

SOCIETY HILL SYNAGOGUE



Keshar

November/December 2017 Newsletter

Lunch & Learn on Saturday, November 18, With Rabbi Sheila Weinberg Avi Winokur

This year's Jay R. Baer Scholar-in-Residence, Rabbi Sheila Weinberg, will join us on Saturday, November 18, for a Lunch & Learn discussion about her newest book, ***God Loves the Stranger***. Rabbi Weinberg was both a colleague and a teacher of mine from the mid '80s. She was finishing her term at the rabbinical college when I was just beginning mine. Her career has involved stints in Hillel, the congregational rabbinate, and much more.

Rabbi Weinberg is a student and colleague of Sylvia Boorstein, and a leading force in the "JewBu" movement, in which alienated Jews who sought spiritual sustenance in Eastern religious practice such as Buddhism creatively incorporated those practices into Jewish spiritual tradition.

When I enrolled in the second rabbinical cohort of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality almost fifteen years ago, Sheila was one of my teachers. It is thanks to her that I have adopted my own daily prayer/meditation practice. Rabbi Weinberg has had a major influence on hundreds of rabbis, whose own spiritual lives have grown in depth and imagination thanks to her pioneering work.

Rabbi Weinberg's most recent book, *God Loves the Stranger*, uses a blend of ancient and modern ideas to carve a clear pathway that enables us to learn how to love one another and create just societies. The book offers readers help with how to handle suffering and aversion in positive, productive ways; how to learn creative skills for mindfulness, meditation, and retreat practice; and how to bring the roots of love and gratitude into our everyday lives. *God Loves the Stranger* provides a comprehensive tutorial for navigating today's interpersonal and situational challenges with grace, spiritual fulfillment, and understanding. It offers tender, thought-provoking insight into the awareness that we are never alone—neither are our family members, friends, or strangers—anywhere in the world.

"This Lunch & Learn program Scholar-in-Residence is sponsored by the Jay R. Baer Fund, which honors the memory of beloved synagogue member Jay R. Baer, who served as Treasurer and President in the early 1980's before his untimely death from cancer."

Jay, a corporate and securities attorney at Wolf, Block, Schorr, and Solis-Cohen, was a key force in professionalizing the operation of our synagogue. His work was essential in developing the staffing and systems that moved SHS from an initially communal, volunteer group to a proficient organization that was more appropriate for a growing synagogue. All who knew him agree that his work at SHS was marked by care and diligence, as well as a fine sense of humor and wit—endearing traits that his family, friends, and fellow congregants continue to miss to this day.

Jay's family, business and professional colleagues, and congregants made generous contributions to SHS when Jay died. These contributions were used to form the Jay R. Baer Fund to help subsidize SHS's Scholar-in-Residence educational programs.

Today, members can continue to honor Jay's memory and support Adult Education at SHS by contributing to the Jay R. Baer Fund.

Inside this issue:

2-3

- December **TGIS**Shabbat
- Meditative Shabbat Service
- Rabbi's Column

4-5

- President's Column
- Treasurer's Message

6-8

- SHS Israel Trip
- Student Rabbi's Column

9-10

- Anne Spak Thal School
- Hebrew School Photos

11-12

- Playschool
- Adult Education

13-14

- Havdalah Down the Shore
- Young Families Group
- Community News

15-16

- Contributions
- 2017-2018 B'nai Mitzvahs

17-18

- Arts & Culture
- Social Action: NIF Lecture
- Young Friends of SHS

19-20

- Hazzan's Column
- Religion Committee

21-23

- Social Action
- Photo Gallery

24-28

- Hatan/Kallat Speeches

28-29

- November/December Birthdays & Anniversaries

30-31

- November/December Calendars

Join Us for a TGIShabbat Hanukkah Celebration With the Blacksbergs on Friday, December 15!

Dan and Bob Blacksberg will return to the SHS Sanctuary for an inspiring musical TGIShabbat service on Friday, December 15, at 6:15 PM.

Dan's music combines two deep sources: the improvisation of the world of free jazz, and the tonalities, rhythms, and expressions of Ashkenazi Jewish music—including klezmer, Yiddish song, and the work of the great cantors of the early-to mid-20th century in Europe and America. Dan's work takes him around the country and across the ocean, including his new album of klezmer trombone, *Radiant Others*, and his work with experimental music luminaries such as George Lewis and Anthony Braxton.

Bob has concentrated on cantorial compositions of the Hashkivenu prayer, singing with the voice of his clarinet. Together they honor our synagogue building's early 20th century heritage as "Die Groyse Rumanishe Shul"—The Great Roumanian Congregation.

A Hanukkah Celebration, complete with delicious latkes and Menorah lighting, will follow in the Social Hall.

Meditative Shabbat Services With Rabbi Winokur Begin on Saturday, December 23!

