

Members of
Society Hill Synagogue's
Latke Brigade in the
Kitchen during our
Hanukkah Happening



SOCIETY HILL
SYNAGOGUE

KESHER

MARCH • APRIL • MAY 2026 • • • ADAR • NISAN • IYAR • SIVAN 5786

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From the President's Desk

OUR GROWING COMMUNITY'S PRIORITIES

by Lisa Eizen

Facility Improvement for Better Connection and Inclusion

"The improvement and/or expansion of the facilities were seen as a necessary focus area for the Strategic Planning Committee and the congregation."

Respondents emphasized the need to make physical spaces more functional, flexible, and accessible, particularly concerning the bimah and our Sanctuary. While the congregation loves the historic building, they acknowledged its limitations and the need for thoughtful improvements. However, it was cautioned that these enhancements should consider future uncertainties. Although fundraising was given a lower priority score, it was recognized as essential to achieving these goals.

Fundraising

"There was a clear recognition from respondents that fundraising would be needed in order to achieve many of the goals and dreams they spoke about. However, they saw fundraising as a means toward shared goals, not something that would be supported in and of itself."

Although fundraising ranked lower than other congregational priorities when considered on its own, focus group discussions and survey responses consistently acknowledged it as

Thank you again to those of you who took the time to fill out our Strategic Planning survey and participated in our focus groups this fall. Your thoughtfulness and appreciation for this community are evident in the responses. I would like to share a brief review of the major themes that emerged from the report by our consultant, Anna Marx, based on the focus groups and survey.

Several key themes emerged, shedding light on our community's priorities and concerns and reflecting a deep level of community engagement.

Out of 634 eligible invitations to take the survey, 339 responses were received, reflecting a **53.5% response rate**. The survey drew input from 267 households, representing **66.8%** of our member households.

Community and Connection

"Community was the number one priority for why congregants come to Society Hill Synagogue and what they hope the focus will be for its future."

A central theme is the profound appreciation that our congregants hold for the community, its clergy, and its cultural heritage. Participants described Society Hill Synagogue as warm, welcoming, inclusive, and spiritually meaningful. This is evident in the survey results, with 75% of respondents identifying community, friendship, and connection as one of their top priorities. Attracting and engaging new members, while deepening connections with current members, received the highest importance score among congregational priorities.

In the focus groups, nearly every session featured participants who spoke with great respect and reverence for the clergy and staff, and many expressed concerns about staff burnout. Participants also expressed a desire to strengthen connection and belonging. They noted that recent growth has made it more challenging to maintain the tight-knit communal experience. This led to two primary concerns: the risk of losing the close communal bond, and the challenge of physical capacity.



Congregants who entered our “Boldly Hanukkah Sweater” contest this year; LilyFish Gomberg.

an essential means of sustaining the synagogue. Participants frequently emphasized the importance of securing long-term financial stability, including the possible creation of an endowment or a “rainy day” fund. Fundraising emerged as one of the top priorities for retirees — the age group most represented in the focus groups — and staff likewise identified it as a top concern. These perspectives likely reflect their distinct vantage points: staff experience the synagogue’s financial constraints firsthand, while retirees bring the life experience and perspective that underscore the importance of long-term financial planning for any institution.

Out of the 339 responses that we received to the survey, 140 (42%) came from retirees.

Nearly two-thirds the 93 individuals who attended the focus groups are retirees, though slightly more than a third of our congregants are retired. To get more input from other segments, Anna facilitated group conversations with other congregants in February.



Our Communications Manager, LilyFish Gomberg, in her “office,” which is a nook in the back corner of the Administrative Suite; Lisa Eizen.

In carrying out my roles and responsibilities as President of Society Hill Synagogue, I spend time in many different spaces throughout our building.

I attend meetings in offices, gather for programs and meals in the Social Hall, pray in the Sanctuary, and learn in the Beit Midrash. **As I move through these spaces, the limits of our current footprint are increasingly clear.** Our Hebrew School is full, and on Tuesdays and Saturdays, classrooms are in use throughout the building. Our oldest Playschool class meets in the Social Hall during the week and must be packed up each Friday to make room for weekend activities. Our office space is also stretched to capacity, and storage space is at a premium.

For all of these reasons, engaging in strategic planning feels both wise and timely – and truly exciting as we imagine what lies ahead for our community.

OUR MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

Mission

Society Hill Synagogue nourishes, strengthens, and inspires our members, their families, and the surrounding community through the rhythms and teachings of Jewish life.

Vision

Society Hill Synagogue envisions a vibrant intergenerational community in which we nourish our souls through prayer and tradition, care for one another, form new and lasting friendships, celebrate our joys together, deepen our minds through Torah and learning, and together help author the next chapter of Jewish life as we work to repair a broken world.

Values

Pluralism — We believe that a diversity of perspectives, backgrounds, and approaches to Jewish life strengthens us and helps us grow. Our services are based on Conservative liturgy while incorporating influences from the Reconstructionist, Renewal, and Reform movements, and beyond.

Kehilah/Community — We believe that life is lived most richly when woven together in the fabric of community: caring for one another when sick, providing shared space for one another's children, celebrating one another's joys, mourning one another's sorrows, and finding diverse opportunities to gather and connect.

Hakhlahah/Inclusion — We believe in the wisdom of making the riches of Jewish life accessible to all. It is our responsibility to build pathways that facilitate participation in Jewish life and to foster an environment of belonging for all those seeking Jewish community, including interfaith couples and families, LGBTQIA+ people, people of color, and people of all abilities.

Talmud Torah/Lifelong Learning — We believe learning is a fundamental part of Jewish living, and it infuses everything we do: from prayer services to Board meetings; from preschool to Hebrew School and throughout adulthood.

T'filah/Prayer — We believe prayer is a vital expression of Jewish life that can connect us to God, strengthen and nourish our soul, and help us form a relationship to mystery, strengthened through music, liturgy, and reflection.

Tzedek/Justice — We believe Judaism gives voice to the eternal call incumbent upon all of us to contribute to a more just world and that the synagogue is an important vehicle for mobilizing our collective efforts.

Klal Yisrael/All of Israel — We believe that fostering a connection to Israel — the people, the land, the country — is an essential component of synagogue life. We believe in the value of expressing and exploring our connection to the Jewish people worldwide and in our ancient homeland across a diversity of perspectives.



From the Rabbi's Desk

TENDING WHAT'S GOOD: GROWTH, CONNECTION, AND OUR SHARED VISION

by Rabbi Nathan Kamesar

In President Lisa Eizen's article, she reflects on the responses we received in the comprehensive survey and focus groups we held in preparation for our efforts to work together to author the next chapter of life here at Society Hill Synagogue.

As a reminder, the process of checking in this extensively with our community was launched in response to the tremendous growth we've experienced over the last several years — from 250 households in 2015, to 306 in 2023, to 418 today. Alongside this, our Hebrew School enrollment has grown from a low of 65 students during the pandemic in 2021 to 115 today. In total, **50% of our members today have joined in the last five years.** That is dramatic growth and a seismic shift.

On the whole, we see this as a tremendously good thing. Our vision for Society Hill Synagogue — as stated on our website and in our foundational documents — is that of an intergenerational, vibrant community in which we nourish our souls through prayer and tradition, care for one another, form new and lasting friendships, celebrate our joys

together, deepen our minds through Torah and learning, and together help author the next chapter of Jewish life as we work to repair a broken world.

This vision statement is not merely a hoped-for future; it's an actively lived-in reality. **To have people flock to Society Hill Synagogue to participate in and strengthen this community as envisioned is inspiring.** We celebrate it. We hope that we all are strengthened through this growth.

Still, it takes real intentionality to ensure that, with this level of growth, the values that are so important to us in living out this vision are nurtured, attended to, and not forgotten.

This survey and focus group process was a process of ensuring that the needs, desires, and wishes of our community are taken into account as we work together to steward the life of the community.

As Lisa references in her article, we heard a number of things in these focus groups:

1. Deep appreciation for this community: For the ways in which the human beings who make up this community — members, volunteers, clergy, staff — roll up their sleeves and create a place where each week, and through the rhythm of the Jewish year, people have the opportunity to experience nourishment, connection, and Jewish enrichment.

2. Excitement about the growth... and some questions: There is deep pride in the growth this community has experienced over the last several years, and the recognition that that growth facilitates possibilities for Jewish community that are more difficult in a smaller community. Whether that is because it means more members who are available to attend a monthly activity like a Rosh Hodesh group, or sign up for a trip to Italy, or in other ways make the programs that we attend feel filled with life. The growth also contributes to the financial strength and sustainability of the community.

At the same time, it makes it more difficult to know everyone.

