

Society Hill Synagogue President Carmen Hayman and the Board of Directors, Rabbi Nathan Kamesar, Hazzan Jessi Roemer, Rabbi Emeritus Avi Winokur, Executive Director Sahar Oz, and the entire synagogue staff wish you and your family a happy Hanukkah, filled with light, love, and latkes!



SOCIETY HILL
SYNAGOGUE

Keshet



President's Column

Grateful for This Community

Carmen Hayman

In my Yom Kippur address to the congregation, I talked about what it means to be part of a caring, connected community. I offered five ideas around what makes a caring, connected community and why it is important for us to continue to grow this community. I want to remind you of the first point that I discussed.

In a caring, connect community, we look out for each other.

We take the time to check in on one another. We offer a helping hand to those in need, whether it's assisting during difficult times, offering emotional support, or simply lending a listening ear. On October 7, our world changed as we learned of the atrocities taking place in Israel. For many of us, we have found much comfort in just being together; praying together; singing together; crying together; and eating together. Each time I have been asked by colleagues, friends, or family how I am doing, my first response has been, ***"I am so grateful for my synagogue community."***

I am grateful to Rabbi Nathan, Hazzan Jessi and Executive Director, Sahar Oz, for recognizing that our planned musical and spirited Simhat Torah service on October 7 needed to change, for knowing that we needed an opportunity to hug and comfort one another, a space where we could just come together. Thank you for your flexibility and understanding of the needs of our community.

I am grateful that our community could come together and celebrate our Hatan Torah, Marty Rosenberg, and our Kallat B'reshit, Terry Graboyes, in a special TGIShabbat service and dinner on Friday, October 13. It was a truly inspiring opportunity to hear their personal stories of what brought them to Society Hill Synagogue and the many contributions each has made to our community over the years.

I am grateful that we've had the opportunity to rejoice as four students were called to the Torah as B'nei Mitzvah. Mazel tov to Max Schoenhaus, Bjorn Seaberg, and Alexander and Jenavieve Kranzel.

I am grateful for the many young families that participate in the monthly Friday Shabbat service and dinner and the new monthly Saturday morning Shabbat service and lunch for this cohort. Thank you, Joanna and Micah Hart, for organizing and leading these services. **More than 85 parents and children regularly attend our Friday celebrations, and over 50 came to the first Saturday morning program this fall.**

I am grateful to our Coolanu: Culture and Community Committee for the wonderful events they plan and offer to our members. Check out the fabulous recap of fall events on page 7. **Coolanu means "all of us" in Hebrew, and there is, indeed, something for everyone**, across generations and interests, to enjoy in our broad range of Coolanu activities. Keep an eye out for more events this winter, and join us.

I am grateful for our thriving Young Friends group for 20- and 30-somethings. Young Friends Co-Chairs Anna Wiener and Niki Torskiy have planned a fantastic year of events, including the upcoming "Go Donuts for Hanukkah" at Federal Donuts (1909 Sansom Street) on December 10 from 11:00 am-1:00 pm. Take a look at highlights from their "Friendsgiving" celebration, **which brought 61 people together**, on page 11.

I am grateful for our Hebrew School students' eager and enlightening participation in weekly Torah discussions at Shabbat morning services. Their thoughts and impressions inspire and provide us with hope for the future. **We have 96 students enrolled in our Hebrew School!**

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Rabbi's Column

Heartbreaking Weeks in Israel, Gaza, and Around the World

Nathan Kamesar

It is an understatement to say it has been quite a couple of months since our last *Kesher* edition, which came out just before Rosh Hashanah in early September: quite a couple of months for Israel, for Gaza, for Jewish communities, and for so many, all around the world, and quite a couple of months even for our own community at Society Hill Synagogue.

Of course, the attack by Hamas on Israel came on October 7, the eve of Simḥat Torah, which, for synagogue communities, is the capstone to an intense month of holidays in the Jewish calendar. For synagogue communities, the stretch from Rosh Hashanah to Simḥat Torah is the busiest month of our year, and our normal rhythm is to catch our breath a little bit after that – to take some time off, to slow down our communications; still to lift up Shabbatot and B'nei Mitzvah each week, but otherwise to prepare for the next holiday, which is not until Hanukkah.

Of course, this year, as we began our Sh'mini Atzeret service, which is held the morning before the celebratory Simḥat Torah service in the evening, word began to trickle in that something unusual was happening in Israel. While we didn't know many details yet, we were under the impression that there had been an attack greater than the occasional series of rockets fired by Hamas from Gaza toward southern Israel. We chanted the Hallel service of Sh'mini Atzeret, a service associated with all major holidays, which is a service of praise, joy, and deliverance. We had a hunch that joy was not the moment we were in, and so we chanted the service naming that, instead, the inspiration for the service this year was the memory of the experience of deliverance – that we as a people had made it through hard times before and would again; that we needed to cultivate a relationship to those memories.

By evening, when our celebratory Simḥat Torah service was planned – an evening of carefree revelry, celebrating the completion, and new beginning, of a cycle of reading the Torah – we had begun to get a clearer sense of the full horrors of the events and knew we had to reimagine the ritual on the fly. We canceled our joyous Klezmer band, the talented West Philadelphia Orchestra, and named that if we were ever to truly experience the joy called for by Simḥat Torah, that we also had to allow our hearts to feel the pain and sadness inherent in this moment in history. We led an a cappella service, in which we circled the room with our Torah scrolls chanting the traditional Simḥat Torah words, *anenu anenu b'yom korenu* – “Answer us, answer us, on the day when we call.” We could feel our hearts calling out with sincerity and pathos. It was one of the most powerful moments I have experienced as a rabbi and in Jewish community.

Since then, the events of October 7, the subsequent war in Gaza, and our waiting with bated breath for news of the hostages, as well as worldwide responses to this conflict, some of which have unfortunately been marked by antisemitism, have informed our everyday operations here at the synagogue.

