Social Action
Library Organization Day at Vare-Washington School
Phyllis Denbo

Once again, the SHS family responded with great generosity to the call for assistance to a community in need. Following Rabbi Winokur’s moving Yom Kippur sermon on immigration, our synagogue was well represented at the HIAS sponsored Refugee Thanksgiving Dinner on November 20. We donated turkeys and side dishes, helped serve and clean up, and mixed and mingled with the newly arrived refugee families. In addition, the responsiveness to the drive for housewares and warm clothing for the immigrants who are resettling here has been just amazing. Before the donations were transported to the storage room for HIAS at Rodeph Shalom, the bags and boxes of contributions threatened to take over the entire SHS reception area.

Further evidence of our members’ interest in this complex and difficult issue was the excellent turnout at the Immigration Shabbaton on December 16-17. The speakers we heard after services on Friday evening and Saturday morning were interesting, informative, and diverse. The keynote speaker, Sarah Paoletti, founding director of the University of Pennsylvania Law School’s Transnational Clinic, had a depth and breadth of knowledge about international immigration statistics, programs, and policies that was very impressive. The next day, we heard from two recent refugees about their very different backgrounds and difficult journeys. Then, a panel of experts, moderated by Immigration Court Judge Steven Morley, covered such topics as a synagogue’s adoption of a Syrian family facing multiple challenges, an attorney’s experiences working with unaccompanied minors, and the range of programs, practices, and problems related to Philadelphia’s immigrant population.

At the end of the discussion, we summarized possible actions that Society Hill Synagogue members might take to address the current immigrant situation in Philadelphia and beyond. The Social Action Committee will meet on January 11, to discuss and possibly decide upon next steps. All interested SHS congregants are welcome to attend.

Continued on page 7
After this past election there is a certain irony to the title of Arlie Russell Hochschild’s book *Strangers in Their Own Land*, which I referenced in one of my High Holy Day talks. The subtitle of that book is *Anger and Mourning on the American Right, A Journey to the Heart of Our Political Divide*. The irony, of course, is that it is now those on the left who feel as if they are strangers in their own land. Though they are most definitely in mourning, anxiety and fear overshadow anger at this point.

That certainly was the sense that I had when I accepted an invitation to be on a panel for a specially called post-election meeting of the Queen Village Association. The overwhelmingly liberal crowd was deeply shaken and most of us were clearly in shock.

In Trump’s America, it will be the liberals and progressives who feel like strangers in their land, exiled from the America that they understood was theirs. But the sense of marginalization is not confined to liberals. At the Queen Village neighborhood meeting, a Trump voter spoke and opened up about his feeling of being an outsider within the liberal bubble of Queen Village. Indeed, I am certain that there are Trump voters among our synagogue members who may often feel a little out of place in our liberal bubble.

The very existence of identity politics testifies to the fact that there is no shortage of individuals and groups who feel marginalized, exiled from the mainstream. Over 2500 years ago, the prophet Jeremiah spoke these words to our Israelite ancestors exiled from Jerusalem to Babylonia—ancestors whose lives had been turned upside down: “Darshu/Seek shalom/welfare of the city to which I [God] have exiled you.” The root of *darshu* is the same as the root of *midrash*: d-r-sh. Like many Hebrew roots, it has multiple meanings when translated into English. Here are some: (1) seek, consult, inquire; (2) search out/examine (seek to deeply understand and search out the essence or core of something); (3) require, demand; (4) seek with application, study, follow, practice; (5) seek with care, care for.

In all of these ways we can seek peace. We can demand it when we are outraged by injustice. We can seek to understand at the deepest level what peace in our country requires. We can follow and practice peace/shalom. Yes, we can demand *shalom* with strength and commitment and do it with caring and understanding at the same time. Indeed the notion of *shalom* stems from sh-l-m, which, at its deepest, means wholeness or completeness. It is the converse of fragmentation and divisiveness.

So let us d-r-sh/seek, inquire, search out, demand, study, and practice with care sh-l-m/wholeness and peace. Jeremiah’s words could not be more relevant.

For some of you, seeking wholeness might be becoming involved with Jewish-Muslim solidarity groups. For others it might be reaching out to immigrants and refugees. Still others may want to reach across the divide and seek to understand what motivated someone who surprised you by voting differently from what you expected. For the liberals among us, that might mean reaching out to folks we know voted for Trump, and did so proudly, and letting them know that your considerable political differences will not undermine your friendship. It’s quite possible that two friends who are members of SHS—one a Hillary voter and one a Trump voter—are reading this column at the same time.

Reaching across the divide, seeking to scale the empathy wall that Professor Hochschild describes, does not preclude strengthening your own commitments through advocacy and activism. One avenue of activism that SHS provides is our involvement with POWER and its initiatives. Those initiatives include full and fair school funding, livable wages, and ending mass incarceration.

Jeremiah does not prescribe how to seek the *shalom* of the society in which you suddenly feel an exile. But Jeremiah does more than suggest that you do so. He demands that you do so. If he can make that demand of shocked and demoralized Israelites who witnessed the destruction of their holy Temple, the center of their religious and political life and who had been forcibly exiled to a land hundreds of miles away, then we can demand no less of ourselves.

If not now, when?
President’s Column
Moving Forward
Harry J. Oxman

In my Kol Nidre address and my last Kesher article, I commented on the challenges that we will face as a congregation. In this article, I wish to update you on the progress that we are making in addressing some of them.

Our Cantor search process is underway; we have posted advertisements for the position in appropriate places and are working with several organizations to acquire applicants. Cantor Search Committee Co-Chairs Marc Schwartz and Terri Novick, in conjunction with the Board of Directors, have carefully refined the profile of this position to meet our congregational needs and realistically describe the nature of the part-time Cantor position we are offering. In comparison to last year’s search, I believe we have prioritized the responsibilities that we feel are most important for a part-time Cantor to fulfill. Of course, seeking a full-time Cantor, while ideal for a number of reasons, is not possible with our limited resources due to the current size of our congregation. Hopefully, our membership growth goals will be achieved, thereby improving our economic stability and possibly enabling us to engage the services of a full-time Cantor in the future.