A clear takeaway for me from the survey responses and focus groups is to double down our investment in efforts that will facilitate more connections among our members so they can get to know each other better, for those who want that. Whether this is through programs directed toward social interactions (like our upcoming Summer Shabbat at Home series) or investing in staff efforts to facilitate connections among people, helping onboard new members, or in our Hebrew School Committee focusing on helping to connect new families who join, **tending to relationships will absolutely continue to be a focus of ours going forward.**

Another question consistently raised about our growth is, will it continue? And to what extent should we plan for that?

Leadership is inherently about working in the face of some degree of uncertainty: we can't know for sure whether this growth will continue, or slow down, or accelerate. We can investigate the available data on trend lines of the Jewish population in our city, and the level of Jewish communal affiliation, and whether or not people are moving to the suburbs or staying in the city, and in fact, we are doing that. But the available data has limits: not all the data we'd want is available, and even if it were, it wouldn't guarantee anything about the future.

So we are proceeding with caution — gathering as much information as we can, while recognizing that something good is happening at Society Hill Synagogue, and when we find something good in the world, we want to tend to it and ensure it is available to those who need it.

3. As we tend to the physical home of our growing community, we need to do so in alignment with our values:

As we reflect on how this physical space can best support this growing community, one area where we see room for improvement is to better align certain spaces with our aspiration that this be as fully accessible a synagogue as is reasonably possible. The

Sanctuary and the synagogue annex (the part of the building that houses our clergy offices and Beit Midrash/study room) stand out as two spaces where accessibility is deeply limited. As we aspire toward a future where the community we envision is fully realized, these are areas that could use our attention and investment.

As we continue our planning process and look toward the future, we will keep asking for your input, and if you have additional thoughts or dreams or questions already on any of these or other issues facing the synagogue, I urge you to reach out to Lisa, Sahar, me, or any of our leadership to connect. Thank you for helping to build this sacred community.



Society Hill Synagogue members at Tribe 12's Hanukkah Gala, where Rabbi Nathan Kamesar and Caroline Kamesar were honored this winter; submitted.



From the Hazzan's Desk

ON ONE FOOT: HILLEL AND MR. ROGERS

by Hazzan Jessi Roemer

The famous Talmudic story goes that a man came before Rabbi Hillel, offering to convert to Judaism if Hillel could teach him the entire Torah while the man stood on one foot. Hillel converted him, saying, **“What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor — that is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary, now go and study”** (Shabbat 31a).

Hillel’s negative command — do not do what is hateful — is based on a positive command in the Torah: **“V’ahavta l’re’akha kamokha — Love your neighbor as yourself”** (Leviticus 19:18).” Not-doing can be as much of a choice as doing. When we are in a position to help and decline, that, too, is action. When not-doing would be hateful — when we would hope for help if roles were reversed — we are called to act.

Throughout and well after my childhood, the Holocaust education I received consistently took an incredulous approach to the “regular” Germans who continued living their lives while their government systematically attacked and murdered Jews, Roma, communists, queer folk, and others they deemed undesirable.

“Why didn’t they protest?!” teachers and students alike would ask about the Germans who were silent while Jews were blacklisted, ghettoized, and then moved to death camps right next to German towns. The question was posed — and still often is — as an unforgivable mystery. It is hateful to us that so many Germans stood idly by as we were slaughtered, and we cannot forgive them for it.

I understand that feeling. But I wish my Holocaust education had pushed beyond it. Because by staying locked in absolute judgement of those Germans, rather than trying to truly understand the fear and denial that lead to paralysis in the face of creeping authoritarianism, I missed an opportunity to prepare for how to act differently, should I ever find myself in their shoes.

And now, it is 2026. In the U.S., as I write, our government is sending weaponized human beings to our cities to unleash — first onto immigrants, and quickly onto others — the kind of brutality that is familiar to Ashkenazi Jews from 1930s Germany, and to Native, Black, and poor communities in this country. This time, Jews as a

group are not the first targets of state violence, though we suspect we won’t be the last.

Those of us reading the news live in daily tension between the ongoing responsibilities of our regular lives and the alarm bells sounding in our collective memory about what we are witnessing. **How do we go to work while trying to defend our civic structures and respond to each attempt to eviscerate our shared humanity?**

This is where I turn back to Hillel and the Torah verse on which he based his answer. The invitation is simple: Love your neighbor. It is also vast and flexible; every shift in perspective grants a host of new neighbors, giving us endless opportunities to live the instruction. **Fred Rogers** famously addressed every single member of his nationally-syndicated TV audience as “Neighbor.” Loving your neighbor can look like anything, from showing up for a Shiva minyan to protesting at a detention facility; from public service to shoveling someone’s car out of the snow. **Every good act is good.**

Some of these opportunities are immediate and urgent; others are a longer game. Life requires that we toggle between the two. The trick, I think, is to place this Torah verse at the center of our awareness and do our best to let it anchor each activity — in the immediate, the intermediate,

and the long-term — and to keep doing something.

In the short term, there are peaceful gatherings for those who can physically attend. There are phone calls and letters to be sent to representatives. There is food assistance work to be done through our very own **Social Action Committee** (see page 26 of this *Kesher*). There are neighbors to be helped, community connections to be made and strengthened, divides to be bridged. Connection is the basis of solidarity, and solidarity is how we survive.

In the longer term, activities that sustain us are important — spiritual and physical practices, relationships, creative expression, community-building. These create the infrastructure for meaning and joy to flourish, as does a regular practice of rest — Shabbat! This, too, is survival. Our synagogue is such a great place to do so many of these things together!

The Torah's instruction also

mentions love for oneself, but in a way that binds neighbor and self, implying that love of each should exist in equal measure. When loving ourselves appears to conflict with stretching beyond our comfort zone to take a stand for others, this verse demands that we view the two in holy relationship: **every defense of others' civil and human rights is a defense of our own.**



Hazzan Jessi sings into a megaphone at a Tru'ah protest in Washington DC in February; from the Tru'ah Instagram.

Recently, I stood at a **peaceful Jewish action in Washington, DC**, protesting extra-judicial federal forces brutalizing people in US cities. Wearing tallitot and carrying shofarot, over 500 Jews sang: "Love your neighbor as yourself" and "Do not stand on your neighbor's blood" (Leviticus 19:16). It was both minuscule and powerful — a drop in the bucket. But many drops make an ocean.

Then I returned home — to Torah reading spreadsheets, teaching, B'nei Mitzvah, Rock Purimspiel preparation; to driving my son to frisbee practice, speaking on the phone with my daughter, hugging my partner. There is no choice, as two-time Grammy winner Rhiannon Giddens recently reminded us, but to keep all the balls in the air at once.

What is the teaching here?

It is a discipline to ask this question in each new moment, even and especially as the moments grow more challenging. My inherited Jewish history reminds me not to get complacent; the current era tells me to understand fear and paralysis so I can resist them in myself; and my daily reality teaches me to choose moments to respond in the present — reaching beyond my comfort zone to support my neighbors — while keeping my eye on my long-term goals: Unity. Diversity. Connection. *V'ahavta l're'akha kamokha.*

WADE IN THE WATER
THE POSSIBILITIES OF
BLACK MUSIC IN
JEWISH SPACES
Sunday, March 22
3:00 pm
FEATURING:
Anthony Mordechai
Tzvi Russell
SOCIETY HILL
SYNAGOGUE
\$10 Society Hill Synagogue Members • \$25 General Public
Advance Registration Required at:
www.societyhillsynagogue.org/wadeinthewater

Come together in community to sing, listen, and engage in conversation! On **March 22 at 3:00 pm**, renowned bass vocalist and Yiddish scholar **Anthony Mordechai Tzvi Russell** will give a performance and lecture in our Sanctuary about Black music in Jewish spaces. In 2018, Anthony's EP, *Convergence*, was released as a conversation

between his musical roots as a Black American and his chosen heritage as a Jew and scholar of Yiddish music and culture. His voice is glorious, and his insight on the interactions of art across cultures is astute and inspiring. **You do not want to miss this hour and a half with Anthony!** Refreshments will be served afterwards in the Social Hall.

societyhillsynagogue.org/wadeinthewater



Society Hill Synagogue Playschool

SPRING FUN AT PLAYSCHOOL

by Megan Nachod



We are always pretty busy at Playschool, but the next several months are extra exciting. We have holidays to celebrate, and summer camp following soon after. We are quite happy to see the beginning of the warmer and busier seasons!



Playschool students taste fruit at our Tu B'Sh'vat Seder; LilyFish Gomberg.

March begins with our **Purim celebrations**. We get into the holiday spirit with a Purim parade on the Friday before Purim, complete with costumes, graggers, and admiring parents. Our parade will likely include the traditional favorites of kings and queens, more than a few dinosaurs, and possibly some K-Pop Demon Hunters. I also would not be surprised to see Elphaba or Glinda making an appearance. Purim necessitates some practice beforehand, specifically graggers. While the kids really excel at using them to make noise and drown out Haman's name, stopping can be more than a little challenging.