Avi Winokur

A meditative service is not a meditation service. Please don't expect 30-45 minute sessions punctuated by Torah/Dharma talks. Instead, we will be using techniques associated with mindfulness and guided meditation practices to lift up the underlying spiritual/religious underpinnings of our traditional liturgy—to experience a greater depth of meaning that comes with meditation.

One of the criticisms of Jewish worship practice—particularly for those who are not familiar with exploring the meaning and different themes of the liturgy—is that as we move from prayer to prayer, too often there is not enough time to allow individual prayers to sink in. By making use of various meditative techniques in connection with major liturgical themes, we hope to deepen the prayer experience for meditative (as well as regular) Shabbat services. Join us on the following Saturdays, 10 AM: December 23, January 20, February 17, March 24, April 28, and May 19. No prior experience with meditation is required.

Regular Shabbat Morning services will also be conducted in the Main Sanctuary, beginning at 10 AM.

Rabbi's Column

A Prelude to the November 14 “Not-Quite-Annual God Lecture”

Avi Winokur

I'm taking a break from the urgent issues, like health care, race, nuclear war, economic dignity, and our broken politics. By all means, get involved in POWER and our Social Action Committee, write congressional representatives, and attach yourselves to groups that advocate for your concerns, but I want to briefly discuss what some might also consider an urgent issue: the issue of God and religion. You can think of this as a kind of introduction to my “Not-Quite-Annual God Lecture,” which I will give on Tuesday, November 14, and the Lunch & Learn presentation with our Jay R. Baer Scholar-in-Residence, Rabbi Sheila Weinberg, on Saturday, November 18.

If one is serious about theology, whether as a person of faith, an agnostic, or an atheist, the book to read is Karen Armstrong's *The Case for God*. (My study guide to the introduction and first three chapters of that book might be helpful; please contact me if you would like a copy.) Her book begins by describing the complaints that she has received from many early readers. Readers complain that the book is too hard. Armstrong is too polite to reply directly that, of course, it is hard. The subject, after all, is God, a rather big and complex subject.

Armstrong (as well most clergy I know, including myself) finds today's mainstream understandings of God and religion “remarkably undeveloped, even primitive,” for the most part. Likewise, she is critical of today's atheists, who, after all, are reacting to notions of God that are primitive. I have read Dawkins, Hitchens, and Harris, the three enfants terribles of the most recent atheistic assault on religion, and I find them collectively and individually utterly shallow and not even slightly challenging. With all the fanfare they received, I was shocked.

While most people understand intuitively that God, if God exists, is beyond their understanding, far too many appear, in Armstrong's words, “to assume that *they* know exactly who ‘he’ is and what he thinks, loves, and expects. We tend to tame and domesticate God's ‘otherness.’” Alas, today's atheists mimic today's believers, denying the existence of a God that many serious religious thinkers would consider a simplistic, if not idolatrous, understanding of God.

This taming of God or packaging God into a neat little box robs religion and God of God's “goodness,” so to speak. At its extreme, this reductionism leads to very dangerous extremism, and, though less dangerous, in its benign form, it leads to a vacuousness that robs religion of its power to inspire.

In my “Not-Quite-Annual God Lecture,” I will not make much of a dent in solving the serious problems that besets belief, faith, and religion today. It is, after all, one short lecture. Whatever arrogance may be attributed to me, it does not go that far.

My goal is more modest. With the help of many thinkers far wiser than I, my aim is to share a little of my own thinking and to open up the possibility that there are sophisticated approaches to theology and religion that those of you who are theologically discontented with contemporary theism, atheism, and agnosticism can explore—subject to the following proviso, again from Armstrong: “Like any skill, religion requires perseverance, hard work, and discipline.” Faith and religion are not primarily about belief but rather about “perseverance, hard work, and discipline.”

Continued on page 12

President's Column

Some Reasons for Optimism

Harry J. Oxman

I'm writing this column in high spirits after our congregation has completed our High Holy Day and Simhat Torah services and the October 14 Shabbat service during which we honored our Hatan Torah and Kallat B'reishit, Jonathan Weiss and Gail Massey. The first four weeks of 5778 have been special. As Eleanor and I are completing our final preparations for our first trip to Israel on October 17, I find that I am filled with optimism. Certainly not what I expected at this point in time, considering the national political turmoil that surrounds us. I thank my SHS community for its positive impact upon my present mental state.

Over the past several weeks, I have taken the opportunity to reflect upon the many things that we have successfully accomplished as a congregation over the last year and how we should prepare to address the demands of the coming year. I would like to briefly revisit some of the more significant challenges we have faced and the goals that we have reached as a result of our efforts.

One of the first goals of 5777 was for our lay leaders to secure the services of a new cantor. Although the process was arduous and lengthy, we were successful in hiring Hazzan Jessi Roemer. Working with Rabbi Winokur and members of our Religion Committee for the past 5 months, Hazzan Jessi has truly enhanced our religious services. She has introduced us to some new approaches in the manner in which we engage in our religious services, while also preserving many of our best traditions. Her beautiful voice and enthusiasm are attributes that will serve us well as this new relationship continues to evolve.