We expect that the Search Committee will conduct its research and analysis of the submitted applications during the months of January and February of 2017. Thereafter, interviews will take place and hopefully, audition weekends will be scheduled in March and April. I am confident that the Search Committee members are up to the rigors of this challenge and that the congregation, as evidenced by its past performance, will provide wonderful feedback to help our committee members make their best cantorial candidate recommendation to the Board.

On January 17, we will convene the first meeting of our Past President’s Advisory Committee. Gathering the 14 Past Presidents who remain active in our congregation at this meeting will provide an opportunity for dialogue between past and present leadership, resulting in experienced insights into the methods by which our congregation can best be served. From a personal perspective, I am confident that this interaction will greatly enhance my own knowledge and capability to more effectively serve in the future.

The work of the Space Enhancement and Capital Campaign Committee continues to move forward. Jeremey Newberg and Jonathan Weiss Co-Chaired a meeting with our professional staff to discuss their ideas about which planned space enhancements and enlargements will enable them to better provide for the needs of the portion of our community with whom they regularly engage. This exchange of ideas has provided an increased awareness of the priorities for this initiative, re-shaping our plans for implementation. We have reached the conclusion that our first priority should be developing the property at 430 Spruce Street.

In order to keep the congregation aware of the progress of the Space Enhancement initiative, a Steering Committee, with the assistance from the members of the Board of Directors, will participate in an information session during the dinner following the TGI Shabbat service on Friday, February 24. At this meeting, we intend to acquaint the congregation with our plan of action. We will discuss our space enhancement priorities and the fundraising methods we will utilize to finance the project. We will also be prepared to respond to questions. I urge everyone to attend this event and be prepared to listen and ask questions.

As we continue to move forward with addressing the challenges of our future development, we must not lose sight of our need to continue participating in activities that clearly enhance our congregational identity. Thus, in keeping with our commitment to social justice, Social Action Committee Chair Phyllis Denbo organized an informative Shabbaton about Immigration and the Refugee crisis on Friday and Saturday, December 16 and 17. Both sessions were well attended, and significant information about the scope of these issues, in the Philadelphia area as well as throughout our country, was provided. The presentation featured an outstanding panel of professionals who are actively engaged in finding solutions to the problems faced by immigrants and refugees. The congregation was given an opportunity to ask questions of the panelists and to learn about the difficult lives of two immigrants who have been helped by HIAS. See Phyllis Denbo’s article on the cover for further details about the Shabbaton. As President of the congregation, I wish to thank Phyllis for a wonderful program, and I thank all of the congregants who attended these presentations and supported a cause so important to many members in our community. Continued on page 7
Cantor’s Column

Celebrating Another New Year

Steven Friedrich

I am sure you have noticed that, even though the winter season is still here, the daylight hours are visibly much longer and the sun is brighter and higher in the sky. In Israel the rainy season is nearly over and the ground is full of water. Even here in Philadelphia, though the air is still chilly, crocus and daffodils will soon begin to sprout, bringing splashes of color to the harsh winter landscape. Far underground the roots of the trees are beginning to soak up groundwater, and aboveground their branches are beginning to grope toward the sun as it slowly climbs northward again. There is hardly any change to see yet, but the turn of the year has come. The still and quiet months are over; life is reasserting itself. It is at this time that we celebrate the New Year of the trees and the reawakening of the Tree of Life.

In Hebrew, this day is called simply “Hamisha Asar B’Sh’vat” or “Tu B’Sh’vat” (the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month of Sh’vat). You may have heard it called by other names, such as “Hag Ha-llanot” (Festival of Trees) or “Hag Ha-Perot” (Festival of Fruits). Although there is no biblical or rabbinic observance specified for this day, it is traditional in some Jewish communities to celebrate it with the eating of different fruits or with the planting of new trees. In the fifteenth-century town of Sefat in Israel, the Kabbalists (mystics) also regarded this day as God’s Rosh Hashanah when the Tree of Life renews the flow of life to the universe. They would celebrate the day with a seder, eating many different kinds of fruits and nuts, singing songs, and reciting verses of Torah and Talmud concerning trees.

This year the festival coincides with Shabbat Shirah, the Sabbath of Song. This is not unusual as they coincide about one out of every three years. Even when Tu B’Sh’vat doesn’t fall on a Saturday, it still takes place during the week prior to Shabbat Shirah. This year both Tu B’Sh’vat and Shabbat Shirah come together on Saturday, February 11. At services that morning we will recite “Shirat Ha-Yam” (The Song of the Sea). This is the song that Moses, Miriam, and the Children of Israel sang after leaving Egypt, crossing the Red Sea and beginning their journey to the Promised Land of Israel. The song is a reminder to us today of our spiritual connection to the Land of Israel.

Learner’s Service for Interfaith Couples and Families: A Recap

Debra Stewart

On Friday, November 25, Rabbi Winokur led a special “Learners Service” for Jewish individuals, as well as individuals of other faiths and backgrounds, who are not familiar with the traditional Kabbalat Shabbat service. Among the evening’s participants, we welcomed a confirmation student from the Gloria Day Church along with the congregation’s Pastor and some of their worshippers, a few young adult interfaith couples, and some of our interfaith families. Our engaging after-dinner table conversation was another the highlight of the evening.

I wish to thank Rabbi Winokur for leading a meaningful service and providing our members and guests with such a warm and wonderful synagogue experience. I also wish to thank the following members who joined me in sponsoring the Shabbat dinner that followed services: Jeremey & Fran Newberg, Gail & Holman Massey, Jared Susco, and Harry & Eleanor Oxman.
The first two months of 2017 will feature a variety of school celebrations, including Bat and Bar Mitzvah services, a class Shabbat service, a Havdalah PJ Party for our youngest students, a "Havdalah and a Movie Night" for our older students, and our popular Tu B'Sh'vat skits and seder.

Of course, January also marks the beginning of Purim Cantata preparations, with rehearsals for the big show on Sunday mornings; the show will be performed on Saturday, March 11, at 7 PM. This year’s theme is Despicable Me, and we are thrilled to have our largest cast in years, with 14 students from grades 3–6 participating!