Playschool students sample matzah and haroset at last year's Playschool Passover Seder; LilyFish Gomberg.

Passover preparation begins almost as soon as Purim concludes. We will be making seder plates, Elijah's cups, and matzah covers, and of course we will hop like frogs on a regular basis. We will have a Playschool Seder and act out the story of Pesah, almost as if we were there. No calm and sedate Seders here!

We will celebrate **spring** by planting flowers and watching how the world changes as it warms up. We are lucky enough to have several outdoor spaces for play, and they are even more popular when we get to play in spring sunshine, surrounded by bird song. Getting outdoors without additional layers of clothing is a real treat!

We have opened our summer camp registration, and spaces are filling up! If you'd like your child to join us for the summer, or if you know someone who may be interested, please feel free to email me at megan@societyhillsynagogue.org.

Camp can fill up quickly, so be sure to enroll to guarantee your spot. The summer camp registration can be found on the Playschool page on the website. **Enrollment for the 2026-2027 school year continues**, and that registration form can also be found on our school webpage.

I want to wish you all hag Purim same'ah (Happy Purim) and hag Pesah same'ah (Happy Passover). Of course, happy spring! We made it through the winter and got to the other side!



Playschool students during water play in the Lawrence Court walkway last summer; LilyFish Gomberg.



Ann Spak Thal Hebrew School

BUT WAIT, THERE'S S'MORE!

by Karen Hafter

Happy start of spring! It seems impossible, but the winter months are passing, and the summer is approaching.

Before we leave the winter behind, I want to remember all of the fun we had during the cold season. In **December**, the Hanukkah Happening was nearly snowed out — but no weather could possibly stop the Hebrew Schoolers from eating fresh-from-the-oil latkes and showing off their Hanukkah swag!



Hebrew School staff pose with Mr. Latke at our Hanukkah Happening; LilyFish Gomberg.

I was filled with pride for how our community came out for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service at Congregation Beth Am Israel in **January**. Despite difficult driving conditions, 35 of our congregants made it out to the suburbs to pack meals, sort clothing, make dog toys, tie blankets, and more. There is no better way to teach our children Jewish values like *tz'dakah* and *tikkun olam* than through action. *Yasher ko'ah* to everyone who came and served!

In **February**, the kids went ice skating in a joint Hebrew School *On the Move* and Coolanu event that ended in s'mores, hot cocoa, and a definite sugar high!



*Hebrew School families gathered at Rizzo Rink for Hebrew School *On the Move* and Coolanu's joint event in February; LilyFish Gomberg.*

February also brought the inter-kitot (grades) **Tu BiSh'vat Seder** to our school, which allowed all of our students to sit together at tables and enjoy fruit with one another while we discussed and celebrated all that trees provide.



*Hebrew School students pour juice during our *Tu BiSh'vat Seder* in February; LilyFish Gomberg.*

And last, but certainly not least, there's **Purim**! A round of applause to the entire cast, young and old, who will bring *Megillat Ester* to life through song, dance, and myriad humorous antics. Special thanks to our Hebrew School students who signed up to run booths at the Purim carnival, stepping effortlessly into roles of leadership and responsibility. Purim is definitely our goofiest holiday, and I love it!

Coming up in **Hebrew School *On the Move***, we'll be taking a trip to the Philadelphia Zoo on **March 22**, picnicking in Bartram's Gardens on **April 26**, and partnering with Coolanu to celebrate Lag Ba'Omer in with a barbecue, s'mores, and games on **May 5**.

This spring, we have four B'nei Mitzvah to celebrate in our school community! We hope that you will come to join us, as each service is a unique opportunity to hear our students share their reflections and chant texts and celebrate traditions that bring us all together. **Anna Elbaum** starts the spring season on March 14, followed by **Eli Slepian** (March 21), **Madeleine Mohajer** (April 18), and **Johanna Fisher** (May 9).

We also have our two remaining class TGISHabbat services of the year. A favorite of students and families alike, it's a spectacular sight to see our students on the bimah for TGISHabbat, helping to lead our community with song and spirit as we kick off Shabbat. **Kitot Hey and Vav** (5th and 6th grades) will help lead services on **Friday, March 6**, and **Kitot Gimel and Dalet** (3th and 4th grades) take the lead on **Friday, May 15**.

Kitot Vav and Zayin families have Learning Sessions on **March 10** and **April 28** from 5:30 to 6:45 pm. These sessions, led by Rabbi

Kamesar and Hazzan Jessi, are opportunities for families to learn more about their children's Jewish journeys and their own as they prepare to usher their kids from childhood to adulthood. Childcare will be provided for students and their siblings.

Hebrew School will be closed for our Pesah break from **Tuesday, March 31**, to **Tuesday, April 7**. Classes will resume for all students on **Saturday, April 11**.

Our final day of classes will take place on **May 16**, when we will close out the year with our Final Day Festivities. We invite



Hebrew School students rehearsing for the Rock Purimspiel; LilyFish Gomberg.

everyone to come join us as we recognize the students and teachers for their amazing work over the course of the year, and of course, we will end the day with Sensational Shabbat Sundaes.

Until then, the Hebrew School teachers and I wish everyone a joyful month of Adar, hag Purim same'ah, v'hag Pesah same'ah.

Membership Committee

SUMMER SHABBAT AT HOME: GATHERING AROUND THE TABLE

by Judy Lalli, Debbie Stewart, and Carmen Hayman

One of the strengths of our community is the way we show up for one another — through phone calls, check-ins, shared ritual, and simple acts of care. This summer, we invite members to deepen those connections by gathering around Shabbat tables in one another's homes.

Summer Shabbat at Home will take place on three Friday nights this summer, as congregants open their homes to host fellow members for Shabbat dinner and warm, welcoming conversation. Save the dates — the second Friday of each month: **June 12**, **July 10**, and **August 14**.

Hosting is meant to be accessible and flexible. Meals can be simple, and guests may be invited to contribute food or drink. Gatherings may be potluck or semi-potluck, host-prepared or shared — casual, buffet-style, or sit-down, indoors or outside in the summer air. **Hosts choose what works best for them.**

At this stage, we are finalizing host homes in a variety of locations, including the city and nearby neighborhoods, New Jersey, and down the shore. Hosts may choose to host one, two, or all three dates.



Interested in hosting? Please fill out the form in the eNews or email Judy Lalli and Debbie Stewart at membership@societyhillssynagogue.org as soon as possible.

Attendee sign-ups will open after Passover.

We look forward to continuing to build connection and care in our community — one Shabbat table at a time.

The Inclusion Corner

OHEL PATU'AH – THE OPEN TENT

by the Inclusion Committee

Inclusion is the hope that belonging can be felt by all those who visit and join our synagogue community.

Our subcommittees are in full swing with programming, collaborations, and resources.

Please join us in our work!

Our subcommittees would benefit from the **lived experience and wisdom** of more folks — including parents — who identify with the groups to which we devote our work: interfaith families, people of color, LGBTQIA+ people, and people with disabilities. We offer learning, dialogue, and community-wide events.

This winter, our Steering Committee met with **Karen Hafter**, our Director of Youth and Family Education, to better understand how *Ohel Patu'ah* can support the Hebrew School. We look forward to more opportunities for collaboration in the future.

On **February 13**, the **Disability Inclusion Subcommittee** celebrated **Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and**

Inclusion Month (JDAIM) by screening the film, *Thirteen*. This short film touched hearts and minds. We are so lucky to have such a special community, as evidenced by the attendees who felt comfortable openly sharing personal experiences.

Participants expressed support and interest in creating unique B'nei Mitzvah experiences suited to each student's needs and strengths that can be meaningful for the student, their family, and the entire community.

The **Subcommittee for the Inclusion of People of Color** will host a Kiddush Lunch 'n' Learn on **March 7** with a screening of Rabbi Sandra Lawson's sermon, *Reflections on Authentic Identities*. We'll discuss how we can apply her lessons here.



Rabbi Sandra Lawson giving her sermon, *Reflections on Authentic Identities*, as available on Youtube. We will discuss this sermon on March 7.

On **March 22** at 3:00 pm, our congregation will host speaker and performer **Anthony Mordechai Tzvi Russell** for an unmissable event, *Wade in the Water: The Possibilities of Black Music in Jewish Spaces*.

Passover will be here before we know it! **Here are some interfaith and disability inclusion Passover resources:**

18Doors has a fantastic Passover resource for interfaith families: 18doors.org/guide_to_passover_for_interfaith_families

Haggadot (plural of *Haggadah*, the Passover seder book) are available in braille and large print from the JBI Library; please email us if you'd like more info.