Although declining membership is a challenge affecting most religious institutions today, the members of the Board of Directors, nevertheless, have committed to reversing the trend at Society Hill Synagogue. David Ladov assumed the role of Membership Committee Chair, with assistance from dedicated Board members Judy Lalli, Brian Mono, and Natalie Lesser; they have already begun to tackle membership growth and retention, with significant support from Executive Director Betty van de Rijn and Education Director Sahar Oz. Throughout the months of August and September, many Board members and congregants acted as true ambassadors of SHS—sharing the perks of being part of such a warm and vibrant community—resulting in the addition of approximately 20 new member units to our synagogue community! As a congregation, we should feel good about this accomplishment, but our work is only just beginning in this regard. The increase in our membership will surely strengthen our potential to achieve worthy long-term goals.

I am certain that most of you know that the income generated by our Playschool is a significant part of our yearly budget. Several years ago Playschool enrollment was on the decline, but in 5776, we began to reverse this negative trend. At the start of 5777, 43 students enrolled for classes. Our Playschool professional staff continued to spread the word about our exceptional program, and we now start the year 5778 with 51 students! Without question, this continued growth will have a strong positive impact upon our budget. Playschool revenue accounts for approximately 40% of our total revenue. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of our Playschool's professional staff, under the leadership of Co-Directors Gloria Parris and Ali Kaplan. I would also like to thank Playschool Committee Co-Chairs Lisa Eizen, Susan Eizen, and Dana Feinberg who have been indispensable to this program's continued success and growth. At this rate, our only obstacle to further growth in the Playschool will be the need for more space.

I will conclude this article by addressing what I believe to be the most compelling challenge for our congregation at this time. Namely, figuring out how to have the most successful Capital Campaign so that we will be able to utilize our synagogue properties to best serve the religious, educational, cultural, and social

Continued on page 5

needs of our community—now and in the future. The lay leadership has presented a plan meant to achieve these goals by maintaining, enhancing, and expanding our wonderful synagogue spaces. All members of the Board of Directors and all active Past Presidents have already established their own financial commitments to the Campaign. It is now incumbent upon you, our congregants, make your own contributions—we ask everyone to make a “joyful stretch” when considering your pledge.

To date, each member unit should have received a letter dated September 22, that I wrote on behalf of the Board and the Past Presidents, requesting your financial contribution to this Capital Campaign. I also asked for your participation in my “State of the Synagogue” remarks on Kol Nidre. Some of you have already responded with a contribution, for which I am most appreciative. To those of you who are still evaluating the extent of the financial commitment you will make to this Campaign, I am appreciative that you are engaging in this important process. In the near future, you be receiving a call from a member of the congregation who has agreed to assist in the cultivation of membership pledges. When contacted, please be responsive and cooperative so that we can achieve our goals celebrate our success.

It is anticipated that by the Annual Congregation Meeting in May 2018, our the Board will be prepared to announce the sum that has been raised during the Campaign, followed by a realistic assessment of the expansion and renovation projects we will be able to support.

The past year has been filled with memorable opportunities and measurable successes. I look forward to the next year with my own personal optimism, and the hope that my community shares the same optimism, so that, together, we can continue to grow and thrive.

I look forward to seeing all of you during this bright and promising year ahead. I wish each of you a healthy, fulfilling, and peaceful 5778.

L'Shanah Tovah!

A Message From the Treasurer

Mark Steinberger

As the end of the year approaches, if you would like to take advantage of the continued stock market gains, then call the office to ask for our stock wire transfer instructions, and donate appreciated securities to cover your 2017-2018 membership dues and Annual Giving obligations! The synagogue also accepts donations now to be immediately recorded against your 2018-2019 obligations. Take the same tax deduction as cash, conserve our own cash, and beat the capital gains tax!

SHS Is Going to Israel—Learn More on November 5!

Sahar Oz

Our first congregational journey to Israel since 2001 will take place this coming August 2018, perfectly timed to coincide with Israel's celebration of 70 years of independence. From natural wonders to modern marvels, come discover this "old-new land" through inspiring interactions with Israeli Jews, Bedouin, and Druze in ancient Jerusalem and bustling Tel Aviv, collective kibbutzim, lush valleys, and spiritual desert locales.



The CARTOON KRONICLES

Led by SHS staff, **we have designed our journey to be enjoyed by travelers of all ages—including young families, singles, couples, and retirees.** Whether you're 5 or 95, you'll cherish this multisensory experience for years!

Join us on Sunday, November 5, from 11 AM–12 PM, as Pam Pearlmitter from Ayelet Tours visits our congregation to discuss the trip and answer your questions. Israeli refreshments will be served during Pam's presentation.