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Hazzan's Column

“In the dark times, will there also be singing? Yes, there will also be singing. About the dark times.” (Bertolt Brecht)

Jessi Roemer

The fall of 2023 has not been easy. War in the Holy Land, reactivated trauma here, and division have affected many of us perhaps more closely than we are used to. I'll be honest: there were Shabbatot this fall when I was not sure how I would rally to show up to sing and pray. I did, of course, and found each time that singing and praying were actually what I needed most to do in that moment.

Because music, like humanity, contains multitudes; it is built to express the gamut of our experience. As my friend, Koach Baruch Frazier, has noted, music is strong and flexible enough to hold it all – pain, joy, and everything in between. Our complex musical and textual legacies help us to tell the story of our lives – our remembered past and our present – in all their complex contradictions.

I learned this from my mom, whose music cut through the noise to connect to people's hearts. In telling her life story, she wrote: “Throughout the years, music was triumphant in my life. It lifted me up when I was down and helped me to celebrate when I was up.” (We put these words on her gravestone.) I love her use of the word “triumphant,” as if music were her sentient companion, sent here to help her “crush it” in life, and pleased with its own success. But I also love that she felt music to be spacious and resilient enough to hold her in every situation.

Perhaps music has something to teach us in these confusing times, when we feel like we are ping-pong back and forth, trying to grapple with layers of emotion within and different perspectives without. I believe that like music, we are spacious, resilient, and strong enough to hold contradictory truths at once. It's hard. We need to feed that strength and encourage it by developing a practice of curiosity, listening, and compassion – including toward ourselves.

I write these words in a hopeful moment of pause in the Middle East violence, which I hope becomes permanent. We have no crystal ball to tell us what will happen as we pass through the deep months of winter toward spring. But we do have tools to help us cut through the noise and connect to our hearts: Breath. Community. Learning. Prayer. Silence. Song.

Along the lines of song, I am planning a “Request Shabbat” for a Friday night TGIShabbat later this year, and I need your help! I want to know what you love to sing – what are your favorite Friday night/Shabbat songs? Please e-mail me at hazzanjessi@societyhillssynagogue.org with a YouTube link or a recording, or sing me a tune on my voicemail: 215-922-6590 x2. Remember: One text can have many tunes, and traditions vary, so just writing “the traditional tune” isn't descriptive enough! To find your song, I need either title plus composer, or a recording. Please send me your favorite tunes by January 20, and I will accommodate as many of them as I can. I look forward to hearing your voices – in my inbox, the Sanctuary, and beyond.



Playschool

Winter Wonders and Fun Festivities

Megan Nachod

December is such an active month in Playschool. We have Hanukkah to celebrate, and that's always a lively, festive time. It seems to last far longer than the eight days that you might expect, since it is raucous excitement and joy all rolled into one in our classrooms. We will be eating latkes and sufganiyot, playing dreidel, and creating beautiful Hanukkah crafts for our homes.

We will open registration for the 2024-2025 school year on **Monday, December 11 for everyone, with currently enrolled families and synagogue members guaranteed admission if they apply within 10 days, by December 21.** After that date, spots will be offered to new families on a first-applied, first-served basis. Please contact me if you'd like to enroll your child in Playschool or if you know a family that might be interested! I'm available at megan@societyhillsynagogue.org and 215-922-6590 x4.

Our winter break will be from **December 20-January 1**, and we hope the snow that is forecast for early 2024 won't be too disruptive, but it is hard to beat the pairing of young children and snow! We will celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy with stories, songs, and art projects that perpetuate Dr. King's dream and values. There will not be classes on **Friday, January 12**, a Professional Development Day, and on **Monday, January 15**, when the synagogue is closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.



Tu BiShvat follows 10 days later, on January 25, so we will mark the birthday of the trees in style! From snacking on a variety of fruits that come from trees and arboreseque art to tree dances and vivid storybooks that inspire conversations about reasons why we are thankful for trees, Tu BiShvat is always such a multisensory adventure in Playschool. It might be easier to talk about the magical quality of trees when they are in full bloom and we can rest in their shade on a sunny afternoon, but we creatively overcome the challenge of tree exploration in the cold winter.

We have another Professional Development Day scheduled for **Friday, February 16**, and there won't be classes on **Monday, February 19**, when the synagogue is closed for President's Day. I started with notes on December and winter, and I'll end with the warmth – figurative and literal – of our wonderful Playschool Summer Camp! Summer camp registration will open in February. Our camp runs for 11 weeks from early June through mid-August, and families have the ability to choose which weeks they want, with the same flexible schedule as our school year, including half-day, afternoon arts, and extended care options.

Please reach out to me for information on our school-year and/or summer camp programming. I love meeting with families and giving them tours. We are proud of what we do and would love to show it to you!

Happy Hanukkah and wishes for a happy and healthy 2024!





Ann Spak Thal Hebrew School

Holidays, B'nei Mitzvah, and TGIShabbat with our Students

Michael Roe

Our year is well underway, and Hebrew School is bursting with excitement. We welcomed a dozen new families into our community, and our school continues growing. A large push for our school this year was bringing the various parts of our community together, and our students have certainly built new connections and gotten closer.

We are excited to celebrate Hanukkah and explore the festival of lights in various ways, from games to art projects, and a Hanukkiyah (Hanukkah menorah) lighting on the 6th night during Hebrew School on **December 12**.

We hope all families will join us for our second “Back to School” parent day of the year, on **January 6**. Come check out what students have been doing in class, reconnect with other families, check in with the Hebrew School Committee, and join us at Shabbat services as we resume classes in the second half of our school year. Additional details will be forthcoming via email.

Our first few Hebrew School TGIShabbat services of the year have been an absolute joy to be a part of. We celebrated with our 3rd and 4th graders in October and our 7th, 8th, and 9th graders in November, with our 5th and 6th graders helping to lead services on December 1. Watching these groups of students on the bimah is a great way to see the future of our community in action. We have more Hebrew School TGIShabbat services coming up in 2024, including **Friday, February 23**, when students in 3rd and 4th grades will join the clergy and guest musicians on the bimah.