Our Purim Cantata director is Adina Goldstein, who teaches in our Hebrew School and directed two of our four recent cantatas, Society Hill Fever and Schmaltz: A Greased Cantata. Adina is also a veteran cast member of four SHS cantatas, having performed in the production annually as a Hebrew School student. So save the date of March 11 for a great night of wonderful laughs and witty lyrics!

Before we get to enjoy the Purim Cantata, there is a lot for our students, families, and congregation-at-large to celebrate. Please join us for Margot Oxman’s Bat Mitzvah service on Saturday, January 7, and Aaron Davidson’s Bar Mitzvah service on Saturday, February 18. Each service will begin at 9:30 AM, and these occasions provide very special opportunities to rejoice in the Jewish learning and Torah leyning achievements of our sensational seventh graders.

On Saturday, January 28, our popular Havdalah PJ Party will feature stories, songs, arts and crafts, and delicious food for Playschool and Sunday School families. The fun starts at 5:30 PM, and parents and children are encouraged to come wearing their pajamas!

On Saturday, February 11, at 10:30 AM, our fabulous fifth graders from Kitah Hey will lead the Shabbat morning service with Cantor Friedrich, so come start your day with soulful sounds, spirituality, and smiles! A delicious meal will follow, and everyone is invited to join us for the service and lunch. Please RSVP for lunch to the office (office@societyhillsynagogue.org) by Thursday, February 9.

The following day, Sunday, February 12, we will celebrate the new year for trees with the Sunday Schoolers’ Tu B’Sh’vat skits at 10:15 AM, followed by delicious fruity treats. Students from Kitah Gimel through Hebrew High will have a sweet feast at our annual Tu B’Sh’vat Seder at 11:30 AM that same Sunday.

On Saturday, February 25, at 6:30 PM, we will present “Havdalah and a Movie” for our students in Kitot Vav and Zayin (Grades 6 and 7), including a delicious pizza dinner with dessert and the screening of the acclaimed British Jewish comedy, Sixty Six. The film was inspired by the real-life experience of its director, Paul Weiland, and is set in the summer of '66. England is consumed by World Cup fever, but 12-year-old Bernie is focused on the biggest day of his life, his Bar Mitzvah! However, Bernie’s family is increasingly distracted by the threat of losing its business and possibly even Bernie’s older brother. Worst of all, the Cup final is scheduled to take place on Bernie’s big day.

As England advances toward soccer glory, Bernie’s longed-for Bar Mitzvah looks set to be a disaster. Sixty Six is a nifty mix of family ties, Jewish values, tradition, and modernity, with great laughs along the way!

Please note that school will be closed on Sunday, January 15 in observance of Martin Luther King Weekend, and on Sunday, February 19, in observance of Presidents’ Weekend.

Last but not least, given our unpredictable weather, please remember that our KYW 1060 snow closing number is 261. During inclement weather, Hebrew School will be canceled whenever the Philadelphia public schools close, dismiss early, or cancel after-school activities. If there is inclement weather on a Sunday, I will e-mail all families as soon as it is determined that school will be canceled.
Welcome back! We hope all of our Playschool families had a happy and healthy holiday season!

The first half of our school year was filled with exciting field trips, class lessons and special Afterschool Arts presentations! We are looking forward to having even more fun in 2017!

During the month of January, our students will be learning about winter weather and friendship. If the weather should bring us snow, we will enjoy going outside to build some snowmen and test out our snow boots. Children should wear coats, scarves, mittens, and boots to school on cold days because our Playschool students love to play outside in the winter!

Our Afterschool Arts Clubs provide a great opportunity for your child to extend his or her school day. We offer a variety of exciting activities Monday through Friday, and our themes change monthly. During the month of January, we have invited our very own Pre-K teacher, Samantha Carr, to present a lesson about the Chinese New Year. In February, former Playschool parent Marta Rodriguez will lead an interactive Spanish lesson. Please make sure to sign up for these very special presentations!

Save the date, Saturday, January 28, 5:30 PM, for our annual Havdalah PJ Party. Children and their parents are encouraged to wear their pajamas to join us in the Social Hall where we will sing songs, read stories, and share some yummy food! Don’t miss out on this terrific family activity!

During the month of February, students in the Pre-Kindergarten class will participate in our annual Donuts with Dads celebration, as well as a field trip to the Insectarium. Miss Gloria’s class will enjoy another special trip to the Art Museum.

Please note that the Playschool will be closed on Monday, January 16, for MLK Day. School will also be closed on Friday, February 17, & Monday, February 20, for President’s Day weekend.

Believe it or not, summer camp is right around the corner! Our Regular Camp Program runs for 8 weeks, from June through July. We offer flexible weekly schedules, including full- and half-day options. We are pleased to announce that we will feature another Specialty Camp Program during the first two weeks in August. Please stay tuned for further information.

There are still a limited number of spaces available in our classes for the 2017-2018 school year! Please tell your friends, family, and colleagues about our wonderful engaging, age-appropriate curricula for children aged 2-5, as well as our recently extended morning and afternoon hours of operation. Please contact us at gparris@societyhillsynagogue.org or abernstein@societyhillsynagogue.org, to schedule a tour or for further information.

Young Families Group
Join Us on February 3 for Friday Nights With Young Families
Joanna Hart

Friday Nights with Young Families: Our lively, lay-led celebrations of Shabbat are a big hit with SHS’s tiniest members and their lovely families! Our next date is Friday, February 3, 5:15-6:15 PM. Come check out what the fun is all about!

The SHS Young Families Group invites all your wigglers and babblers to our community! Geared especially towards families with babies and kids through Pre-K, we will celebrate Shabbat with song, dance, prayers, including our own special Kiddush. Attendees are invited to bring a meatless, vegetarian or dairy dish to share. The program runs from 5:15–6:15 PM, allowing family members to also attend the following 6:15 PM Kabbalat Shabbat Service in the main Sanctuary if they are interested. A professional educator, who has many years of experience in Jewish youth programming, will focus on age-appropriate music and movement, creating a warm exposure to Shabbat and synagogue experiences. We aim to help children and their families learn rituals that can provide a basis for Jewish life in the home and synagogue.