And there's more to come! Stay tuned for ways to celebrate **Pride Month 2026** this June. We are enriched by and welcome members who identify as LGBTQIA+.

Subcommittee Chairpeople:

Interfaith Inclusion:

Gail Massey

Inclusion of People of Color:

Jared Susco

LGBTQIA+ Inclusion:

Marty Rosenberg

Disability Inclusion:

Amy Goldman

If you would like to participate in the Inclusion Committee or subcommittee conversations, please contact Debbie Stewart and Jared Susco at inclusion@societyhillsynagogue.org, or reach out directly to a subcommittee chairperson.

Resilience and Return

Segev Kalfon's Survival of Captivity in Gaza

Sunday, April 26 @ 3:00 pm at Society Hill Synagogue

Segev Kalfon was kidnapped from the Nova Music Festival on **October 7, 2023**, and survived **738 days of captivity in Gaza** before his return home.

Society Hill Synagogue's Israel Connections Subcommittee invites you to **join us as Segev shares his remarkable story of the resilience, determination, and faith** which sustained him in captivity. He will discuss the strength, purpose, and hope that can emerge even in the darkest of circumstances.

\$18 Society Hill Synagogue Members • \$36 General Public • \$180 Sponsorship • Free for Students with ID

All Proceeds Support Segev's Recovery

Advance Registration Required: societyhillsynagogue.org/segev



Hesed Committee — Caring for Our Community

COMING TOGETHER TO CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER

by Laurie Krivo, Natalie Landro, Debbie Stewart, and Julie Wilson



The **Hesed Committee** has had great success in serving our community. The volunteers are fabulous — thank you!

Our **Hesed Committee** — **Caring for Our Community** (previously "God's Unfinished Business," or "GUB") is leading our new efforts to maintain connections among our growing community and provide needed support to our congregants. If you or someone you know in our congregation could use a meal, a visit, a ride, or just some extra care, please click the link in the eNews or scan the QR code above to let our committee chairs and our clergy know.

Since our inception in November, our volunteers have responded to 29 requests for assistance for 23 congregants. Many of our members have needed meals, rides to medical appointments, visits at home or in the hospital, errands, or assistive equipment. **Through the loving care of volunteers, we have met these needs.**

We also reach out to our volunteers to attend **Shivah Minyan** for a member who has lost a loved one. This is something all congregants are encouraged to do. One does not need to know the member in mourning. We just show up for

one another and naturally build bonds.

Through the service of 50 volunteers, in addition to providing direct support, we are phoning members to strengthen our connections, say hello and wish them "Shabbat shalom," and to ask if they need anything or know if someone within our community needs assistance.

If you want to join our volunteer team, please email hesed@societyhillsynagogue.org.

Israel Connections Subcommittee

CONNECTING THROUGH ART, MEMORY, AND COMMUNITY

by David Levine

The Israel Connections Subcommittee has had a meaningful and active season, with recent and upcoming programs that bring our community together through art, remembrance, and personal testimony.

In early February, we welcomed Israeli artist **Igal Fedida** for a special evening at Society Hill Synagogue. The Social Hall was filled with his artwork, and more than 50 congregants and guests who came to see it and hear him speak. His distinctive use of metal as a surface, the integration of Hebrew letters, and his thoughtful use of color creates work that feels deeply spiritual and alive. Nearly \$3,000 in artwork was sold, and Igal generously donated \$300 to Society Hill Synagogue. We are especially grateful to subcommittee member Ana Atach, who was instrumental in bringing Igal here and offered a beautiful introduction to the evening.



Igal poses with his art and an attendee at our event in February; Sahar Oz.

Looking ahead, we are so honored to welcome former Israeli hostage **Segev Kalfon** for an afternoon of powerful testimony and reflection titled **Resilience and Return**. Segev, 27, was the last Israeli hostage released alive from Gaza, on October 15, 2025. He was kidnapped from the Nova Music Festival on October 7, 2023, and **survived 738 days in captivity in Gaza**.

Join us at **3:00 pm on Sunday, April 26**, for this unique opportunity to hear Segev's remarkable story of resilience, determination, and faith which sustained him in captivity. Segev will discuss the strength, purpose, and hope that can emerge even in the darkest of circumstances and will answer audience questions.

After Segev's talk, we will have a brief commemoration of **Yom HaZikaron, Remembrance Day for Israel's Fallen Soldiers and Victims of Terrorism**, which this year is just a few days before Segev's visit.

A reception with Israeli hors d'oeuvres in the Social Hall will follow the program. **Advance registration is required for Resilience and Return at societyhillsynagogue.org/segev — join us!**



Adi Nes, Hagar, 2006, chromogenic print, presented with *Visions of Place: Complex Geographies in Contemporary Israeli Art*.

Mark your calendars for a **November 7** Kiddush Lunch 'n' Learn following Shabbat services, as our own **Marty Rosenberg**, Professor Emeritus of Art History at Rutgers University, reprises his talk, **Visions of Place: Complex Geographies in Contemporary Israeli Art**, on the tenth anniversary of this acclaimed exhibition, which was seen by more than 30,000 people across the United States.

We thank our dedicated subcommittee members for their ongoing leadership and support. We look forward to continuing this important work together, strengthening our connections with one another and with the people of Israel.

**Be informed. Be connected.
Be part of Am Yisrael — the
People of Israel.**

Coolanu Committee

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

by Lesli Reich and Elliot Landes

Winter in Review

In December, we had Hanukkah shopping at **The SPACE Art Gallery**, hosted by Society Hill Synagogue members and gallery owners Andrea Appel and Chris Brown. Thank you, Andrea and Chris, for your hospitality and your generous donation to our synagogue!

The afternoon of art at the gallery was followed by our 3rd annual "**Boldly Hanukkah Sweater**" contest at the Hanukkah Happening. There was a lot of creativity, and it was tough to pick winners. Mazal tov to our 1st place winners, **Donna Heaslip and Gabby Rathz**, 2nd place winner, **Michael Eckstein**, and 3rd place winners, **Julia, Amelia, and Maddie Riskowitz**.



Congregants at the Landes' home in February following ice skating; Karen Hafter.

Winter activities continued in February with **Ice Skating, S'mores & Hot Cocoa**. Twenty-five congregants braved the bitter cold weather, and a good time was had by all. Thank you to **Morgan and Elliot Landes** for the s'mores and hot chocolate!

Here's what's coming up this Spring

March 2 — The 4th annual Hamantaschen Bake-Off!

We're excited for the Bake-Off, which will take place during Purim Dinner, before the Rock Purimspiel. Who will take home the Hamantaschen trophy?

April 12 @ 3 pm — Dr. Stefanie Horovitz: The Isotope Lady

Co-sponsored with the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), congregant **Dr. Stephen Cohen** will explore the life and groundbreaking work of Viennese Jewish chemist **Dr. Stefanie Horovitz**, whose early 20th-century research provided key evidence for the existence of isotopes. Horovitz's discovery reshaped modern chemistry, yet her name all but disappeared from the scientific record. Why?

This talk will explore Horovitz's pioneering work, her intellectual circle, and the dramatically different paths taken by her colleagues as Europe descended into World War II and the Holocaust. Admission is included with synagogue and/or RSC membership; general admission is \$18. Registration is required.

May 3 — Itzhak Perlman: In the Fiddler's House at the Kimmel Itzhak Perlman's Emmy Award-winning special, *In the Fiddler's House*, is celebrating its 30th anniversary. With Perlman joined by klezmer giants, this live performance promises to be an unforgettable experience. We have just a handful of discounted tickets left, so reach out before they go.

May 5 @ 6 pm — Lag Ba'Omer BBQ

Lag Ba'Omer is celebrated with bonfires and outdoor parties — our courtyard is the perfect venue! We'll grill kosher meat and vegetarian burgers and hot dogs, enjoy pareve s'mores, and sip drinks. There will be art projects and nerf archery. Admission is included with synagogue membership, and costs \$30 for the general public, or \$15 for kids under 13.

July 19 @ 2 pm — Architecture and Public Sculpture Walking Tour of the Penn Campus

Dr. Martin Rosenberg, Professor Emeritus of Art History at Rutgers, and AIA architect **Carter Reich** will lead a walking tour exploring the Penn campus, which is home to remarkable examples of both architecture and public art: the Fisher Fine Arts Library, *Split Button* by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, and more.

Coolanu is seeking a new co-chair, as Elliot Landes will step down after our spring events. If you're interested, please contact:

coolanu@societyhillsynagogue.org

Many thanks to Elliot for all his dedication over the past 3 years!