Our next two B'nei Mitzvah are coming up in January. These joyous milestones are excellent opportunities for families to experience B'nei Mitzvah services at Society Hill Synagogue and to learn and be inspired by our students and a community coming together for traditions that span generations. Please join us on **Saturday, January 20**, for the Bat Mitzvah of Rebecca Buse-Morley, and on **Saturday, January 27**, for the Bar Mitzvah of Aiden Laver. We are excited to hear Rebecca and Aiden chant Torah and Haftarah and share their teachings with us.

January also brings our two annual Tu BiShvat celebrations for Hebrew School students. On **Saturday, January 20**, we invite parents of students in Gan-Kitah Bet (PreK/K-2nd grade) to join us as our youngest students celebrate trees through song and skit. Students in Kitot Gimel-Zayin (3rd-7th grades) will celebrate our annual fruit and chocolate filled Tu BiShvat Seder on **Tuesday, January 23**. These days are perennial student favorites and sure to bring great festivity as we celebrate the birthday of the trees. Additional information will be sent to families as we approach Tu BiShvat.

We have some more dates to mark on your calendars. Please note that our last day of classes for the fall semester will be **Tuesday, December 19**. Classes will resume for our spring semester on **Saturday, January 6**. There will not be classes on **Saturday, January 13**, during Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend, nor will there be classes on **Saturday, February 17**, during President's Day Weekend.

The Hebrew School staff and I wish you a Hanukkah filled with light, love, and latkes, and a happy new year. We look forward to seeing everyone soon!

Coolanu: Culture & Community

Skating from Fall Joy Into Winter Fun

Lesli Reich and Elliot Landes

With the High Holiday season behind us, that means one thing... winter is coming. But it's not all doom and gloom – Coolanu has just the thing to fight the winter chill and raise your spirits: **Ice Skating, S'mores, and Hot Cocoa on Sunday, January 14, from 2:15-3:30 pm!**

This is our second time for this excursion, and we had a fantastic time last year. Ice skating will be at Rizzo Rink (1001 S. Front Street, corner of Front Street and Washington Avenue), with s'mores and hot chocolate to follow at the Landes family residence three blocks from the skating rink. The address for the Landes family home will be provided upon RSVP to Elliot Landes. Please email Elliot with your headcount by **January 4** at elliotlandes@gmail.com.

This event is rain or shine, as Rizzo Rink is outdoors but fully covered. Skate rental costs \$5, and we'll enjoy ice skating during a public skate session; space is somewhat limited, so arrive early. *A note for families with young children or first-time skaters: Rizzo Rink does not allow the use of skating aids during their busiest public skate sessions.*



Since our last *Kesher* article, Coolanu has done a lot! We hope you were able to join us, but in case you missed it, here are some highlights:

- Several dozen congregants and friends helped to build and decorate our sukkah in late September, and then more than 60 people came together for Salsa and Sips in the Sukkah on October 2.
- Our resident art and architecture experts, Marty Rosenberg and Carter Reich, led an informative and fascinating architectural walking tour through the Market East area of the city on October 29. Space for the tour filled up in just three days, and we look forward to more tours!
- On November 12, almost 20 of us went to see a powerful, thought-provoking performance at Theatre Exile, *Camp Siegfried*, directed by SHS member Deborah Block. We were treated to a special talkback with Deborah following the performance.
- Congregants Andrea Appel and Chris Brown hosted fellow SHS members at their beautiful SPACE Art Gallery in Bella Vista on November 21, and they are generously donating to the synagogue a portion of the proceeds from everything purchased that evening and through December 7.

There are more good times to be had this winter and spring, so keep an eye on the eNews and Shabbat announcements for more Coolanu events. Got ideas for a future program? Interested in joining the Coolanu Committee? Please reach out to Lesli at leslireich2@gmail.com or Elliot at elliotlandes@gmail.com.



Inclusion Committee

Ohel Patu'ah (aka The Open Tent) – Save the Date: Saturday, Feb. 10
Lunch 'n' Learn on *Universal Design in the SHS Universe*

Please join the Disability Subcommittee of the SHS Inclusion Committee for a Lunch 'n' Learn in honor of Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance, and Inclusion Month. Let's come together and engage in learning about universal design. While our Disability Subcommittee continues to work with the administrative staff to accommodate the needs of individual congregants (when those needs are brought to our attention), there are also changes we have already made, and can continue to make, to our physical spaces and programs that can improve accessibility for everyone at Society Hill Synagogue.

If we think of the intuitive nature of the adaptations that have been made to a technological device like a TV remote control (such as the addition of larger buttons, raised symbols, and voice activation), we can recognize the benefits of universal design in our everyday lives. These kinds of adaptations have improved usability and access for people *with* and *without* disabilities. One example where universal design has been implemented at SHS is the creation of enlarged doorways that can accommodate strollers, rollators, and wheelchairs – as well as the movement of AV equipment and furniture to support programming.

We look forward to discussing more examples of universal design and asking for your feedback about some of the changes we have already made in both the older and newer parts of our buildings.

We wish to thank Sahar Oz and the Facilities Committee and its chair, Abe Silber, for responding to our request to research, to purchase, and to train staff to use a piece of equipment called an evacuation chair. This chair is located outside of the Sanctuary and can be used to safely evacuate individuals with limited mobility if the elevator is not available during an emergency.