The other dates for the Friday Nights With Young Families program will be March 3, May 5, and June 2. Please RSVP to joanna.lee.hart@gmail.com if your family plans to attend, but feel free to join us, even at the last minute.
Arts & Culture
Mark Your Calendars for the Following Events!
Eleanor Oxman, Betta Kolansky, & Ellen Fennick

Join the members of the Arts & Culture Club on Saturday, January 21, at 7:30 PM, for an SHS Cabaret! We'll begin the evening with an Open Mic event, featuring Sahar Oz, our own comedian extraordinaire, who will show off his impeccable comedic timing while sharing his insights on the history of Jewish humor. Members of the audience will also be invited to tell jokes or sing songs. The cover charge will be $10 per person. Wine, snacks, and dessert will be served. What a way to start 2017 — by sharing laughter and camaraderie with your fellow congregants!

If you are a fan of TGISHabbat services, please join members of the Arts & Culture Club on February 12, at 8 PM, to see one of our favorite guests, Israeli jazz flutist Mattan Klein, perform at World Café Live. Attendees are also invited to meet there for dinner at 6:30 PM, before the performance. Please RSVP to Al Sutnick a 215.563.1365 or altonsutnick@msn.com. Alternatively, you may contact World Café Live directly by calling 215.222.1400 and ask them to add your name to the SHS table. For further information, you may visit their website at http://www.worldcafelive.com/event/1392460.

Mark your calendars for Tuesday, April 11, when we will have our third annual Second Night Pesach Seder in the SHS Social Hall. Details and fees will follow.

Save the date of Sunday, April 30, at 1 PM, when Rabbi Lance Sussman, historian of American Jewish History, college professor, and the Senior Rabbi at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park, will lead a walking tour of Jewish South Philly. The tour will begin at SHS with stops at Kesher Israel, B’nai Abraham, Fabric Row, the Hebrew Literature Society, and Catharine Street. The tour will run for about 2 hours and will cover approximately 2.5 miles in distance.

President’s Column
I am truly inspired by the values of our congregation, and I am proud of our identity and future aspirations. I close by thanking all of you for your continued support as we face new challenges with spirit, determination, and dedication.
Philadelphia Interfaith Community (PIC)
Join Us for an Interesting Conversation
Debra Stewart

PIC invites interested participants to attend a conversation about "Community and Relationships" on Wednesday, January 4, 7 PM, at Old St. Joe’s Church Rectory (321 Willings Alley, located on of 4th Street between Spruce and Walnut Streets).

With whom do you share community? What religious beliefs and/or practices have contributed to forming and sustaining your community? Do you see your religious group as community, and if so, in what sense? When differences of opinion occur in your community, how are they reconciled? Do you see your community as part of, or separate from, the rest of the world? How do you perceive your religious community in relation to others?

Join us for an interesting conversation.

The Young Friends of SHS
Stay Tuned for More Fun Activities in 2017
Natalie Lesser & Jordan Segall

The Young Friends of Society Hill Synagogue are a group of individuals who are creating a community that fosters Jewish identity, culture, and friendship. We meet for potluck dinners, a pre-Shabbat drinks, and discussions about spiritual exploration. We’d love for you to join us as we celebrate together and learn more about each other.

Look for more events, Shabbat dinners, Havdalah services, and opportunities for learning this winter. We welcome you to “like” our Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/SHSYoungFriends/.

For further information, or to join our mailing list, please contact me at lesser.natalie@gmail.com or my Co-Chair, Jordan Segall, at segall.jordan@gmail.com.
2016-2017 SHS B’nai Mitzvah Celebrations

January 7
Margot Oxman
Daughter of Joe Oxman & Christie Rosengart

February 18
Aaron Davidson
Son of Michael Davidson & Christine Reardon

March 4
Maxon Raphael
Son of Michael & Jennifer Raphael

March 18
Lysander Michaels-Koenig
Son of Julia Michaels-Koenig & Scott Koenig

June 24
Noah Kauderwood
Son of Ira Kauderwood & Peter Kauderwood
JANUARY BIRTHDAYS
Phyllis Denbo
Daniel Feinberg
Jayne Bernsten
Harry Feinberg
Walter Ferst
Nathaniel Gearhart-Robboy
Michael Hafter
Peter Piven
Nathan Farbman
Peter Eizen
Joshua Wolson
Jeannie Bell
Nella Bloom
Karen Kaufman
Gabriel Downes
Jennifer Schwartz
Ezra Goldfinger
Hava Goldfinger
Maya Pirok
Sheri Gifford
Judith Green
Leslie Hafter
Rachel Margolin
Robin Axelrod
Jared Eizen
Jack Goldenberg
Samuel Lear
Daniel Cohen
Samuel Feinberg
Elizabeth Sedran
Yaeli Zhang
Elias Zaring
Jesse Abrams-Morley
Merle Salkin
Samuel Shemtov
Debra Weissbach
Karen Kaufman
Gabriel Downes
Jennifer Schwartz
Ezra Goldfinger
Hava Goldfinger
Maya Pirok
Sheri Gifford
Judith Green
Leslie Hafter
Rachel Margolin
Robin Axelrod
Jared Eizen
Jack Goldenberg
Samuel Lear
Daniel Cohen
Samuel Feinberg
Elizabeth Sedran
Yaeli Zhang
Elias Zaring
Jesse Abrams-Morley
Merle Salkin
Samuel Shemtov
Debra Weissbach
Nancy Morgenstern
Scot Ziskind
Beatrice Acker
Jean Blumberg
Mark Dichter
Talia Mono
Noam Rosenberg
Richard Morgenstern
Tova Ztaoui
Judah Galler
Steve Morley
Ezzie Susco-Stearns

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS
Colleen Wyse
Evan Chrismer
Nancy Goldenberg
Tobias Hart
Ric Hayman
Carl Tanfous
Susan Snedden
Yul Summers
David Klasko
Morgan Miller
Ira Rubenfeld
Marc Goldenberg
Gary Love
Amber Goldberg
Gus Schoenfeld
Linda Joy Goldner
Aaron Davidson
Randi Glatzer
Sofia Newberg
Liza Bresson
Amanda Kirshenbaum
Len Weinberg
James Whitesell
Jeremy Pitok
Gail Massey
Ilana Dean-Schmidt
Adam Ziegfeld
Elayne Bloom
Liron Prystowsky
Benjamin Rosenberg
Joshua Szul
Mack Steinbock
Rachel Grunberger
Jennifer Raphael
Michael Yudell