Book Club

BOOK CLUB SPRING READS

by Judith Axler

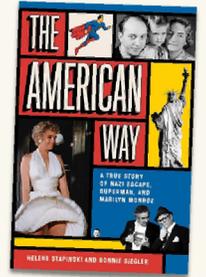
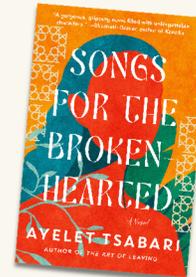
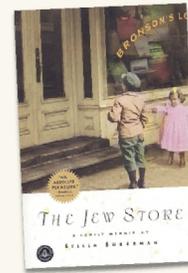
The Society Hill Synagogue Book Club is springing into spring with some great reading selections!

On **March 13**, we'll meet to discuss ***The Jew Store* by Stella Suberman**. It's the 1920s, and in small towns throughout the American South, the ubiquitous dry goods store was usually owned by Jews and often referred to as "the Jew store." Many of us have been thinking about Jewish history in the South after the arson at Beth Israel Congregation and the Institute of Southern Jewish Life building in Mississippi in January. **Ray Solomon**, Dean Emeritus and University Professor of Law Emeritus at

Rutgers-Camden will join us to discuss his experience growing up in Arkansas, where his family owned a department store.

On **April 10**, we'll dive into an amazing, true story of a family trying to flee Nazi Berlin and make a new life in the US. Somewhere along the way, they encounter the publisher of DC Comics and Marilyn Monroe. To understand all this, you have to read the book — ***The American Way: A True Story of Nazi Escape, Superman, and Marilyn Monroe* by Helene Stapinski and Bonnie Siegler**.

Then on **May 8**, we'll meet to discuss ***Songs for the Broken***



***Hearted* by Ayelet Tsabari**. In 1950, thousands of Yemeni Jews have immigrated to the newly founded State of Israel seeking a better life. In an overcrowded immigrant camp, a shy young man happens upon a beautiful girl singing by the river. In the midst of chaos and uncertainty, they fall in love.

Men's Club

ADDING TO OUR COMMUNITY

by Bob Kaufman and Harry Oxman

The Men's Club continues to work on developing events and opportunities to bring men together for discussion and fellowship. We meet at the synagogue at 7:00 pm on the fourth Thursday each month.

In late **December**, a number of Men's Club participants and their guests attended a performance by the Klezmatics at City Winery.

In **January**, we hosted a fantastic presentation by Lise Marlowe, M.Ed, who is the Education Director of the Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center. The Museum is located at 8339 Old York Road, Elkins Park. Ms. Marlowe highlighted the work the museum does to present the testimonies of Holocaust survivors that have been recorded over the years.

During our **February** meeting, we discussed programing for the spring and the summer, how to organize the group, and how to encourage more Society Hill Synagogue members, especially younger members, to participate.

Whether you've been active in the past or you're brand new to the synagogue or Men's Club, we welcome your voice.

Reach out to Bob and Harry at:
mensclub@societyhillsynagogue.org



MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS



Every week, Society Hill Synagogue spotlights one of our marvelous members on social media and in our eNews! Here are the members who have been spotlit this past quarter.

You can learn more about them on our social media or at societyhillsynagogue.org/member-spotlights



LEN WEINBERG

I love our musical Shabbat services and the friendliness at Kiddush lunch afterwards. I think it's terrific that Rabbi Kamesar knows everybody's name, including the kids. I love hearing the kids answer challenging questions during the intergenerational Torah discussion every Shabbat morning.

EZRA EDELMAN

I love my friends in the Hebrew School and the great community we have here.

Ezra's Bar Mitzvah was on December 6.



ELI HOWE

I love the sense of community at Society Hill Synagogue and in Hebrew School.

Eli's Bar Mitzvah was on December 13.

HAVA GOLDFINGER

One reason I love Society Hill Synagogue is that I've been coming since I was a toddler, and many people here have known me since I was young. My first memory of being here is begging my twin brother for his snack at Playschool.

Hava's Bat Mitzvah was on January 24.





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STEVE MORLEY

I joined Society Hill Synagogue because I found its commitment to social action as an integral part of being Jewish resonated with my personal view of what it means to be a Jew.



EZRA GOLDFINGER

I love Society Hill Synagogue because I get to meet friends and talk during Torah discussions. My first memory of being at Society Hill Synagogue is that in Pre-K, someone took a fire truck that I was playing with and wouldn't give it back. Then we got to eat Pirate's Booty for snack!

Ezra's Bar Mitzvah was on January 24.

YAELI ZHANG

I love Society Hill Synagogue because the people are kind. Hazzan Jessi's voice just blows me away every time I'm at Shabbat or holiday services.

Yaeli's Bat Mitzvah was on January 31.



TOBIAS HART

My favorite event at Society Hill Synagogue is the annual Hanukkah Happening because of the excellent latkes and seeing the whole community together. One highlight is the annual "Boldly Hanukkah Sweater" contest with Coolanu!

Tobias' Bar Mitzvah was on February 7.



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JUDITH AXLER

I really like the combination of using the Conservative prayer book overlaid with Reconstructionist approaches. To me, this is a perfect combination of tradition and creativity. Also, the warmth and friendliness of the congregation can't be beat!

STACI SCHWARTZ

My favorite program is the Purim Carnival. It is a true labor of love for my family to lead it each year, and it makes me so happy to see all of the kids playing the homemade games and running the booths! I'm so proud that the Society Hill Synagogue Purim Carnival won the "Best Synagogue Event" award in the *Jewish Exponent's* 2025 "Best of Jewish Philadelphia!"



TALIA ROSEN VANCE

My favorite memory at Society Hill Synagogue is playing hide and seek with a bunch of kids after Kiddush lunch.

Talia's Bat Mitzvah was on February 28.

WENDY AND STEVE GREENSPAN

We are grateful that through Society Hill Synagogue's connection to POWER, we were able to find a deeply meaningful way to engage in tikkun olam. We are active in POWER's Climate Justice and Jobs team working to promote clean energy and safeguard our planet for generations to come.





PLAYSCHOOL FAMILY FEATURES



As we continue with Playschool enrollment, we've been highlighting some of the fabulous families who make our community so vibrant.

Here are the families who have been featured this past quarter.

You can learn more about them on our social media or at societyhillssynagogue.org/playschool/family-features

THE BISACQUINO FAMILY

Over the past three years, we have watched Manny thrive while attending Playschool. He looks forward to going to school every day to see his friends and teachers. Communication has been great, and we are very excited to be sending our younger son, Blaze, in the fall.

— Lexi Bisacquino (Manny and Blaze's Mom)



THE PATRA FAMILY

Aavi loves playing outside by Lawrence Court and posing with the kangaroo sculpture! The music and dance specials are something he always looks forward to, and this year the parents "Jobs Week" was a huge success. Aavi got to be inside a fire truck and also learned more about medical professions.

— Mitali Patra (Aavi's Mom)



THE SHAW FAMILY

We love how every teacher knows Armie's name, even if she's not in their classroom. They really get to know her — they know how her day went when we pick her up, they know exactly where her water bottle is, and they catch the little things, like when she's wearing a new outfit.

— Kyle and Arala Shaw (Armie's Parents)



THE STEIN THOMAS FAMILY

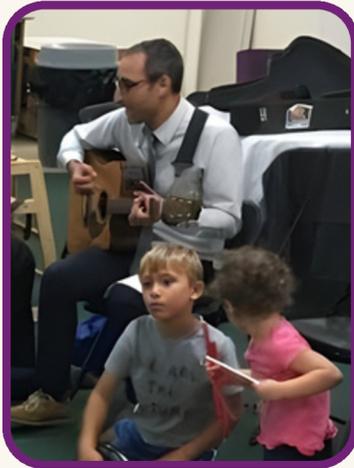
The teachers have been very supportive and helpful with all of the things we're working on with Louisa. Whether it's napping, potty training, or whatever comes next, we feel like we've got the pros in our corner. Louisa has also picked up some of the mannerisms of her teachers, and she uses some of their phrases when she talks to her little brothers. It's adorable!