Highlights of our adventure together will include Jerusalem's Western Wall and its tunnels, vibrant markets, and Kabbalat Shabbat in this 3,000-year-old city; a jeep tour of the Golan Heights and strolls through Roman ruins in Caesarea and Beit She'an; making chocolate at one of Israel's top confectionaries and exploring the mystical city of Tzfat; hiking Masada and floating in the healing waters of the Dead Sea; a biblical desert experience including a camel ride, and milestones in Israel's modern history, such as the Ayalon Institute and Tel Aviv's Independence Hall; and feeling the high of helping others at Yad LaKashish and the Jaffa Institute, while seeing Israel from the heights of the Azrieli Observatory—the tallest in the Middle East.

And there is so much more! For the full itinerary, price, and to sign up today, visit <http://secure.ayelet.com/SocietyHill2018.aspx>.

For further information, contact me at soz@societyhillsynagogue.org or 215.922.6590, ext. #29.

Student Rabbi's Column

Rejoicing Is a Mitzvah

Nathan Kamesar

Sukkot is in our rearview mirror, but the words of Torah that surround the holiday contain ideas worth examining further. “You shall rejoice before Adonai your God for seven days,” Leviticus says, in reference to Sukkot (23:40). You *must* be happy.

Can this be? Can God, or our ancestors, or whoever you believe composed our sacred texts, *command* a feeling? Is this a sensible approach to dealing with human nature?

It is far from the only instance of commanding an emotion in the Torah. “You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your might,” it says in Deuteronomy 6:5. You shall also love your “fellow” (Lev. 19:18), the “stranger” (Lev. 19:34), and, by implication, yourself (Lev. 19:18, 34).

Our sacred text does not stop with seeking to compel us to experience positive feelings; it instructs us *not* to feel negative feelings as well. “You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart” (Lev. 19:17); “You shall not . . . bear a grudge against your countrymen” (Lev. 19:18); and, of course, perhaps the example of this with which we’re most familiar, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife. You shall not crave your neighbor’s house, or . . . or anything that is your neighbor’s” (Deut. 5:18). (The television series *The West Wing* has fun with a storyline in which a U.S. town wants to abolish all laws except the Ten Commandments. West Wing staffers observe that the commandment “you shall not covet” will be hard to enforce, and further point out that if one *was* to be arrested for violating that law, they would probably also violate the commandment regarding bearing false witness.)

So what are we to do with being commanded to feel a feeling? It is one thing to have our conduct prescribed for us. This happens all the time in our tradition—eat Kosher food; observe Shabbat; hear the Shofar blast on Rosh Hashanah, to name a few examples. But a feeling? As moderns, we sometimes feel like we couldn’t generate a feeling that didn’t come naturally to us, even if we wanted to.

And yet there is wisdom here worth grappling with. For starters, there is a debate about whether emotions are actually being commanded. Perhaps what is being commanded instead relates to the actions that flow from those emotions.

Ancient notions of love, for example, often came up in the context of treaties between ruling tribes (suzerains) and subservient tribes (vassals). According to scholars like Dr. Jeffrey Tigay, “love” in the context of those treaties essentially meant “loyalty towards.” “We Canaanites pledge to love [that is, act loyally towards] King [so-and-so] of the Hittites,” to name one hypothetical example.

Similarly, the Hebrew words for covet (*chamad*), and crave (*tit’aveh*), according to Dr. Tigay, can also be seen as concerned about the *actions* that flow from these ideas. *Chamad* can, rather than covet, instead be translated as do not “scheme to acquire,” and *tit’aveh* as do not “long for.” When translated this way, we can see that the nature of the commandment not to covet is based on the ultimate concern that the offender will *act* on their jealous impulses. “Do not scheme to acquire” essentially means do not let it get so close that you might *act* on your jealous impulses or that you might actually *do* something that is harmful to your neighbor or your community.

By the logic that feelings are really about the conduct they lead to, the commandment to rejoice on Sukkot is not a commandment that you literally *must* be happy; it is a more general statement regarding the sorts of

Continued on page 8

activities that should be taking place during Sukkot: have festive meals; invite people over; dance or carry on activities that, even if you are not happy, are *associated* with joy.

It is a festive time of year for the Jewish people because of the ancient ingathering of the harvest; act *as though* you are feeling consonant with the spirit of your people, even if you are not.

The idea that when feelings are commanded, actions are called for is a very plausible reading of the text, perhaps even the most plausible.

But I think there is a more interesting, more radical reading available to us as well. Perhaps the Author(s) of this text are indeed centrally concerned with how we as a people *feel*—what emotions we are experiencing—and the text is indeed instructing us to do what we can to be in control of our emotions—to open up our internal passageways to let the Divine light shine through.