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES
Daniel & Barbara Rottenberg
Marc & Staci Schwartz
Richard & Nancy Morgenstern
Barry & Joann Slosberg
Michael Rochester & Carole LeFaire- Rochester

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES
William & Tracey Goldberg
David & Linda Paskin
Rina & Bill Mitchell
Paula & Larry Ninerell
Andrew Hohns & Leah Popowich
Arthur & Janet Cherry

Community News
Mazel Tov to
Andrew and Joanna Bottaro on the marriage of their daughter, Laura, to Phil Galier.
Judy and Richard Gelles on the birth of their granddaughter, Gemma Taylor Gelles.
Jonathan Freitag and Sara Shelley on the birth of their daughter, Sosi Elizabeth Shelley.
Libby Rosof and Murray Dubin on the birth of their granddaughter, Tema Henya Elitzur.
Condolences to
Betty Kolansky on the death of her mother, Elsa Kolansky.
Becky Rohtbart (Ben Schindler) and Meyer and Judy Rohtbart on the death of Becky’s grandmother and Judy’s mother, Irene Teller.

What is a Kiddush or Oneg?

Customarily at the end of Shabbat morning and holiday services, the SHS community joins together to bless the wine (make “Kiddush”) and the bread (make “Motzi”), and enjoy good food and company! This is what we call “the Kiddush.”

Similarly, at the conclusion of Friday evening Kabbalat Shabbat service, we gather for an Oneg or a Shabbat dinner, where we bless the wine & bread and share light refreshments or dinner. Sponsoring this weekly community event is a wonderful way to celebrate a simcha or joy, mark a special moment in one’s life, honor someone, or commemorate a Yahrezeit. Sponsoring a Kiddush, Oneg or Shabbat dinner helps the community to get to know you and share important moments in your life. It is also a way to say thank you to your community.

Please call the SHS office at 215.922.6590 or email us at office@societyhillsynagogue.org for more information.
JEWISH BASKETBALL IS BACK
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FOR BOYS AND GIRLS IN GRADES 5,6 AND 7.
ALL LEVELS WELCOME.
CONTACT: INFO@JPHILLYHOOPS.ORG

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Co-sponsors invited

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Anne Ballen Ladenson

In Memory of
Elsa Kolansky, Mother of Betta Kolansky
Ann & Mark Steinberger
Joanna & Andy Bottaro & Family
Amy Steerman & Mary Ann Stover and Family
Iris Levine
Harry & Eleanor Oxman
Stanley & Judith Woloff
Debra Stewart

Harrison Ziskind, Son of Scot & Marcie Ziskind
Joanna & Andy Bottaro & Family

Yahrzeit Remembrance
Marcia Morante, Mother of Anne Ballen Ladenson
Anne Ballen Ladenson

Ethel Schwartz Blender, Mother of Burton Blender
Burton Blender & Libby Harwitz Blender

Martin G, Weinberg, Husband of Rosemarie Weinberg
Rosemarie Weinberg

Harry Ruttenberg, Father of Phyllis Denbo
Phyllis Denbo

Rosamunde Ginsburg, Mother of Erica Ginsburg
Erica Ginsburg

Maurice Acker, Husband of Beatrice Acker
Beatrice Acker

Annual Giving Fund
In Memory of
Elsa Kolansky, Mother of Betta Kolansky
Barbara Spector

Restoration Fund
In Honor of
Marc Schwartz, 2016 Recipient of Hatan Torah
Rona & Arthur Greenfield

In Memory of
Elsa Kolansky, Mother of Betta Kolansky
Ron & Libby Kaiser

Joel Levine, Husband of Iris Levine
Iris Levine

Playschool Fund
Yahrzeit Remembrance
Joseph & Shirley Graboyes, Parents of Terry Graboyes
Terry Graboyes

Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund
In Memory of
Bambi Plante Brown
Curtis Lizenzbaum

Yahrzeit Remembrance
Morris Chernock, Father of Joel Chernock
Joel Chernock

Seth Palmer, Son of Karen Palmer
Karen Palmer

Mildred Druckman, Mother of Karen Palmer
Karen Palmer

GUB God’s Unfinished Business
Yahrzeit Remembrance
Philip, Sarah, Louis and Jack Rosen
David & Cheryle Rosen

Kiddush Fund
In Appreciation of
November Interfaith Dinner
Holman & Gail Massey

December Immigration Shabbaton
Barbara Spector

Additional Donors
Bob Blacksberg & Terry Novick
Jeremey & Fran Newberg
Harry & Eleanor Oxman
Joseph Shemtov & Sharon Hill
Barry & Joann Slosberg
Mark Steinberger & Ann Lebowitz Steinberger
Debra & Bill Stewart

Tree of Life
Leaves
Gerald Faich & Bonni Rubin-Sugarman
Jordan Segall & Natalie Lesser
Harvey & Babette Snyder
Sara Steinberger & Jared Shapiro

Silver-Heit-Salkin Fund
In Memory of
Barbara Baxt, Sister-in-Law of Merle & Stan Salkin
Marc, Staci, & Jamie Schwartz
TGISHABBAT SERVICES
Friday, January 27, at 6:15 PM

Please join us for this month’s TGISHabbat service on Friday, January 27, at 6:15 PM, featuring Romanian-born and Israeli-raised violinist Eliezer Gutman. Our guest at two prior TGISHabbat programs, Mr. Gutman’s enchanting violin music adds a wonderful dimension to our services. He is the current concertmaster of Chester County’s Kennett Symphony, the Allentown Symphony Orchestra, and Opera Delaware. Founder and first violin of the Copeland String Quartet and long-time member of the Delaware Symphony, Mr. Gutman has also performed solo recitals in France, England, Spain, Israel, and the United States.