— Jake Stein (Louisa's Dad)





L'DOR V'DOR: GENERATIONAL COHORT GROUPS



YOUNG FAMILIES GROUP

By Micah and Joanna Hart

Though hard for us to comprehend, our son Toby was called to the Torah as a bar mitzvah just a few weeks ago, and our hearts (Harts!) are incredibly full. As we reflected on his Jewish journey, one thing became abundantly clear: so much of his love for Judaism and his Jewish community was shaped years ago at Young Families Shabbat services. Those early experiences — singing loudly, clapping wildly, playing instruments, dancing, and listening to

*Left: Tobias Hart at his Bar Mitzvah rehearsal this February; submitted.
Right: The Hart family at Young Families Shabbat years ago; submitted.*

stories that brought Jewish values and holidays to life — were a part of what we affectionately call “CSC: Controlled Shabbat Chaos.” It was joyful, meaningful, and developmentally perfect for a young child discovering prayer and community for the first time. We are thrilled to continue welcoming families to Young Families Shabbat this spring! These services are designed especially for children ages 6 and younger (though older siblings are always welcome!) and their grown-ups. **Whether your child loves to sing, move, or simply observe, Young Families Shabbat offers a joyful, low-pressure way to build Jewish memories that truly last a lifetime.**

Fridays:

- Friday, March 20 @ 5:45 pm
- Friday, April 24 @ 5:45 pm
- Friday, May 15 @ 5:45 pm
- Friday, June 5 @ 5:45 pm

Saturdays:

- Saturday, April 11 @ 11:15 am
- Saturday, May 30 @ 11:15 am

You can RSVP for our upcoming Shabbat gatherings via the quick and easy form on our webpage:
societyhillssynagogue.org/young-families-group

YOUNG FRIENDS (20- AND 30-SOMETHINGS)

By Alexis Rosen and Louis Polcin

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our winter events! From **Young Friends•Giving Back to Hanukkah doughnuts**, from **Young Friends Tables at Shabbat to Brews & Schmooze** and **Board Game Night**, we loved spending the snowy season connecting with you. We're so excited to keep that energy going into spring!



Alexis Rosen (right) came in second place in last year's Hamantaschen Bake-Off; LilyFish Gomberg.

On **March 2**, we'll kick things off with Society Hill Synagogue's annual **Purim Dinner, Hamantaschen Bake-Off, Scotch Tasting, and Rock Purimspiel**. We can't wait to gather as a community, celebrate Purim in style, and enjoy some friendly (and delicious!) competition.



Young Friends at our Board Game Night at Queen & Rook Game Cafe in February; Alexis Rosen.

On **Friday, March 27**, we'll host a **Young Friends Table** at Friday night TGISHabbat services at Society Hill Synagogue. We'll begin with wine and cheese at 5:30 pm, share a TGISHabbat service at 6:00 pm, and enjoy a festive Oneg dinner at 7:15 pm. A joyful, music-filled evening awaits.

On **Monday, April 6**, join us for our annual **Matzah Pizza Party!** This super fun Passover gathering is all about coming together to make our own matzah pizzas. We'll start at 6:30 pm in the Social Hall.

On **Saturday, April 18**, we'll gather at Society Hill Synagogue for Shabbat morning services and a **Young Friends Table** at Kiddush lunch. Services begin at 9:30 am, followed by a delicious meal. Expect a friendly, relaxed morning with plenty of time to talk, reflect, and enjoy our growing community.

On **Wednesday, May 20**, celebrate **Shavuot** with the Young Friends at a potluck in the park. Bring a blanket or lawn chair and a dairy or pareve dish to share — we'll provide the cheesecake! Enjoy good food, great conversation, and warm weather in one of Philly's most iconic green spaces: Washington Square Park.

We're so excited for all of the fun and meaningful celebrations ahead. Each gathering is a chance to connect, laugh, and grow together.

We can't wait to see you this Spring!



Young Friends at our Matzah Pizza Party last spring; LilyFish Gomberg.

Visit our webpage for full details and registration links for these events and more:
societyhillssynagogue.org/young-friends



TRIPLE CHAI (AGES 54+)

By Robin Cohen and Natalie Landro

Triple Chai has been very busy in 2026, and we are excited about what's ahead!

In **January**, 59 people braved the cold to join us for a presentation on *The Math of Jewish Mystery* by our own Jerry Silverman. It was a terrific morning of learning and community.

In **February**, 40 people came out for Edward Janes' fascinating talk about revitalizing Jewish cemeteries in Poland. We learned about cemeteries overgrown with brush, lost tombstones, and the work being done to restore dignity to these sacred spaces.

Both programs were so meaningful and well attended — thank you to everyone who participated.

On **Sunday, March 15**, we will gather for brunch at **11:00 am** followed by **Stand Up to Falls: Balance & Strength Class** at **12:00 pm**. This welcoming, guided class focuses on improving balance, coordination, strength, and confidence, with modifications available for all fitness levels.

The **Walking Tour of Jewish South Philadelphia** with Jerry Silverman is now sold out. If you would like to be added to the waitlist, please sign up — we may run a repeat tour for those who are not able to attend on **April 5**.

From **April 12-24**, Triple Chai will travel to **Northern Italy** for our next Jewish Heritage Journey, building on the tremendous success of last year's Morocco trip. Together,

we will explore historic synagogues, vibrant Jewish communities, and centuries of Jewish resilience and creativity — from Venice's first ghetto to hidden treasures throughout the region. Space is limited, so sign up today if you want to come!

Then on **Sunday, May 17 at 7:00 pm**, Sharon Geller returns to Society Hill Synagogue for **Colonial Chat with Ben & Betsy**, an entertaining and educational comedy program featuring Ben Franklin, Betsy Ross, audience trivia, and Jewish Philadelphia connections.

Triple Chai continues to bring us together through learning, culture, travel, and connection.

We look forward to sharing these experiences with you in the months ahead.

Visit our webpage for full details on these and other events: societyhillsynagogue.org/triple-chai

**Hidden Gems of Italy:
A Jewish Heritage Journey**

April 12-24, 2026

SCAN FOR MORE INFO

MARCH • APRIL • MAY 2026 • • • ADAR • NISAN • IYAR • SIVAN 5786

OUR COMMUNITY IN PHOTOS



MARCH • APRIL • MAY 2026 • • • ADAR • NISAN • IYAR • SIVAN 5786

Social Action Committee

REPAIRING OUR WORLD THROUGH ACTION



by Steve Morley

The Social Action Committee has been busy through the winter and looks to continue engagement in the coming months.

Our congregation, along with the rest of the country, is watching immigration enforcement unfold in an unprecedented manner. On January 9 and 10, we sponsored a weekend of information from five different immigration nonprofits whose panelists brought their unique missions and perspectives on this crucial issue. Thank you to **HIAS PA, Nationalities Services Center (NSC), Esperanza Immigration Legal Services, Juntos, and Pennsylvania Immigration Coalition (PIC)**.

There are various ways to get involved. For example, you could help someone study for the naturalization test (Esperanza), or when the weather gets better, register new voters with PIC.

As Jews, we know only too well the importance of “welcoming the stranger” and the dangers of treating anyone as an “other.”

The Social Action Committee continues our commitment to **Vare-Washington Elementary School** — now 20 years strong! — with classroom and library volunteers. The parent group at Vare-Washington continues to step up. This fall, we also began working with the library at **Taggart Elementary School**, located at 4th and Porter Streets.

Our volunteers meet with 12 classes every other week, for students from kindergarten through fifth grade. Each session lasts about an hour and includes a read aloud time, some conversation about books and reading, and time to select a book to take home. **We could use a few more volunteers for this wonderful opportunity to share books with kids.**



Our congregation continues to **combat food insecurity** through our collaboration with **Old Pine Community Center (OPCC)**. Society Hill Synagogue volunteers pack 100 bags of fresh and non-perishable food each week, and we’ve added the delivery of 50 bags of groceries to Vare-Washington families twice a month. Please see the online sign up in the eNews to register to help with this initiative.



OLD PINE
COMMUNITY CENTER

Join us on March 12 — Sharing and Appreciation Dinner at Old Pine Community Center

Free for Society Hill Synagogue members, this is a chance to break bread with other faith communities who aid OPCC and learn the impact and importance of this crucial work. Register for the dinner via the link in eNews.

Please enjoy the POWER article on the next page, and join us for the **POWER Kiddush Lunch ‘n’ Learn on April 25**.

Email Social Action Committee Chair, Steve Morley, with questions: socialaction@societyhillsynagogue.org

POWER Interfaith

THE AFFORDABILITY CRISIS

by Wendy Greenspan, Steve Greenspan, and Nancy Wygant



POWER has just launched a major campaign to address the affordability crisis in Philadelphia. **POWER — Pennsylvanians Organized to Witness, Empower, and Rebuild** — is an interfaith social justice organization that builds people power. Our synagogue has worked together with POWER since its founding.

Affordability has become a crisis across the country and particularly in Philadelphia. Rising rent, stagnant wages, and predatory housing developers have caused housing insecurity for our most vulnerable communities.

Those that do own homes face mortgage increases in homes that lack repair; leaving them vulnerable to health and safety concerns. These circumstances push more of us toward homelessness, denying people their basic human dignity. Neighborhood integrity suffers, weakening our community safety net.

Locally:

- Property taxes rose on average 23% last year, disproportionately affecting black and brown Philadelphians.
- Philadelphia has already lost \$280 million in federal funding; another \$2 billion is on the line!
- Our school district is taking \$300 million out of reserves to cover next year's budget.
- More Philadelphia renters are scraping by each month, with stagnant wages and higher costs.