Now, we know it's not always as simple as flicking a switch and experiencing the emotion we want to experience. If we could tell someone who was experiencing depression or grief, to simply “buck up”... well, then the world would be a different sort of place. (And perhaps not an altogether desirable one; sometimes, we need to be able to experience our grief). We know that's not how things work.

But there are other emotions we can perhaps control to a limited extent. We may not be able to control what sets us off, but, with work, we sometimes have the ability to *realize* that we have been triggered. Being self-aware or mindful can allow us to be in relationship to the reactions and feelings we have, and therefore to have more control over the effects they have on us.

We might not have the ability to control how we react to a particular stimulus but sometimes we can control how long we dwell on it. “You shall not bear a grudge against your countryman” (Lev 19). Dwelling on negative thoughts about another can be tempting and seductive, but these feelings do not buoy us. “Resentment is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die.” This adage of unknown origins seems to reflect the wisdom of our ancestors.



Another folktale of unknown (perhaps Native American) origin illustrates this. A man says to his grandson, “My son, there is a battle between two wolves inside us all. One is evil. It is anger, jealousy, greed, resentment, inferiority. The other is good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, humility, kindness, empathy, and truth.” The boy thinks about it and asks his grandfather, “Which one wins?” And the grandfather says, “the one you feed.”

Which brings us back to Sukkot and the commandment to rejoice for seven days. We can't necessarily just *be* happy. We can't necessarily just flip that switch. But we can nurture the parts of ourselves that yearn to be joyful. We can give ourselves permission to be happy. We can find the seeds of joy in our lives, tend to them, embrace them, and make them feel comfortable and welcome within us. After all, rejoicing is a *mitzvah*—a commandment.

Ann Spak Thal School

November News & December Delights

Sahar Oz

As autumn turns into winter, the days get chillier, and darkness sets in earlier—this is precisely when the warmth and light from our curious, creative, and clever students radiates even more. We're thrilled to have welcomed 20 new students to our school, including 13 children whose families joined our congregation since August.

November and December bring a variety of exciting events and special celebrations, including three B'nai Mitzvah services: Jacob Mono (**November 4**), Harry Feinberg (**November 25**), and Scotty Jordan (**December 2**). Each Bar Mitzvah service will begin at 9:30 AM and is a unique opportunity to rejoice in the Jewish learning and Torah leynung achievements of schoolmates.

We also have our first two Class Services of the year coming up, with Kitot Gimel and Dalet (3rd and 4th grades) collaborating on the Kabbalat Shabbat service they will lead together on **Friday, November 17, at 6:15 PM**, and Kitah Vav (6th grade) students leading the Shabbat Shaḥarit (morning) service at **10:30 AM on Saturday, December 9**.

These two Class Services will be followed by a delicious dinner and lunch, respectively, so please confirm your family's dinner and/or lunch attendance by e-mailing Betty, *no later than two days before each service*, at bettyv@societyhillssynagogue.org.

On **Sunday, November 5**, we will welcome three guests from the German organization, Action Reconciliation Service for Peace (ARSP), with which our Hebrew School has built a close friendship over the past five years. Jakob, Ben, and David—ARSP's new volunteers in Philadelphia—will first meet with our students in 7th–10th grades to discuss life in Germany and the US, the Holocaust's impact on younger generations, and the topics of anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia here and in Germany.

Our German guests will then join our students from 3rd–10th grades **at 12:15 PM** for our annual program in memory of the victims and survivors of Kristallnacht, which took place in Germany and Austria on November 9–10, 1938. **Parents are encouraged to join us for this program**, which has been designed to be appropriate for ages eight and older.

In preparation for the Hanukkah Happening, **classes for all grades will meet from 9 AM–11 AM on Sunday, December 10**. The Hanukkah Happening will then take place **from 11 AM–1 PM** and will feature latkes by our renowned Latke Brigade and a lot of fun for all ages, with a variety of activities designed especially for our younger children.

The following **Sunday, December 17, at 10 AM**, we are holding auditions for this year's Purim Cantata, and all students in Kitot Gimel-Vav (3rd–6th grades) are welcome and encouraged to try out for the show, which will be performed for the congregation on Wednesday, February 28, at 6 PM. Rehearsals for the Purim Cantata will take place on Sunday mornings from 9 AM–11 AM, starting January 7.

There are no classes on Sunday, November 26, due to Thanksgiving Break, and our last day of classes before Winter Break will be Tuesday, December 19. Classes will resume in 2018 on Tuesday, January 2.

Our faculty, student aides, and I wish you and your family a joyous Thanksgiving and a happy Hanukkah filled with love, light, and latkes!



Sunday School exploration in the Sanctuary, up close with the Torah.



What better way to wrap up a lesson on Noah and the flood than with a rainbow created using water and kosher Skittles from Israel?

Playschool

We Are Off to a Busy Start!

Gloria Parris & Ali Kaplan

The Playschool is off to a fabulous start this year. All of the children are excited to attend our fun-filled classes and are sharing new preschool experiences every day.