We would like to extend our thanks to Jerry and Bonni Faich for sponsoring the Shabbat dinner that will follow services. RSVPs are strongly encouraged. Please contact office@societyhillsynagogue.org.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 6:15 PM

Please join us on Friday, February 24, at 6:15 PM, for a TGISHabbat service featuring violinist Eunice Kim. Ms. Kim made her solo debut with The Philadelphia Orchestra, Louisville Symphony, and the Albany Symphony Orchestra. Recently, she appeared at the Library of Congress, with “Curtis On Tour,” and at the Kennedy Center. She has participated in the Music from Angel Fire and Marlboro Music festivals, and she is the recipient of awards from the California International Violin, the Pacific Music Society, and the Korea Times String competitions. She recently taught at Chile’s Teatro Del Lago Festival and Norway’s Valdres Music Academy. She holds degrees from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and the Curtis Institute of Music, where she was concertmaster of the Curtis Symphony Orchestra and was awarded the Milka Violin Artist Prize. She will become Concert Mistress of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra this coming season.
Bring the whole family to Society Hill Synagogue for a Havdalah Pajama Party!

Saturday, January 28, 2017
at 5:30 PM

After an early dinner at home, bring your family and friends to join together in Society Hill Synagogue’s main Sanctuary to mark the end of Shabbat with a traditional Havdalah service with wine, twisted candles, and spices.

Older children can hold Havdalah candles during the service in a darkened Sanctuary, and all attendees are encouraged to bring their own Besamim (spice boxes) to share.

But wait—there’s more—kids and parents are encouraged to wear their pajamas! We’ll sing songs, read a story, and then enjoy hot cider and homemade cookies.

Whether you celebrate Havdalah at home every week, or you are interested in learning more about it, please join us for this special evening.

Please contact the SHS office at 215.922.6590 with any questions.

Save the Dates

Purim Celebration
Saturday, March 11
7 PM Cantata
7:30 PM Scotch Tasting
8 PM Megillah Reading

The celebration will continue...

with SHS’s Annual Purim Carnival

Join us on Sunday,
March 12, 11 AM to 1 PM

Community 2nd Night Passover Seder
Tuesday, April 11, 2017
Mark your calendars for the following TGIShabbat Services

January 27
Eliezer Gutman

February 24
Astral Artist Eunice Kim

March 24
Jonathan Wintrigham

April 28
Yom Ha’atzmut
Nitzam Haroz

May 19
TBA

Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel...
Annual Giving Appeal

Thank you for your recent contribution to the SHS Annual Giving Fund which is vital to the financial health of our Synagogue. Your continued generosity has enabled us to make up the difference between our income from Membership dues and Playschool tuition and our operating expenses.

G Bartell
Jean Blumberg
Joel Chernock
Neil Cohen & Debra Weissbach
Murray Dubin & Libby Rosof
David Gutstadt & Julia Dranoff Gutstadt
Jerome Kranzel & Rian Berger
David & Sayde Ladow
Rafi Licht & Gabrielle Applebaum
Holman & Gail Massey
Daniel & Barbara Rottenberg
Brooke & Matthew Salzman
Brett Schaeffer & Sarah Rottenberg
Gerry Schneeberg
Howard Sedran & Martha Levine
Barbara Spector
Wayne Spilove
Jay Wussow & Emily Zimmerman
Hatan Torah and Kallat B’reishit Speeches

If you were unable to attend the luncheon on Saturday, October 29, during which this year’s Hatan Torah, Marc Schwartz, and Kallat B’reishit, Phyllis Denbo, were honored, here are transcriptions of their wonderful speeches:

**Hatan Torah Speech**
Marc Schwartz

Shabbat Shalom. I really feel honored to receive this recognition today and am so glad that my family is here to help me celebrate this occasion.

Being Jewish, for me, is not just a box to check off on a demographic survey; it is integral to my identity. My Jewish n’shamah defines who I am, and I revel in my connection to our amazing tradition.

How did I get to this point?

My mother, and my father of blessed memory, set the tone as I was growing up by living a Jewish life and maintaining a kosher Jewish household for me and my sister, Robyn. For Judaism to thrive, I think that it is essential for parents to imprint on their children’s brains positive memories of Jewish living. I have tons of those memories – Shabbat candles and dinners, unpacking the Pesach dinnerware, visiting my grandparents at their synagogue during Yom Kippur services, lighting the Hanukkiah, large family seders, attending morning minyan with my Dad for the annual siyyum ha-b’khorim study session in order to avoid fasting on the day of the first seder, performing the lulav/etrog ceremony during Sukkot (in that regard, one searing memory was the plaintively expressed hope from an adult congregant that perhaps our agricultural waving would be able to reverse the fatal collapse of the 1964 Phillies - alas it was not to be), eating cake in the Sukkah, passing around the omnipresent spirits of ammonia on Yom Kippur to prevent fainting, and of course, amazing food…

(Remember this was back in the days when a total serum cholesterol level of 300 was deemed to be “normal.”)

Blintzes, k’nishes, chopped liver, sweet & sour prachas, chicken soup, matzah balls, latkes, fried matzah, roast beef, honey cake, kugel, schnecken, kamish bread, and deli in all of its iterations!

My home foundation was complemented by Hebrew School at Beth Sholom. I actually enjoyed the challenges of learning Hebrew and the historical details of our civilization. My Hebrew School experience, even now, evokes pleasant personal memories of an optimistic time in Jewish education at a thriving institution that used innovative techniques to foster successful learning. It was here that I learned to lead Junior Congregation services and to become comfortable with Torah/Haftarah trop. Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation followed in sequence, and then I graduated from the Gratz College Hebrew High School program.

I was fortunate to have spent these formative years during a golden era of suburban Philadelphia Conservative Judaism in a synagogue that would be derided by many of the founders (and current members) of SHS as a “cathedral synagogue ruled by the wealthy and the successful.” Perhaps that was true, but as a youth I loved the grandiosity of the Frank Lloyd Wright structure and the educational, religious, and social opportunities that Beth Sholom offered.

In college (and later in medical school), I was a Hebrew School teacher for students ranging from 4th to 12th grade, and because both positions were at Reform synagogues (that were both coincidentally named Keneseth Israel), I came face to face with some of the denominational differences among us Jews. Which reminds me of the story about…

*A woman who goes to the post office to buy stamps for her Hanukkah cards.*
*She says to the clerk, "May I have 50 Hanukkah stamps?"