In the last *Kesher*, we mentioned an upcoming special event during which we'd like to discuss making SHS a more inclusive place for Jews of Color (JOC). We are looking for congregants who are interested in joining our subcommittee to explore how to help JOC and all People of Color to feel more welcome at SHS. A meeting – in person and over Zoom – is tentatively planned for **Monday, January 29**, and we will confirm the date via the eNews. We offer the following reference for clarification purposes:

<https://rac.org/embracing-racial-diversity-our-synagogues-who-are-jews-color-joc>

In joyful collaboration with the synagogue's clergy, lay leaders, Executive Director, committee chairs, and others, we are learning, growing, and continually striving to make our community more welcoming and inclusive for all. Input and participation are always welcome! Feel free to contact Debbie Stewart at beachethic@gmail.com any time.

Food Insecurity Committee

Fighting Hunger in Our Neighborhood

Bob Kaufman and Laurie Krivo

Since September, members of Society Hill Synagogue have brought great energy to our new collaboration with Old Pine Community Center (OPCC) to help feed our neighbors. OPCC is committed to working with local volunteers to provide high quality healthy food to households so they do not go hungry. Our congregation shares these values of providing healthy food with dignity to those in our community. We are therefore excited to have become a volunteer partner with OPCC so they can increase the number of households they serve.

Our collaboration with OPCC provides food to an additional 30 families in the Courtyard Apartments at South 4th Street and Washington Avenue who would not otherwise receive a bi-weekly food bag. Our involvement has also expanded the variety of foods distributed so that 75 families now receive a loaf of sandwich bread and a dozen eggs in addition to their bag of non-perishable foods.

Each week on Tuesday from 4:00-5:30 pm, synagogue members volunteer at OPCC to pack food bags. We have had an incredible response from congregants to this new volunteer program. The five volunteer slots fill up quickly, and we have a growing breadth of volunteers from the congregation, all of whom tell us that they had a great experience!

How can you help?

- Volunteer to pack and prepare food at Old Pine Community Center any Tuesday afternoon from 4:00-5:30 pm. OPCC is located at the corner of Lombard and 4th Street. Sign up to volunteer on the synagogue's website at "Food Insecurity Committee" under the ACTION tab. **Registration is required; please, no walk-ups.**
- Make a donation to the Society Hill Synagogue Food Insecurity Fund, through your dues and/or as a direct donation online by clicking the DONATE link at the top of the synagogue's website. The synagogue now purchases foods that are highly desired by families (eggs and bread) but hard to obtain through donating organizations like Philabundance. In this way, Society Hill Synagogue is expanding the types of food distributed to families because of the generous contributions of our members!

Far too many families in Philadelphia face challenges putting food on the table. For the last three years, members of Society Hill Synagogue have helped feed our South Philadelphia neighbors in collaboration with South Philadelphia Community Fridges. We continue to acknowledge the fabulous work that South Philadelphia Community Fridges does in feeding our neighbors, as we have moved on to a new partnership. Thank you to Old Pine Community Center for all they do and for welcoming us into a new collaboration!

If you have questions or want to get more involved, please contact Bob (rlkaufman758@gmail.com) or Laurie (lkrivo758@gmail.com).



POWER

Education Justice, Climate Justice, and Statewide Meeting

Wendy Greenspan

We are glad to share an update on ongoing POWER efforts, recent successes, and an upcoming statewide meeting on **Monday, February 19 (President's Day)**.

Education Justice. Pennsylvania has among the greatest inequities in public school funding in the country. We rely heavily on local property taxes to pay for the education of our students. This means that wealthier, Whiter communities can raise much more money for their schools, while poorer communities with a greater proportion of Black and Brown children raise far less. In 2020, wealthier districts in Pennsylvania received \$4,187 more per child per year than poorer districts.



In February 2023, in a historic victory for Pennsylvania's public school students, the Commonwealth Court ruled that Pennsylvania's school funding system is unconstitutional and must be reformed. The Pennsylvania Basic Education Funding Commission (BEFC), comprised of state senators and representatives, will issue a report in mid-January with recommendations on how to distribute state education funding.

POWER's Education Justice Team is fighting for adequate and equitable funding for all students, regardless of race, economic status, or ZIP code. The team has focused its efforts on making sure the BEFC issues a report that ensures a quality education for all children. The team has met in small groups with dozens of lawmakers. Because the BEFC did not allow meaningful public input in their "public" hearings, the team held four "people's hearings."

Interested in working for equitable public education in Pennsylvania? Contact John Barnett, Co-Chair of POWER's Education Justice Team at jbarnettfx42@gmail.com.

Climate Justice Victory! POWER, along with several allies, fought a proposed PGW rate increase and advocated for environmental protections. PGW wanted to raise gas rates by 10% to build new pipelines. The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) approved only a fraction of PGW's rate increase request. Importantly, the PUC also ruled that environmental issues are within its jurisdiction. The PUC can direct PGW to consider alternatives that do not require installing or replacing pipelines. Alternatives such as weatherization and geothermal energy can save money and reduce the demand for gas.

Statewide Meeting. Roadmap for Justice: Save the date for the POWER Interfaith Convention on **Monday, February 19** (President's Day), in East Norriton; bus transportation will be available. Learn about POWER's vision for the 2024-2025 legislative session. Help inform key state lawmakers on how they can bring change to our communities. Be an integral part of shaping the path to a more equitable and just future.

If you have questions about POWER or want to get involved, please contact Wendy Greenspan (wgreenspan72@gmail.com), Steve Greenspan (sgreenspan@gmail.com), or Nancy Wygant (nwygant@gmail.com).

President's Column

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I am grateful to congregants who make a commitment to show up for the weekly Zoom Ma'ariv Minyan service on Monday evenings at 7:00 pm; what an impactful way to come together and enable those who are observing a yahrzeit to say Kaddish in a minyan in memory of their loved ones.

I am grateful for Rabbi Nathan's weekly email reflections and commentary, sharing openly his thoughts and providing guidance and resources.