On Friday, November 10, the Playschool will host Grandparents'/Special Friends' Day for the students in the 3–4-year-old and Pre-Kindergarten classes. One of the highlights of the morning will be celebrating Shabbat together; we will sing, dance, and recite the blessings. In the evening, at 5 PM, the Playschool's Art Exhibit and Fall Shabbat Dinner will be held in the Social Hall for all of our Playschool families. Original works of art created by our students will be on display. Shabbat Dinners always provide a wonderful opportunity for our Playschool families to get to know each other.

Encourage families with young children to attend our Playschool Open House on Friday, November 17, 9–11 AM. Prospective parents are invited to visit our classrooms while they are in session to see what a regular school day is like and to celebrate Shabbat with the children. The application process will begin in December. Please contact the Playschool office (215.922.6590, ext. 28) for further information or if you plan to join us for the Open House.

On Wednesday, November 22, the Playschool will close at 12:30 PM and remain closed on Thursday and Friday (November 23 and 24) for the Thanksgiving holiday.

On Tuesday, December 5, students in the 3–4-year-old class will be going on a trip to the Philadelphia Museum of Art to participate in the *Museum Looks and Picture Books* program, where they will learn about Food and Art. Parent chaperones are invited to attend.

On Wednesday, December 6, the Playschool will have parent-teacher conferences for all of our classes. No classes will be in session that day, however the staff will be available to care for children during scheduled conference times. Teachers will be available from 7:45 AM until 6 PM for additional hours of childcare. Please contact us if you need childcare for longer than your scheduled conference.

The annual Hanukkah Happening and Open House will take place on Sunday, December 10, from 11 AM until 1 PM. All SHS and Playschool families, friends, and neighbors are welcome to celebrate with crafts, festive music, dreidel games, cookie decorating, sweet treats, and delicious homemade latkes made by the renowned SHS Latke Brigade. Playschool teachers will be on hand to accept applications for the September 2018–May 2019 school year. Parents may download applications from the SHS website, www.societyhillssynagogue.org (go to the Playschool section) to fill them out ahead of time. Class spots will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis, with priority given to SHS members and current Playschool families.

The Playschool offers a wonderful “first school experience” for young children! We offer classes for 2-year-olds, 3-year-olds, and an academic Pre-K class for 4-year-olds, featuring age-appropriate learning experiences, creative art projects, Shabbat and holiday programs, and special events and trips. We have excellent indoor and outdoor play spaces, welcoming classrooms, and a warm and nurturing staff. As a parent cooperative, our parents and caregivers get to spend a school day with their child on a rotating basis, giving them a chance to actually see the learning that goes on in our classrooms.

Continued on page 12

Playschool Continued from page 11

Each weekday (except on holidays), the Playschool offers early care beginning at 7:45 AM, and late care from 3 PM until 6 PM. The class for 2-year-olds meets from 8:30 AM until 11:30 AM, with an option to stay for lunch until 12:30 PM. The class for 3–4-year-olds meets from 8:30 AM until 12:30 PM, and the Pre-K class meets from 8:30 AM until 2 PM. Every afternoon, from 12:30 PM until 3 PM, the children participate in After School Arts activities that focus on cooking, science, art, movement, and music.

The Playschool will be on winter break from Monday, December 18, through Monday, January 1. Classes will resume on Tuesday, January 2, 2018.

If you would like more information about the upcoming enrollment process, or if you would like to schedule an appointment to visit the Playschool, please contact the Playschool office at 215.922.6590, ext. 28, or feel free to send us an email at gparris@societyhillssynagogue.org or abernstein@societyhillssynagogue.org.

Happy Hanukkah and best wishes for a happy, healthy New Year!

Rabbi's Column Continued from page 3

In my lecture, the first reading that I will share with you is from William Pepperell Montague's 1930 work *Belief Unbound*. Montague is a man of faith who dismisses "belief" as a stumbling block to serious religious life. T. M. Luhrmann, an academic who studied evangelical communities, echoes Montague in her May 29, 2013, *New York Times* op-ed entitled "Belief Is the Least Part of Faith." She writes, "The role of belief in religion is overstated, as anthropologists have long known." She remarks that secularists are completely baffled by the centrality of God among evangelicals and the seeming irrelevance of belief. Karen Armstrong, one of our time's leading theologians and scholars of religion, would agree with Montague and Luhrmann and, I suspect, would sigh in exasperation (but not let you see the exasperation) at the secularist's puzzled question, "But, professor, I just don't understand. How can God be central and belief be irrelevant? It just doesn't make sense."

If Montague's assertion that belief gets in the way of religion, seconded by Luhrmann and Armstrong, is intriguing, then come join us on November 14. The Montague piece will not be the only one specifically designed to upset mainstream contemporary religion and theology. Not by a long shot.