The clerk says, "What denominations?"

"Oh my God," the woman says. "Has it come to this? OK, give me 34 Orthodox, 12 Conservative, 3 Reform, and 1 Recon."

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I also had the opportunity to work with the college Lutheran chaplain, who couldn’t have been more open to interactions with our Hillel chapter. In my senior year as president, we even built a Sukkah that leaned on the exterior wall of the Gothic cathedral that served as Muhlenberg’s chapel.

In college it was also interesting to study Biblical Hebrew and comparative religion with professors who also were Lutheran ministers, with an occasional participating visiting rabbi thrown in for politically correct balance.

In those days, especially as Israel began to develop an identity that was discernible to the gentile world, there was a debate concerning how we should be labeled – were we Jewish Americans or American Jews? Back then, I always felt like a Jewish American, with the “Jewish” serving as an adjective for the “American.” But, more about this later…

My introduction to Society Hill Synagogue came, when as a Jefferson medical resident I, along with my friend Ira Rubenfeld, would attend Shabbat services at either BZBI or here. For me, BZBI was easy to relate to because it was a traditional Conservative synagogue. Attending services at SHS, on the other hand, was a much more interesting and complex experience. Sure, there was the standard siddur, but there were also loose leaf binders of “supplemental readings” that required an ambidextrous approach to praying, and, there was a rabbi who dazzled me with his erudition and expansive vocabulary. A definite impression was made.

Staci and I embarked on our life together with the commitment to carry on the Jewish life to which I was accustomed. It was Staci’s (and later Jamie’s) questions and challenges about the Jewish practices that had been second nature to me, that have encouraged me to grow in my own understanding of our culture. Over the years, I have amassed a collection of Judaic references, dubbed the “Bookshelf of Doom” by Jamie, to which I refer when questions need definitive answers and not just my guesses. Of course, in my quest to be accurate and comprehensive, I usually provide TMI, and am lovingly chastised for that.

I don’t have to review Staci’s commitment and extensive service to SHS, but her involvement encouraged my own participation here, beyond what I ever would have originally imagined. I was quite content to be a member, attend services, and participate in Adult Education when it struck my fancy. However, the more time that I spent at the synagogue, the more I wanted to become involved.

Stimulating Adult Ed classes, during which I have studied Rashi with Rabbi Caine, Torah with Rabbi Winokur, and Hasidism with Nathan Kamesar, have reinforced my appreciation of Jewish intellectualism. One class with Avi, The Jew in the Modern World, really reoriented my Jewish identity. By reading an amazing collection of primary sources, it became clear to me that despite our own internal classification, the external world has consistently considered us to be outsiders. Over the years, despite being quite assimilated members of many different societies (even here in the U.S.), we really are considered Jews and not Jewish.

Our SHS community offers each of us the opportunity to hone our Jewish identity in a variety of different ways. As someone who loves the rituals of Judaism, joining the Religion Committee and working with my Co-Chair, Terry Novick, has been a great fit for me. At our committee meetings, we engage in stimulating policy discussions, are not afraid to experiment, and are willing to step up and accept challenges. We shortened Shabbat morning services and added weekly Torah study, we conducted a lay led more traditional monthly service, we produced a transliterated siddur for both Friday nights and Saturday mornings, we supported Al Sutnick’s lay Torah leyners program, we took on the cantorial duties for every Shabbat during Avi’s sabbatical year when our cantor had abruptly resigned… you get the idea.

Speaking of religious observance…

When Sh’lomo first arrived in New York, the customs official searching through his bags was perplexed as to why he had 5 sets of false teeth.

He looked at Sh’lomo suspiciously and said, “My grandfather wore false teeth but he only had one set, why do you need five?”

So Sh’lomo explained, “I am an Orthodox Jew and we can’t mix meat and dairy foods. We even have two separate sets of dishes, vone for meat products and vone for dairy products, but I am so kosher and religious, I also have two separate sets of teeth.”
The customs official shook his head and said, "Well, that accounts for two sets of teeth. What about the other three?"

Sh'lomo then said, "Ach, I'm glad you asked. Ve very religious Orthodox Jews also use separate dishes for Pesach – also divided into meat and dairy, but I am so religious, I also have separate teeth for Pesach, vone for meat Pesach and vone for dairy Pesach."

The customs official looked over his bifocals and then said, "You must be a very religious man with separate teeth for meat and dairy products and likewise for Passover. But that still only accounts for four sets of teeth. What about the fifth set?"

"Vell, to tell you the truth, vonce in a while, I like to eat a nice ham sandwich."

Participation in the Education Committee and interacting with committed people such as Carmen Hayman and Sahar Oz, while trying to optimize the educational experience for our children, has been a great source of satisfaction. However, my most meaningful experiences here at Society Hill Synagogue have involved my family. I have felt tremendous pride in Staci's numerous accomplishments in reshaping synagogue operations, and in her dedicated service and performance in all of the roles that she has assumed here, including the presidency.

Of course, for Staci and me, Jamie's maturation from the cutest little preschooler to the accomplished young woman whom you see today has been our most spectacular experience of all. The Jewish events in Jamie's life – from her baby naming to her enrollment in Sunday and Hebrew School, and from her Bat Mitzvah to her Confirmation — have produced an incredible sense of pride and joy in us and have, hopefully, inscribed in her brain the engrams of her Jewish identity.

Here at Society Hill Synagogue, we are all privileged to have an administrative staff led by Betty van de Rijn, a clergy led by Avi Winokur, and committed members who foster a community that enriches the essential elements of Judaism – tradition, religiosity, intellectualism, empathy, identification with Israel, and tikkun olam. I am grateful that Staci, Jamie, and I have been a part of it. Todah rabah, and to paraphrase Douglas Adams – thanks for all the smoked fish.