I am grateful for the new members who have joined our community since the High Holidays. Please join me in welcoming:

Richie and Ana Gelman and their children, Sebastian and Camila • Lila Goldenberg and Bill Fedullo • Maxine Mann and Jay Goodman and their daughters, Mallory, Rebecca, Samantha, and Sydney • Carl Kaplan • Jay and Andrea Shipper and their daughter, Leah • Shane Malach and Hailey Rovner • Matthew and Mindy Fingerman • Zachary Winkler and Madeline Sweitzer • Eric Raab and Amanda Sherman and their son, Brandon • Shelli Fedullo • Sarina Kaplan and Adam Elbaum and their daughters, Anna and Julia • Jackie Silverstein • Kathy Kaplan • Michael Grosberg and Carly Neidorf and their daughters, Rosie and Willa • Max Genecov and Casey Leeds and their son, Zev • Louis and Mirit Schwartz and their daughters, Isabella and Arielle • Adam Saltzman and Jenny Wallner Saltzman and their children, Hazel and Milo • Michal and Daniel Strunk and their daughter, Hannah • Debby Freedberg and William Diebold • Shelley Aronson • Marc and Anita Cohen • Joan and Robert Greenstein • Ilyse Kramer • Edward and Rivka Weinstein and their children, Aviva and Daniel

Being together helps. Let me encourage each of you to resist the urge to stay home on these very cold days. **We are so much more than just a synagogue – *we are a community.*** SHS is here to keep you busy and engaged throughout the winter. I look forward to seeing you soon and wish you and your families a happy, healthy, and peaceful 2024!

Young Friends of Society Hill Synagogue "Friendsgiving" Celebration on Nov. 19

For more great photos from this event and other synagogue programs and celebrations, like and follow us on Facebook and Instagram!



Rabbi's Column

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I have begun emailing the community each week with my evolving and unfolding response to the October 7 massacre, the war, and the fallout, which largely revolves around the following principles:

- Israel has a right to defend itself. It is hard to imagine other countries around the world being subjected to this kind of heinous attack targeting innocent civilians – as a percentage of the national population, the October 7 attack was the equivalent of 12 September 11th attacks – and not responding with a major show of force to eliminate the capacity of the perpetrators to ever carry out a similar attack.
- Since the October 7 attack, Hamas has expressed a desire to be in a perpetual state of war with Israel and has never renounced its desire to eliminate the State of Israel. Under those conditions, it is hard to imagine reaching a political solution with Hamas, and thus it is understandable that Israel concludes it needs to eliminate Hamas.
- Still, the Palestinians as a whole are not coextensive with Hamas. Like Jews, Palestinians have longstanding ties to the land, and they, too, need a future of hope to which they can look forward, one that gives them the right of self-determination.
- Therefore, a pathway of two states for two peoples needs to be paved. This means ceasing settlement construction in the West Bank and cracking down on vigilante settler attacks on Palestinian civilians.
- The war in the meantime is a heartbreaking thing. Thousands of innocent civilians are dying. I believe Israel is taking steps to reduce civilian casualties, and still, we mourn the loss of all innocent lives. Hamas embeds itself within a civilian population, using them as human shields, operating control centers from hospitals, mosques, and schools, and still, Israel needs to do what it can to continue to reduce civilian casualties and suffering without giving Hamas immunity.
- There is a diversity of opinion within this community about whether the cost of this current war to Israel and to Palestinian civilians is too high to justify the military objective of removing Hamas from power. While I support Israel's right to remove an existential threat – Hamas – from its borders, my heart, too, breaks at the toll of this war, and war – all wars – are so morally fraught that I can't say with certainty that continued prosecution of this war is the answer. While I am against a long-term ceasefire in this moment because I recognize Israel's right and responsibility to defeat a force that is sworn to its destruction, the civilian death toll makes this a hard enough decision that I respect conclusions that the cost of war is just too high.
- I pray, pray, pray, for the safe return of all the hostages. Reading their stories has been among the most heartbreaking moments of this experience.
- Here in the United States, it has been dispiriting to witness, in the streets, on social media, and on campuses, observers not only denounce Israel's right to wage this war, but actually celebrate the October 7 events and denounce the very right of the State of Israel to exist.
- Israel has existed for 75 years. It served as a place of refuge for millions of Jews returning to their ancestral homeland after centuries of persecution in far-off lands, culminating in the ultimate horrors of the Holocaust, when six million Jews were systematically murdered, and the international community, through the auspices of the United Nations, recognized that the Jewish people without a nation-state was not working. The international community therefore voted to partition British-occupied Palestine, assigning one state to the Jews – Israel – and one to the Palestinian Arabs – Palestine. As has been often cited, the Jews accepted the plan, the Palestinians rejected it, and the rest has literally been history, which we are living up to the present.

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Rabbi's Column

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- Nation states form in many ways. Our own was not bloodless. The particular focus on Israel as the state that should be eradicated and dismantled would appear to contain age-old traces of antisemitism. While not all criticism of Israel is antisemitic – there is plenty to criticize, as there is for every country – a unique focus on dismantling Israel has to be examined for the ways in which antisemitism is informing it. We all have implicit biases. That is part of what has been so important about the racial justice breakthroughs since the murder of George Floyd in 2020: recognizing the subtle ways that racial and ethnic bias informs how we see the world, even when we don't intend it to. Antisemitism is one of the world's oldest prejudices, and those, including Jews, castigating Israel, the world's only Jewish state and the home to the most Jews in the world, as a pariah state, need to honestly search themselves for the ways in which the weight of cultural history has informed their perception of Jews and why they are so focused on the Jewish state. (Jews, by the way, like me, would be well served to investigate to what extent we have our own implicit biases around Arabs and Muslims.) I don't mean to inoculate Israel from all criticism, but, as someone who does not feel like I had encountered personal antisemitism much in my life up until the past couple of years, the readiness of so many to believe the very worst about Israel suggests to me the soil may have been riper for antisemitism than I realized.
- I pray for a future of peace for Israeli Jews and Palestinians. It is not around the corner, but that doesn't mean it is impossible. We need leadership that realizes the other people is not going away – that neither is simply going to let their national aspirations fade into the ether. If anything comes from this devastating moment, I pray that it is the recognition that we need to never get to a place of this much violence again; that we invest in leaders who recognize the legitimacy of the other, the security needs of the other, the need for economic and emotional dignity in the other, and that we find a pathway forward that lets both peoples flourish.