Adult Education: Rabbi Winokur's Not-Quite-Annual God Lecture

Tuesday, November 14, 7:30 PM–9 PM

One of Rabbi Winokur's most popular offerings, this lecture is a veritable tour de force presenting the possibility of a theology that your most critical mind and your deepest soul can both affirm . . . or, at the very least, seriously consider. Seekers and skeptics are welcome. Truth in advertising: Pseudo-Skeptics (affirming agnosticism but essentially atheists at heart) may be disappointed, as will seekers who are looking for an iron-clad theology that will keep doubt at bay and prove that there is a God. Several congregants have come more than once to hear this same lecture.

Havdalah Down the Shore—A Truly Special Evening

Debbie Stewart

On behalf of our community, I would like to thank Lisa and Steve Eizen for hosting this year's wonderful Havdalah Down the Shore event! Judy Lalli did a great job helping to coordinate the event. As Judy shared, "Except for the fact that Susan was not able to join Avi and the rest of us, I'd have to say the evening was perfect." The conversations, flowed, for both old and new friends, from the minute we all walked in to the haimish atmosphere. The food was delicious, the Eizen's home was beautiful, the Kabbalat Shabbat service on the beach was inspiring, and the weather was terrific!

Here are quotes from some of the participants:

"Don and I enjoyed ourselves thoroughly! The feeling of community and warmth made this summer event so special."

"Thank you all for putting together such a lovely and warm Havdalah celebration. The feeling of community was so strong, and the setting was beautiful and hospitable."

"Thank you so much for hosting this event. It was a very enjoyable SHS get-together in a perfect setting. Thank you, Judy, for organizing it."

"Dana and I sincerely thank you for your hospitality and generosity! It was a lovely evening and we look forward to seeing everyone at SHS."

"Thank you so much for a really wonderful evening. You are generous and gracious hosts, and your home is stunning."

"Bill and I had a truly delightful evening and are most appreciative that you hosted this event for our community."

"Joel and I thoroughly enjoyed the Havdalah event—it was beautiful in every way. Warm community, beautiful setting, and we even witnessed a miracle—lighting the candles in the wind."

"Thank you all so much for putting this lovely evening together, and Mazel Tov to Steve and Lisa on your beautiful home."

"Thank you to Lisa and Steve for hosting such a magical evening in such an exquisite setting."

"Thank you to all who contributed to the delicious food, wine, and spirits (especially that Eleanor's Amaretto cake. Can't wait to Google [kosher.com](https://www.kosher.com) for the recipe)!"

"Avi, you led a fantastic service! Love the Havdalah traveling bag!"

"We echo everyone's sentiments. It was a VERY special evening, including the magical candle. Many thanks to Lisa, Steve, Judy, Avi, and everyone else who made it possible!"

"Thank you to Steve & Lisa for opening their home to us, to Judi for coordinating the event, to all the fine cooks and bakers, and to Highland Park for the single malt. It was a magical evening with great company!"

"Thank you for hosting a fun-filled evening! Everyone demonstrated such warmth and caring for one another ... Avi's sense of humor made the Havdalah service fun and animated ... Lastly, Dana, without your great sprinting that candle would not have been lit. Super job!"

Young Families Group

Friday Nights with Young Families Resumes on November 3!

Joanna Hart

We welcome all families with young children to join our warm and welcoming community! Parents, prospective members, expectant parents, and any caretakers are invited to join our email list by contacting me at joanna.lee.hart@gmail.com. Our group nurtures all infants, babies, and toddlers—and we help those who love these little people to feel supported.

Our popular *Friday Nights with Young Families* programming will begin again on Friday, November 3, at 5:30 PM! Once a month, we will come together to share songs, prayers, and a potluck meal—all at a bedtime-friendly hour. A Jewish Education professional with years of experience leads our short, kid-friendly Shabbat services. We celebrate the joys of community and prayer, and participants will also learn to build their own memories and family traditions in their homes. No prior Jewish knowledge or experience is necessary.

Please join us in the first floor Playschool classrooms (enter through the Lawrence Court doors) on the following Fridays: November 3, December 15 (Hanukkah celebration), January 5, February 9, March 9, April 27, and June 1. Our services begin at 5:30 PM, with dinner at 6 PM.

We look forward to meeting new families this year!

Community News

Mazel Tov to

Bonnie and Harvey Weiner on the birth of their first grandson, Ezra Tran Weiner.

Carol and Bruce Katcher on the birth of their granddaughter, Eleanor Bea D'Argenio.

Welcome New Members...