POWER has been collecting personal stories of city residents' struggles in order to deliver this vital information to City Council members. Next, at the Town Hall meetings hosted by Council members in **April**, we'll show up with strategic, coordinated questions about affordability. Then, on **May Day**, we'll partner with dozens of labor unions and community groups to launch the Working People's Vision for Philadelphia.

Alongside the affordability campaign, POWER's **Climate Justice and Jobs** team (where Wendy and Steve Greenspan and Nancy Wygant are active) is continuing its work for affordable renewable electricity, a transition away from fossil fuels, and greater accountability from our utilities. The **Education Justice** team, having won the landmark court case declaring our state's old method of funding schools unconstitutional, continues to keep an eye on how the legislature is responding to create a truly fair funding formula.

Reach out to us at **POWER@societyhillssynagogue.org** to learn how you can be part of this campaign, and join us for a special POWER Kiddush Lunch 'n' Learn on **April 25!**



COMMUNITY NEWS

Mazal Tov to:

Caroline and Peter Piven, Michael and Leslie Hafter, and Karen Hafter on the birth of their first great-grandchild, grandchild, and nephew, **Harry August Charde**

Natalie Landro on the birth of her grandson, **Lucas George Landro**

Ashley Toal and Jonathan Wetstein and their daughter, **Valerie**, on the birth of their son and brother, **Corbin Francis Wetstein**

Alex Levy and Nathan Bennett on the birth of their son, **Caleb Samuel Bennett**

Marsha Cohen on the birth of her fourth great-grandchild, **Emilia Lynn Fragola**



Welcome New Members:

Jonathan Feinman

Tracy and Nathaniel Chellel, and their son, **Kai**

Stuart and Fern Fisher

Mitchel Weiss and Lili Rosenstreich

Phyllis Bookspan and Ian Frank

David and Lizzie Rubin and their daughter, **Andie**

Eli Fish and Netta Golenberg and their daughter, **Avital**

Melissa and Sandy Caust-Ellenbogen

Condolences to:

The family of **Neil Epstein** on his passing

Joan Goodman and her family on the passing of Joan's husband, **Frank Goodman**

Debra and Bill Stewart and their family on the passing of Debra's mother, **Faith Greenhouse**

Deena and Len Friedland and their family on the passing of Deena's mother, **Shirley Dorfman**

Randi Kamine and her family on the passing of her husband, **Hop Sears**

Alice Levy and Motty Seal and their family on the passing of Alice's mother, **Beverly Levy**

Stacey and Benjamin Cohen and their family on the passing of their son, **Lavi Jacob Santos Cohen**

Bob Kaufman and Laurie Krivo and their family on the passing of their sister-in-law, **Yaffit Zohar Kaufman**



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

March Birthdays

Theo Danoff
Caroline Kamesar
Madeline Riskowitz
Marsha Cohen
Josh Cooper
Susan Fisher
Libby Rosof
Marc Cohen
Alice Rizen
Raphael Englander
Mayah Gold
Linda Rosenstein
Angela Lashbrook
Dylan Barg
Valeria Ramirez Siller
Sophia Spiegel
Jaci Polakoff
Amy Finkel
Levi Nigsch
Mirit Schwartz
Matt Cohen
Darryl Hazelwood
Ann Lebowitz
Zachary Lilien
Emanuel Maiberg
Diane Siegel Danoff
Miles Skolnik
Alan Casnoff
Marjorie Goldstein
Bill Hauptman
Petal Ladenson
Lysander Michaels-Koenig
Daniel Sobol
Richard Braemer
Jonah Cohen
Jordan Fox
Jackson Hendler
Leo Kastenberg
Bonnie Slobodien
Rafi Licht
Anna Elbaum
Nina Kamesar

Jeremey Newberg
Jane Peskin
Ezekiel Hazelwood
Dinah Lovitch
Ellie Wilson
Nathan Bennett
Margot Englander
Jackie Goldfinger
Sarina Kaplan
Julie Liedman
Staci Schwartz
Richard Frantz
Benni Kauderwood
Odilia Kirshenbaum
Erica Ginsburg
Mira Isaac Treatman
Amalya Wolf Weiss
Christopher Banch
Susan Berman
Nancy Moses
Isabella Schwartz
Stewart Fisher
Rachel Howe
Daniel Strunk
Ashley Toal
Eleanor Oxman
Anthony Padilla
Isabella Lieberman
Daniel Sztul
Aaron Silberstein
Barbara Zamarin
Amy Goldman
Bob Kaufman
Stephanie Reinitz
Claire Flamendorf
Jake Rainwater
Carole Rochester
Jane Kotler
Louisa Slutsky
Louis Golding
Elliot Landes
Stephanie Wolson
Neila Douglas



April Birthdays

David English
Kinsey Nigsch
Mark Steinberg
Rick Summers
Niva Agmon
Ezra Gellman
Ava Goldman
Morgan Landes
Susan Leshnoff
Hattie Thomas
Audrey Boytim
Emma Halpern
Leah Jordan
Felicity Lowe
Megan Nachod
Joshua Brugger
Zevi Epstein
Andrew Seaberg
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HAPPY BIRTHDAY

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Leo Isanuk
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Maxine Mann
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Beverly Michaels
Alex Seldin
Luke Makuen
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Murray Dubin
Levi Goldstein
Wally Morano
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Lev Zheleznyak

May Birthdays

Noah Chrismer
Penelope Hendler
Aislinn Bohren
Elliot D'Amore
Barbara Einhorn
Hayden Gellman
Ilene Hollin
Renee Edelman
Jessica Tropea
Steven Datlof
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HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

March Anniversaries

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Joe Manko & Jennifer Porges
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Jordan & Rebecca Fishman
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Joanna Lack & Brendan Lowe
Judy & Tony Lalli
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May Anniversaries

Jonathan Grode & Jayne Bird
Max Goldberg & Maria Chambers-Goldberg
Megan Helzner & Jason Flamendorf
Mark & Carol Brugger
Josh Lehrer & Laura Gessman
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Marilyn Luber & Robert Raymar
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Julia & Sean Riskowitz
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CARRYING FORWARD A LEGACY OF LIFELONG LEARNING

By Rabbi Nathan Kamesar

We are delighted and grateful to **Barbra Rosenberg and Scott Kloter** for making a generous gift in honor of Barbra's parents and longtime synagogue members, **Jerome and Lois Rosenberg**. This gift will support the **annual Jerome and Lois Rosenberg Scholar-in-Residence Shabbat**.

Our Scholar-in-Residence program is a cornerstone of our congregation's commitment to lifelong learning and spiritual growth. These weekends provide our community with unique opportunities to engage deeply with thought leaders, rabbis, and scholars who are

challenges, or rediscovering shaping Jewish life today. Through thought-provoking lectures, dynamic conversations, and immersive Shabbat experiences, we explore timeless Jewish wisdom while grappling with contemporary issues.

Our Scholar-in-Residence weekends, which have featured such nationally renowned rabbis as **Michael Strassfeld, Sharon Kleinbaum, and Sharon Cohen Anisfeld**, enrich our community, inspire meaningful connections, and spark fresh perspectives among our congregation on what it means to live a Jewish life in the modern world. Whether delving into spiritual practices, tackling social justice

ancient traditions, these moments remind us of the beauty and vitality of learning together as a community.

Jerry and Lois were among the earliest members of Society Hill Synagogue and cared passionately about lifelong Jewish education. Jerry led our early morning service on Rosh Hashanah for many years and was honored as Hatan Torah, one of our most esteemed service leadership awards. Jerry and Lois made significant contributions to the community.

We are honored to carry forward their legacy through this gift from Barbra and Scott.

Take the Next Step in Your Planning SUSTAIN JEWISH LIFE FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

There are various ways to leave a bequest to Society Hill Synagogue! Gifts in wills, trusts, IRA beneficiary designations, and no-longer-needed life insurance policies enable you to make a meaningful impact on your community for years to come.

Your personal financial advisor can help you explore these options, and volunteer congregants are also available to chat (without serving as professional advisors).

To learn more and plan ahead, please contact our Executive Director, Sahar Oz, at 215-922-6590 x3 or soz@societyhillsynagogue.org.



END OF YEAR APPEAL DONORS – THANK YOU!