Here at Society Hill Synagogue, it is my hope that we can hold space for these conversations – for dialogue, for listening, for learning, and for engaging; that we continue to wear our heart on our sleeve, showing up with our full selves and making the case for what we believe in, while also listening to the other and looking for a pathway forward for us all.

Young Families Group

Shabbat with a Fun Mix of Music, Movement, and Meals

Micah and Joanna Hart



Something that stands out at every Young Families Shabbat is the friendships that are forged and continue to deepen. This is so special and inspiring, and we are excited for even more families with children from newborns to six-year-olds to experience the *ru'ah* (spirit) and warmth that permeate our Friday evening and Saturday morning celebrations. Our Friday Kabbalat Shabbat program starts at 5:45 pm, and Saturday morning Shabbat celebrations begin at 11:15 am.

In December through February, we will gather on **Friday, December 8; Saturday, December 16; Friday, January 5; Saturday, January 20; Friday, February 9; and Saturday, February 24**. All of the dates through June are listed on the calendar on the synagogue's website and in the Facebook event for Young Families Shabbat. Enjoy guitar grooves, singing, instruments for all ages, blessings, dancing, and the company of new friends and familiar faces! A delicious dinner or lunch is always included. Your RSVP via the quick and easy online form linked in eNews, on Facebook, and on our website – "Young Families Group" under the COMMUNITY tab – is greatly appreciated. Please contact Sahar with any questions at soz@societyhillsynagogue.org or 215-922-6590. We look forward to celebrating with your family!

Community News

Mazal tov to:

Gloria and Howard Briskin on the birth of their grandson, Hayes Alexander Porges

Francine Cohen on the birth of her grandson, Liev Dinesh Simpson

Effe and Brian Kean and big sister Tilia on the birth of their son and brother, Dov Kean

Shane Malach and Hailey Rovner on their wedding

Casey Leeds and Max Genecov on the birth of their son, Zev David Genecov

Danielle Gershowitz and Darryl Hazelwood and big sister Eliana and big brother Ezekiel on the birth of their son and brother, Elijah Zion Hazelwood

Condolences to:

The family of Rosemarie Weinberg on her passing

Roberto Pace and Eve Friedman and their son, Aldo, and family on the passing of Roberto's sister, Marina Pace

The family of Jackie Pack Segal on her passing

Susan and Stew Fisher and their family on the passing of Susan's mother, Naomi Greenberg

Rona Buchalter and Nathaniel Popkin and their children, Lena and Isaak, and family on the passing of Rona's mother, Carol Buchalter

The family of Cantor Alan Cohn on his passing

Robin Cohen and her family on the passing of her mother, Joan Toll

Ron Kaiser and his sons, Brian and Jeff, and their family on the passing of his wife, Libby Kaiser

November Birthdays

Joanna Rosner
Samantha Rosner
Rachel Goldfinger
Samuel Gordon
Thomas Snell
Ari Laver
Shira Angert
Margot Elton-Ratliff
Ava Herrmann
Cyrile Wilson
Mike Fox
Henry Gutstadt
Miriam Magen
Adriel Mesznik
Daniel Bruton
Gabrielle Applebaum
Atara Jaffe
Neil Bunis
David Ladov
Mark Dembert
Ira Kauderwood
Sarah Levitsky
Scotty Jordan
Ron Kaiser
Terri Soifer
Alan Tobacman
Frank Goodman
Micah Hart
Elias Mesznik
Marcie Ziskind
Deborah Casnoff
Sara Chrismer
Aaron Edelman
Cora Michaels-Koenig
Valerie Wetstein
Hilary Levine
Eryn Appel
Megan Helzner
Jordan Moonblatt
Terry Novick
Pelley Brown
Jeff Ratliff
Adam Reinitz
Layla Solomon

December Birthdays

Tobin Ratliff
Noah Schindler
Sarah Buse-Morley
Julia Elbaum

December Birthdays

Ella Marchant
 Holly Gorsen
 Howard Sedran
 Emma Angert
 Joel Chernock
 Ezra Edelman
 Evelyn Eisenstadt
 Myron Bloom
 Ariana Eizen
 Ben Honig
 Myra Silverstein
 Laura Gessman
 Joanna Hart
 Wendy Greenspan
 Blair Goldstein
 Martin Angert
 Rachael Gordon
 Julia Riskowitz
 Leah Popowich
 Michael Yasner
 Max Ladenson
 Phoebe Ladenson
 Dylan Sante
 Robin Schatz
 Zachary Winkler
 Steven Eizen
 Ami Fisher
 Judy Lalli
 Roberto Pace
 Barry Slosberg
 Ned Weiss
 Oren Pipano
 Aaron Wolson
 Margot Oxman
 Barbara Spector
 Steven Gendler
 Josh Goldwert
 Thomas Kline
 Jordan Fishman
 Lily Seldin
 Alexander Ehrlich
 Joan Goodman
 Clara Landes
 David Paskin
 Stanley Woloff
 Alyssa Vaysman
 Erica Borman
 Rebecca Buse-Morley
 Mimi Hunter
 Todd Schoenhaus

December Birthdays

Carl Kaplan
 Barbara Miller
 Jamie Cooperstein
 Isabel Robbins
 Jaime Fox
 Eli Slepian
 Marilyn Appel
 Stanton Salkin
 Talia Bruton
 Emily Zimmerman
 Hazzan Jessi Roemer
 Leanne Bendetti
 Rhonda Bello