Kallat B’reishit Speech
Phyllis Denbo

When Rabbi Winokur called to tell me that I had been chosen as this year’s Kallah B’reishit, I was surprised, honored, and as it started to sink in, just delighted. He needed to know if I would accept this recognition of my commitment to Society Hill Synagogue. Of course I would accept …. but that meant I would have to give a speech about my journey to Society Hill Synagogue and who I am now because of my years here. Easy enough – that was the speech I gave three years ago at my Bat Mitzvah. Except, I really couldn't give the very same speech. And so, in the three weeks since the Rabbi's phone call I have been doing a lot of remembering and reflecting.

I grew up in Camden when there was a sizeable Jewish population. It was a working class community that supported three synagogues, one Orthodox and two Conservative, as well as the beginnings of a Reform temple that is now the 1,000-member Temple Emanuel in Cherry Hill. Many members of my immediate family lived near us – all four grandparents, who had immigrated from Russia at the beginning of the 20th century, and lots of aunts, uncles, and cousins. There were large family seders and an annual Cousins Club Hanukkah party.

Jewish education was an important part of my years in Camden. We belonged to one of the Conservative shuls, and two afternoons a week, I walked from my elementary school to the synagogue for Hebrew School. I also went to junior congregation services on Saturday and to Sunday School.

I was a very serious child and a diligent student who actually liked Hebrew School. When I had the opportunity to attend Akiba Hebrew Academy instead of the junior high school a block from my house, I was delighted, even though it meant a daily two and a half hour round trip from Camden to Har Zion Synagogue in Wynnewfield, where Akiba was located at the time. I loved it. But at the end of three years, my parents were tired of schlepping me to Philadelphia for my social life and not happy about paying the rising tuition.

I entered Camden High School and two evenings a week went back to Hebrew School at my synagogue. I was confirmed that year, and because I wasn’t ready to give up my Hebrew studies, I went to Gratz College for another year, again commuting to Philadelphia. Then my parents moved to Cherry Hill, and my weekly trip across the river became an inconvenience for the family.

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Hatan Torah and Kallat B’reishit Speeches
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My formal Jewish education had come to an end, and my practice became sporadic at best during and well beyond my college years. Eventually, we joined a suburban synagogue so our son and daughter could attend Hebrew School. But the place and the people did not project a Judaism that touched or inspired me. Years passed. Our children grew up and left home. Eventually it occurred to me that we didn’t have to belong to that synagogue any longer. And so I began a long and frustrating quest for the best fit shul-wise …… until we came to Society Hill Synagogue.

It was different in so many ways from any synagogue I had ever known. The congregation was warm and welcoming, informal and unpretentious, smart, non-competitive, and nice. Who would have thought that in my mid-sixties I would make so many wonderful new friends? At the Break-the-Fast meal a few weeks ago, Ellen Fennick sat down at our dinner table and said something that really struck me. One of the main reasons she so enjoys Society Hill is that she can sit down at any table here and find interesting people she likes being with. Yes!

And who would have thought that in my retirement years I would become so quickly and thoroughly involved in the life of a synagogue? I’ve been able to pursue my passion for Social Action with the Rabbi’s encouragement and support and with the assistance of a terrific committee. I’ve had a number of other responsibilities over the last fifteen years here, as Terry just told you in her introduction, but I know that Social Action is what our members are most likely to associate me with. And so I’ve been thinking over the past several weeks of what I can say about why social justice matters to me, where it comes from, and how it developed.

It wasn’t modeled at home. My parents were good people but always too busy … with work, with family, with the immediate concerns of daily living. My early years were insular, as well. At Akiba, my horizons began to expand. I remember we took one of those career interest tests, which revealed that I had a strong affinity for social work. I didn’t become a social worker. I thought I was going to become a teacher; that changed too.

As I continued to reflect on my educational and career choices, I recognized a certain pattern. My first job out of college was with the Public Housing Administration in Washington in their Office of Intergroup Relations. Our job was to look at the documentation on housing units under construction and comment on the likelihood of their being integrated. I then worked for the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations. I took time off for family and graduate school and got a Master’s degree in Human Relations, an interdisciplinary program at Penn, and continued in their doctoral program in City Planning. Returning to work, I began a twenty-five year career in higher education administration. Most of those years were at a university in Newark, NJ, that was deeply committed to educating a diverse population and to serving the needs of the city in which it was located.

So my commitment to social justice has been there for pretty much my entire adult life, evolving and deepening with each experience. When I joined Society Hill and discovered it had a Social Action Committee, I knew I had found home. I’ve since discovered new members who joined because we have an active Social Action Committee.

There’s another journey, a more personal one that I didn’t embark upon until we joined Society Hill Synagogue. I came here with an understanding of Judaism that can best be described as undeveloped and a view of spirituality that can best be described as skeptical. With our wonderful Rabbi – yet another reason I love this place – as enthusiastic teacher, intellectual guide, and discussion partner, my immature understanding of and views on Judaism, Torah, God, spirituality and much more have deepened, matured, and become an essential part of who I am.

There’s one more recent journey I want to mention that, while not at Society Hill Synagogue, is very much connected to my spiritual development. Under the leadership of Rabbi Dayle Friedman, who has devoted her entire career to working with the elderly, twelve women in their sixties and seventies have been meeting monthly for four years to explore and discuss the path ahead – what to expect and how to best prepare for it. One thing that I’ve taken from this incredible experience is a daily gratitude practice. After saying Modah Ani and the Sh’ma each morning, I think about the previous day or so and what one thing I have to be grateful for. Very often my answer is Society Hill Synagogue.

Thank you Avi, thank you dear friends, thanks to all of you who’ve come up to me in the past weeks to wish me Mazel Tov for this very special honor. Your kind words have touched me deeply.

Shabbat Shalom!
Kitah Bet Students master the Hebrew spelling and vowels for the word, Shabbat.

Kitah Vav students with the olives they hand picked for our olive press activity, in which we lit a Hanukkiyah using olive oil.

More fun with olives in preparation for Hanukkah!
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Avi Winokur, Rabbi
Nathan Kamesar, Rabbinic Intern
Steven Freidrich, Interim Cantor
Harry Oxman, President
Betty van de Rijn, Executive Director
Sahar Oz, Education Director
Gloria Parris & Ali Kaplan, Playschool Co-Directors
Staci Schwartz, Kesher Editor