-person Shabbat services. We will keep you posted as we move forward.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Looking Toward the High Holidays

It is difficult to know exactly what the conditions will be come September, and that makes saying anything definitive about our High Holiday services right now very challenging.

Our rabbis, staff, and lay leadership, including the leadership of our wonderful *minyanim*, are considering all issues very seriously as we all plan for the High Holidays. Alternatives being considered range from all-remote High Holiday services to a hybrid service in which a limited number of members would attend services in person—masked, seated distant from each other, and with plastic shields separating them from service leaders—while the majority of members would join the services remotely. We are also planning for ways to engage our children and young people, such an important part of our celebrations, as well as options for Tashlich and shofar blowing. We welcome your ideas and input as we make these difficult decisions.



# TODAH RABBAH!

## CONTRIBUTIONS from APRIL 7, 2020–JUNE 1, 2020

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

FUND	BY	OCCASION
<b>Bess Schick Memorial Fund</b>	Mindelle Goldstein Dena & Ed Lake	in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin in honor of Marcy & Dan Bacine, on their 50th wedding anniversary
<b>Dorshei Derekh</b>	Helen & Michael Feinberg	in honor of Levanah Cohen, daughter of Rabbi Debrah Cohen, on becoming Bat Mitzvah
<b>Early Childhood Program Fund</b>	Ellen Brown	in memory of Myra A. Sterns, mother
<b>General Fund</b>	Adina Abramowitz & Naomi Klayman Diane Ajl	in memory of Linda Kriger, wife of Jake Kriger  in honor of Rina Rosenberg, for all her efforts in making the Wise Aging gatherings so meaningful
	Holli Bluestein	in honor of Marcy & Dan Bacine, on their 50th wedding anniversary
	Diane Dienstman	in honor of Cyrilla Rosen, on her special birthday
	Linda Hahn	in memory of Sylvia Klevit, mother
	Harry Kissileff	in memory of Julia Kissileff, mother
	Bob & Lynn Levy	in memory of Bertha Reisman, grandmother in honor of Marcy & Dan Bacine, on their 50th wedding anniversary
	Devorah Lissek & Josh Barash	in memory of Linda Kriger, wife of Jake Kriger
	Linda Millison	in memory of Vivian Rabineau, aunt
	Harry Mison	in honor of The Wolnek Family
	Nan Myers & Mark Lipshutz	in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin
	Hershel & Betsy Richman	in honor of Marcy & Dan Bacine, on their 50th wedding anniversary
	Michael Simon	in honor of Marcy & Dan Bacine, on their 50th wedding anniversary
	Beth Stearman	in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin in memory of Al Denniberg, grandfather
	George & Debbie Stern	in memory of Linda Kriger, wife of Jake Kriger
	Denise Wolf & Paul Rudick	in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin
<b>Kiddush Fund</b>	Marta & Michael Sivitz	in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin
<b>Minyan Masorti</b>	Diane Ajl	in honor of Louie Asher, on the engagement of her daughter, Rena
<b>Memorial Shabbat Fund</b>		
<b>Music Fund</b>	David & Betty Ann Fellner	in honor of Nina Peskin, for her elegant and inspiring sharing of music
	Steve & Chris Levin	in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin
	Charles & Martha Schleifer	in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin
	Joan Stern	in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin
<b>Program Fund</b>	Diane Ajl	in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin
<b>Rabbi Zeff's Discretionary Fund</b>	Diane Ajl	in memory of Samuel Ajl, father
	Louie Asher & Family	in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin
	Nan Daniels	in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin
	Yona Diamond Dansky	in memory of William Diamond, father
	Connie & Sam Katz	in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin in honor of Marcy & Dan Bacine, on their 50th wedding anniversary

# Contributions *continued*

FUND	BY	OCCASION
Rabbi Zeff's Discretionary Fund ( <i>continued</i> )	Neil Kitrosser	in memory of Beatrice Kitrosser, mother
	Jim & Sandy Meyer	in honor of Marcy & Dan Bacine, on their 50th wedding anniversary
	Beth Rosenbaum & Noel Eisenstat	in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin
	Joan Silver	in honor of Marcy & Dan Bacine, on their 50th wedding anniversary with deep appreciation to Rabbi Adam Zeff & the GJC office staff, for their tireless efforts to keep the GJC community together
Tikkun Olam Fund	Beth Stearman	in honor of Rabbi Adam Zeff, for his leadership and support during the pandemic
	Marna Sternbach	in memory of Maurice Sternbach, father
	Deborah White & Dan Piser	in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin
	David & Betty Ann Fellner	in memory of Nelly Thalheimer, mother of David Thalheimer in honor of Rivkah Walton, for her continuing and creative support of the community.
Torah Restoration Fund	Lynne Jacobs	in memory of Bernard & Dora Jacobs, parents in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin in memory of Daniel Greenberg, father of Rabbi Julie Greenberg
		in memory of Gertrude David Schneier, mother of Joel Schneier
	Eve & Yale Pinkenson	in memory of Eleanor Strauss, mother of Sharon Strauss
		in memory of Sara Tepper, grandmother of Nina Peskin
Youth Activities Fund	Marlene & Steven Hilkowitz	in memory of David Moses, cousin of Joan Silver
	Curtis & Leslie Pontz	in honor of Marcy & Dan Bacine, on their 50th wedding anniversary in memory of Barry Meyer, father of Rebecca Meyer



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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.



### Germantown Jewish Centre A community of communities

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