January Birthdays

Phyllis Denbo
 Dan Feinberg
 Sage Seltzer
 Jake Litwack
 Harry Feinberg
 Walter Ferst
 Nate Gearhart-Robboy
 Michael Hafter
 Peter Piven
 Nathan Farbman
 Joan Greenstein
 Jim Rosenstein
 Justin Herrmann
 Alex Howe
 Sylva Baker
 Ed Hollin
 Samuel Mink
 Mari Rubin
 Josh Wolson
 Eli Robbins
 Nella Bloom
 Karen Kaufman
 Tilia Kean
 Sophia Grode
 Jennifer Schwartz
 Max Goldberg
 Ezra Goldfinger
 Hava Goldfinger
 Rami Jaffe
 Sheri Gifford
 Judith Green
 Leslie Hafter
 Jared Eizen
 Sam Feinberg
 Yaeli Zhang

January Birthdays

Elias Zaring
 Henry Fishman
 Deborah Freedberg
 Nadia Laver
 Tyler McKinley
 Jesse Abrams-Morley
 Merle Salkin
 Debra Weissbach
 Jakob Peskin
 Lynn Davidman
 Nathan Hersh
 Nancy Morgenstern
 Vicki Markovitz
 Scot Ziskind
 Willa Grosberg
 Mark Dichter
 Talia Mono
 Jean Galbraith
 Steve Morley
 Ezra Susco Stearns
 Holman Massey
 Diane Harrison
 Allison Herrmann
 Jonathan Grode
 Anna Bruton
 Michele Margolis
 Xander Segal

February Birthdays

Lev Berlin
 Pam Levine
 Judy Rohtbart
 Evan Chrismer
 Nancy Goldenberg
 Toby Hart
 Mindy Hauptman
 Ric Hayman
 Carl Dranoff
 Louis Marion
 Sue Snedden
 Yul Summers
 Ira Rubinfeld
 Marc Goldenberg
 Emily Kastenber
 Stephen Kastenber
 Marian Morano
 Claire Dubin
 Linda Joy Goldner
 Debbie Jaffe
 Aaron Davidson

February Birthdays

Randi Glatzer
 Donna Tartasky
 Sofia Newberg
 Paul Rosen
 Leah Shipper
 Brian Kean
 Aminda Kirshenbaum
 Len Weinberg
 Jonathan Angert
 Gail Massey
 Charlotte Peskin
 Alexandra Polakoff
 Milo Saltzman
 Alice Levy
 Adam Ziegfeld
 Elayne Bloom
 Brad Miller
 Alex Tablin-Wolf
 Laurie Krivo
 Josh Sztul
 Sebastian Gelman
 Jenny Wallner Saltzman
 Wilma Bass
 Jennifer Raphael
 Hailey Rovner
 Beth Seltzer
 Danielle Gershowitz

November Anniversaries

Alice Levy & Motty Seal (25th)
 Alan Ominsky & Marlene Lachman
 Howard & Gloria Briskin
 Steven Datlof & Diane Harrison
 Steven & Lisa Eizen (50th)
 Robert & Wilma Bass
 Terri Soifer & Jake Rainwater
 Effe & Brian Kean
 Michael & Holly Gorsen (10th)
 Neil Cohen & Debra Weissbach
 Sam & Susan Gordon
 Leslie Weiss & Neil Bunis
 Jim & Julie Wilson
 Kinney Zalesne & Scott Siff (25th)
 Jeremey & Fran Newberg
 Jud Aaron & Sue Snedden

December Anniversaries

Jerry Kranzel & Rian Berger (15th)
 Dan Bogen & Erica Ginsburg

December Anniversaries

Josh Cooper & Jamie Cooperstein (10th)
 Atara Jaffe & Lorenzo Riboni (1st)
 Alex & Stefanie Seldin
 Len Weinberg & Fran Gallun (55th)
 Harvey & Bonnie Weiner
 Alan & Deborah Casnoff
 Susan Denbo & David Serlin
 Bill & Mindy Hauptman
 Jonathan Weiss & Abigail Wolf
 Lynn Davidman & Neal Horrell
 Mike Roe & Joy Lander Roe (15th)
 Nella Bloom & Andrew Seaberg

January Anniversaries

Dan & Barbara Rottenberg (60th)
 Carter & Lesli Reich (45th)
 Jacob & Jaci Polakoff
 Marc & Staci Schwartz
 Barry & Joann Slosberg (55th)
 Joel & Dana Rosner

February Anniversaries

David & Linda Paskin
 Paula & Larry Ninerell
 Brad Miller & Esther Bisker (15th)
 Danielle Gershowitz & Darryl Hazelwood
 Andrew Hohns & Leah Popowich
 Martin & Shira Angert

General Fund

In Appreciation of

Society Hill Synagogue

Lauren Collier and Family
 Julian & Gail Hart
 Dan & Barbara Rottenberg
 Richard & Catherine Fischer
 Sara Gevantschniter
 Alan Mittelman & Barbara Freed
 Jonathan Weiss & Abigail Wolf
 Gdaly & Eva Berlin and Family
 Larry Weitzner
 Pamela Zimmerman