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Grandson, Gabriel Cohen-Alexander

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Bat Mitzvah of Yaeli Zhang

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Randi Kamine

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Donna Tartasky

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Deborah Kuhn

Hop Sears, Husband of Randi Kamine

Flora Wolf

Linda Joy Goldner

Francine Cohen

Judy Wertheim

Marilyn Deutsch

Bob Blacksberg & Terry Novick

Barbara Spector

Natalie Landro

Flora Wolf

Charlie Dreisbach & JJ Garcia

Donna Tartasky

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Joyce Norden

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Evelyn Segal

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Motty Seal & Alice Levy

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

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Ed Hollin

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Donna Tartasky

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Marilyn Deutsch

Geoffrey Michaels, Husband of Beverly Michaels
Beverly Michaels

Sidney Lachman, Father of Marlene Lachman
Alan Ominsky & Marlene Lachman

Selma Katz, Aunt of Marlene Lachman
Alan Ominsky & Marlene Lachman

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
In Appreciation of
Rabbi Kamesar leading Shivah Minyan following
Aaron Woloff's passing
Stanley & Judith Woloff

Owen Fox's Bar Mitzvah
Mike & Jaime Fox

Rabbi Kamesar leading Shivah Minyan following
Faith Greenhouse's passing
Bill & Debra Stewart

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

In Appreciation of

Rabbi Kamesar for Yaeli Zhang's Bat Mitzvah
Rick Summers & Merrily Williams

Rabbi Kamesar leading Funeral Services for Hop Sears
Randi Kamine

In Honor of

Society Hill Synagogue
Mark Dembert & Mary Fish

In Memory of

Hop Sears, Husband of Randi Kamine
David Pressel & Jill Feldman
Bob Kaufman & Laurie Krivo
Len Weinberg & Fran Gallun

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Amy Goldman & Karl Janowitz

Myrtle Manheimer, Mother of Joyce Norden
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Phyllis Dembo

Hazzan Jessi for leading Shiva Minyan following Faith Greenhouse's passing
Bill & Debra Stewart

Hazzan Jessi for Yaeli Zhang's Bat Mitzvah
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In Honor of

The Life of Peter Roemer
Hazzan Jessi Roemer

Birth of Neil Cohen & Debbie Weissbach's Grandson, Gabriel Cohen-Alexander
Stanley & Judith Woloff

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In Appreciation of

Society Hill Synagogue
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Rob Einhorn

Debbie Jaffe, for Assistance with Owen Fox's Bar Mitzvah
Mike & Jaime Fox

Rabbi Avi Winokur for leading Shiva Minyan following Faith Greenhouse's passing
Bill & Debra Stewart

In Honor of

Birth of Natalie Landro's Grandson, Lucas Landro
Holden & Felise Nagelberg

In Memory of

Faith Greenhouse, Mother of Debra Stewart
Barbara Spector
Len Weinberg & Fran Gallun
Bonny Hohenberger & Nathan Farbman

Hop Sears, Husband of Randi Kamine
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Bill & Debra Stewart

Shirley Dorfman, Mother of Deena Friedland
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Neil Cohen & Debbie Weissbach

Jules Cohen, Father of Neil Cohen
Neil Cohen & Debbie Weissbach

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Birth of Neil Cohen & Debbie Weissbach's
Grandson, Gabriel Cohen-Alexander
Judy Rohtbart

Birth of Steven & Wendy Greenspan's
Granddaughter, Rosalie Greenspan
Judy Rohtbart

Birth of Bob Kaufman & Laurie Krivo's Grandson,
Ezra Krivo-Geselowitz
Stanley & Judith Woloff

In Memory of
Shirley Dorfman, Mother of Deena Friedland
Judy & Tony Lalli

Hop Sears, Husband of Randi Kamine
Judy & Tony Lalli

Faith Greenhouse, Mother of Debra Stewart
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Yahrzeit Remembrance of
Irene Teller, Mother of Judy Rohtbart
Judy Rohtbart

Meyer Rohtbart, Husband of Judy Rohtbart
Judy Rohtbart

Oneg/Kiddush Fund
In Appreciation of
Elliot & Morgan Landes, for Hosting the Post-
Skating Gathering
David & Pam Levine

Debbie Jaffe for Help with Preparation of Yaeli
Zhang's Bat Mitzvah
Rick Summers & Merrily Williams

In Honor of
Bar Mitzvah of Eli Howe
Barbara Spector
Randi Kamine
David & Pam Levine

Birth of Natalie Landro's Grandson, Lucas Landro
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Tanya Buchman for Teaching the Israeli Dance
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David & Pam Levine

JJ Peskin Chanting Torah for the First Time
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B'nei Mitzvah of Hava Goldfinger & Ezra
Goldfinger
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Bat Mitzvah of Yaeli Zhang
David & Pam Levine
Stanley & Judith Woloff

In Memory of
Hop Sears, Husband of Randi Kamine
Bill & Debra Stewart
David & Pam Levine

Faith Greenhouse, Mother of Debra Stewart
Bill & Debra Stewart
David & Pam Levine

Shirley Dorfman, Mother of Deena Friedland
David & Pam Levine
Ric & Carmen Hayman

Beverly Levy, Mother of Alice Levy
David & Pam Levine

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

Yahrzeit Remembrance of
Sidney Lachman, Father of Marlene Lachman
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Max Levine, Grandfather of David Levine
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Betty Kaplan, Grandmother of Pam Levine
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Birth of Natalie Landro's Grandson, Lucas Landro
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Joan Rosenstein

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

Estelle Rosenberg, Aunt of Robert Bass
Robert & Wilma Bass

PESAH SECOND NIGHT SEDER

Thursday, Apr. 2 @ 6:00-8:45 pm

Register by March 13 at www.societyhillsynagogue.org/pesah

Celebrate Pesah (Passover) at our annual Second Night Seder with Society Hill Synagogue members, family, and friends. Led by **Rabbi Nathan Kamesar**, we'll march through the *Haggadah* together with interactive readings and interpretations as we envision ourselves journeying from Egyptian bondage to freedom. Enjoy a delicious Kosher for Passover meal catered by Panache by Foodarama, including wine — and you're also welcome to bring your own additional Kosher for Passover wine.

Menu

Entrées:

- **Option 1:** Tender Roast Prime Brisket of Beef Au Jus
- **Option 2:** Portobello Mushroom Stuffed with Grilled Vegetables
- **Option 3:** Poached Atlantic Salmon Filet with Lemon, Dill, White Wine

Along With:

- Gefilte Fish, String Beans, Potato & Onion Kugel
- Mixed Green Salad
- Pickles, Sour Tomatoes, Olives & Matzah
- Sweet Tray with Passover Cakes, Cookies & Fresh Fruit

Each table also receives a Seder Plate, a Bottle of Red Wine, and a Bottle of White Wine.

SPRING 2026 CALENDAR

MARCH

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

APRIL

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

MAY

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

CALENDAR KEY:

-  = Book Club
-  = B'nei Mitzvah
-  = Rosh Hodesh
-  = Men's Club
-  = Building Closed
-  = Young Families
-  = Other Synagogue Events

Synagogue Events:

- Mar. 1** — Purim Carnival
- Mar. 2** — Purim Dinner, Hamantaschen Bake-Off, Scotch Tasting & Rock Purimspiel
- Mar. 3** — "Traditional" Megillah Reading
- Mar. 6** — TGIShabbat feat. Kitot Hey and Vav
- Mar. 7** — Lunch 'n' Learn: *Reflections on Authentic Identities*
- Mar. 9** — *Soul on Fire*
- Mar. 12** — Sharing & Appreciation Dinner at OPCC
- Mar. 15** — Triple Chai (54+): *Stand Up to Falls*
- Mar. 22** — Hebrew School *On the Move*: Passover at the Philadelphia Zoo
- Mar. 22** — *Wade in the Water* Concert and Lecture
- Apr. 2** — Pesah Second Night Seder
- Apr. 5** — Triple Chai (54+): Walking Tour of Jewish Philly
- Apr. 6** — Young Friends (20s-30s) Matzah Pizza Party
- Apr. 12-24** — Triple Chai (54+) Jewish Heritage Trip to Italy
- Apr. 12** — Dr. Stefanie Horovitz: *The Isotope Lady*
- Apr. 25** — POWER Kiddush Lunch 'n' Learn
- Apr. 26** — Hebrew School *On the Move*: Bartram's Garden
- Apr. 26** — *Resilience and Return* with Segev Kalfon
- May 2** — Confirmation for 10th Graders feat. Hebrew High
- May 3** — Itzhak Perlman: *In the Fiddler's House*
- May 5** — Lag Ba'Omer BBQ Celebration
- May 15** — TGIShabbat feat. Kitot Gimel and Dalet
- May 16** — Last day of Hebrew School
- May 17** — Triple Chai (54+): *Colonial Chat with Ben & Betsy*
- May 20** — Young Friends (20s-30s) Shavuot Picnic

This calendar is subject to change.

For up-to-date information, check www.societyhillsynagogue.org/calendar or contact our office.

**SOCIETY HILL
SYNAGOGUE**

418 Spruce Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

215.922.6590

www.societyhillsynagogue.org

Lisa Eizen, President

Rabbi Nathan Kamesar

Rabbi Avi Winokur, Rabbi Emeritus

Hazzan Jessi Roemer

Sahar Oz, Executive Director

LilyFish Gomberg, Communications Manager



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