Barbara Spector

Beverly Michaels

Dan Feinberg

Rona Buchalter and Family

General Fund

In Honor of

Bris of Our Grandson, Elijah Zion Hazelwood
 Howard & Pamela Gershowitz

In Memory of

Ethel Yasner, Mother of Michael Yasner
 Michael & Valerie Yasner

Jay Denbo, Husband of Phyllis Denbo
 Alan Casper

Marina Pace, Sister of Roberto Pace
 David & Pam Levine

Jackie Pack Segal
 Rick Summers & Merrily Williams

Cantor Alan Cohn
 Linda Joy Goldner

Yahrzeit Remembrance of

Ray Eisenberg, Mother of Valerie Yasner
 Michael & Valerie Yasner

Dora Lizenbaum, Grandmother of Curtis Lizenbaum
 Curtis & Lucrezia Lizenbaum

Ilse Roller, Mother of Jerry Roller
 Jerry & Joan Roller

Esther Kaplan, Mother of Carl Kaplan
 Carl Kaplan

Harvey Janowitz, Father of Karl Janowitz
 Karl Janowitz & Amy Goldman

Erwin Goldman, Father of Amy Goldman
 Karl Janowitz & Amy Goldman

Marilyn Davidson Laufer, Sister of Barbara Behar
 Robert & Barbara Behar

Rose Schertz, Grandmother of Pelley Brown
 Stephen & Pelley Brown

William & Myrtle Manheimer, Parents of Joyce Norden
 Joyce Norden

General Fund

Yahrzeit Remembrance of

Dee Massey, Sister of Merrily Williams

Rick Summers & Merrily Williams

Elizabeth Williams, Mother of Merrily Williams

Rick Summers & Merrily Williams

Alfred Summers, Father of Rick Summers

Rick Summers & Merrily Williams

Katie Loeb

Barbara Spector

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

In Appreciation of

Rabbi Nathan Kamesar

Michael & Valerie Yasner

Rabbi Nathan Kamesar's Classes

David Pressel & Jill Feldman

Marty Rosenberg for the Architecture Tour

David Pressel & Jill Feldman

Carter Reich for the Architecture Tour

David Pressel & Jill Feldman

Rabbi Nathan Kamesar

Ralph Horwitz

In Memory of

Lois Rosenberg

Iris Levine

Libby Kaiser

Len Weinberg & Fran Gallun

Yahrzeit Remembrance of

Edward Blender, Brother of Burton Blender

Burton Blender & Libby Harwitz Blender

Rabbi Emeritus' Discretionary Fund

Yahrzeit Remembrance of

Isadore Goldenberg, Father of Marc Goldenberg

Marc, Nancy, Jack and Alice Goldenberg

Social Action Fund

Yahrzeit Remembrance of

Helene Rieder, Mother of Joan Roller

Jerry & Joan Roller

Marilyn Toll, Sister of Robin Cohen

Robin Cohen

Jay Stewart Cohen, Husband of Robin Cohen

Robin Cohen

Herbert Toll, Father of Robin Cohen

Robin Cohen

Vare-Washington Elementary School Gift Cards

Bob Kaufman & Laurie Krivo

Robin Cohen

Frank Giorgilli

Carter & Lesli Reich

Jerry & Joan Roller

Bill & Debbie Stewart

Marc & Anita Cohen

Gregg Greenberg & Jamie Goren

Susan Banchek

Harry & Eleanor Oxman

Bruce & Carol Katcher

Josh & Stephanie Wolson

Mark Dembert & Mary Fish

Food Insecurity Fund

In Appreciation of

Receiving Aliyah During Shabbat Services

Joseph Freedman

In Honor of

Society Hill Synagogue

Paula Ninerell

Marc Kravitz

Jeremy Tobacman & Jean Galbraith and Family

Phyllis Barsky

Harry & Eleanor Oxman

Howard & Gloria Briskin, on the Birth of their Grandson, Hayes Alexander Porges

David & Pam Levine

Wedding of Shira Cohen & Marjorie Alexander

David & Pam Levine

Carter & Lesli Reich

Sahar Oz's Kindness During Sukkah Visit

Paula Ninerell

Food Insecurity Fund

In Honor of

Marty Rosenberg, Hatan Torah Honoree
David & Pam Levine

Terry Graboyes, Kallat B'reshit Honoree
David & Pam Levine

In Memory of

Ethel Yasner, Mother of Michael Yasner
David & Pam Levine

Col. Victor H. Thaler, Brother of Marsha Cohen
David & Pam Levine

Yahrzeit Remembrance of

Al & Joan Fries, Parents of Lesli Reich
Carter & Lesli Reich

Herman Jacob Fries, Grandfather of Lesli Reich
Carter & Lesli Reich

Anita Reich, Mother of Carter Reich
Carter & Lesli Reich

H. David Kaplan, Uncle of Pam Levine
David & Pam Levine

Morton Levine, Father of David Levine
David & Pam Levine

Capital Campaign Fund

Yahrzeit Remembrance of

Elsa Kolansky, Mother of Betta Kolansky
Betta Kolansky

Kiddush Fund

In Appreciation of

Society Hill Synagogue
Rachel Howe and Family

In Honor of

Max Genecov & Casey Leeds, on the Birth of their Son, Zev David Genecov
David & Pam Levine

Francine Cohen, on the Birth of her Grandson, Liev Dinesh Simpson
David & Pam Levine

Kiddush Fund

In Memory of

Libby Kaiser
David & Pam Levine

Yahrzeit Remembrance of

William J. Levy, Father of Alice Levy
Alice Levy & Motty Seal

Margie Seal, Mother of Motty Seal
Alice Levy & Motty Seal

Dr. Effy Oz Hebrew School Fund

In Honor of

Society Hill Synagogue
Adele Fine & Burton Ginsberg
Rachel Howe and Family

Estelle Rosenberg, Aunt of Robert Bass
Robert & Wilma Bass

Yahrzeit Remembrance of

Sylvia T. Ewens, Mother of Wilma Bass
Robert & Wilma Bass

Adult Education Fund

In Appreciation of

Rabbi Nathan Kamesar, High Holiday Services
Myer & Miriam Magen

Hazzan Jessi Roemer, High Holiday Services
Myer & Miriam Magen

Leanne Bendetti's Assistance with High Holiday Services
Myer & Miriam Magen

Yahrzeit Remembrance of

Leon & Sara Magen, Parents of Myer Magen
Myer & Miriam Magen

Annual Giving Fund

In Honor of

Wedding of Shira Cohen & Marjorie Alexander
Barbara Spector

Marty Rosenberg, Hatan Torah Honoree
Barbara Spector



SOCIETY HILL
SYNAGOGUE

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Rabbi Nathan Kamesar
Rabbi Avi Winokur, Rabbi Emeritus
Hazzan Jessi Roemer
Sahar Oz, Executive Director