Robert & Wilma Bass

Brett & Allison Benton

Aaron & Renee Edelman
Felix and Ezra

Dave and Rebecca Femia
Eva and Talia

Elizabeth Fletman

Alan & Lynn Gottlieb

David Gould & Victoria Lai

Pekka & Susan Hakkarainen
Ari and Max

Cindy Mendelson

David & Jamie Nussbaum
Zoe

Ben & Liz Rubin
Gabriel and Lexi

Aaron Silberstein & Miriam Pogach

David Spiegel & Maryam Naim
Sophia

Alan & Elaine Shechtman

Verna Segal
Xander

Laurie Leas
Ezra
Ella

Contributions

General Fund

In Appreciation of
High Holy Day Honors
Ron & Robin Feinberg
Bernie Cohen
Joseph Freedman

In Honor of

Gail Massey, 2017 Kallat B'reishit Recipient
Michele Richman
Harry & Eleanor Oxman

Marty & Betty van de Rijn
Marc, Staci, & Jamie Schwartz

Jonathan Weiss, 2017 Hatan Torah Recipient

Harry & Eleanor Oxman
Marty & Betty van de Rijn
Marc, Staci, & Jamie Schwartz

Rabbi Marjorie Berman

Joseph Freedman

Yahrzeit Remembrance

Dora Lizenbaum, Grandmother of Curtis Lizenbaum
Curtis Lizenbaum

David Merlin, Father of Marian Merlin

Merlin-Rubinov Family

Sara Belkina

Merlin-Rubinov Family

Alekandr Rubinov

Merlin-Rubinov Family

Anna Paller, Grandmother of Robert Paller

Robert Paller

Norman Feinberg, Father of Dan Feinberg

Dan, Dana, Sam, Hannah, & Harry Feinberg

Henrietta Levine, Mother-in-Law of Iris Levine

Iris Levine

Ilse Roller, Mother of Jerry Roller

Jerry & Joan Roller

Helene Rieder, Mother of Joan Roller

Jerry & Joan Roller

Annual Giving Fund

In Honor of
Engagement of Nathan Kamesar & Carolyn Fortin
Barbara Spector

Playschool Fund

In Honor of
Gail Massey, 2017 Kallat B'reishit Recipient
Bill & Rina Massey

Cantor's Discretionary Fund

In Appreciation of
Hazzan Jessi Roemer
Mara Lipschutz & Janet Shikoff

In Honor of

Hazzan Jessi Roemer on her new role at SHS
Abbe Fletman & Pat Ryan

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

In Appreciation of
Avi Winokur
Jean Blumberg

Yahrzeit Remembrance

Nathan Richman, Father of A. Scott Richman

A.Scott Richman

Sara Weyland, Aunt of Harris Hayman

Harris & Renee Hayman

Samuel D. Sablove, Father of Pelley Brown

Pelley Brown

Sigmund Weinberg, Father-in-Law of Rosemarie Weinberg

Rosemarie Weinberg

Anna Weinberg Trust, Mother-in-Law

Rosemarie Weinberg

Rose Schertz, Grandmother of Pelley Brown

Pelley Brown

Bernard Dembert, Father of Mark Dembert

Mark Dembert & Mary Fish

Adult Education

Yahrzeit Remembrance
Estelle Dubin, Mother of Claire Dubin
Claire Dubin

Kiddush Fund

In Appreciation of
SHS During the High Holy Days
Henry Steiner
Pamela Zimmerman

In Honor of

Betty van de Rijn
Michael Rochester & Carole Le Faivre-Rochester

Harry Oxman

Michael Rochester & Carole Le Faivre-Rochester

Continued on page 16

Kiddush Fund Continued from page 15

Harvey & Bonnie Weiner on the birth of their grandson, Ezra Tran Weiner

Michael Rochester & Carole Le Faivre-Rochester
Marty & Betty van de Rijn

Jonathan Weiss, 2017 Hatan Torah Recipient

Stanley & Judith Woloff
Marty & Betty van de Rijn

Gail Massey, 2017 Kallat B'reishit Recipient

Stanley & Judith Woloff
Marty & Betty van de Rijn

Yahrzeit Remembrance

Sadie Baughn, Grandmother of Carmen Hayman

Ric & Carmen Hayman

Sara Weyland, Great Aunt of Ric Hayman

Ric & Carmen Hayman

Miriam Winston, Mother and Grandmother

Fred & Dinah Lovitch
Beth Dougherty
Michael Lovitch

Slyvain van de Rijn, Father

Aaron van de Rijn, Nephew

Marty & Betty van de Rijn and Family

Silver Heit Salkin Fund

In Appreciation of

SHS During the High Holy Days

Roger Brand

Dr. Effy Oz Hebrew School Fund

In Honor of

Sahar Oz

Dan & Barbara Rottenberg

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 simha or joy, mark a special moment in one's life, honor someone, or commemorate a Yahrzeit. 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@societyhillssynagogue.org for more information.

2017 – 2018 SHS B'Nai Mitzvah Celebrations

November 4

Jacob Mono

Son of Brian & Jessica Mono

November 25

Harry Feinberg

Son of Dan & Dana Feinberg

December 2

Scotty Jordan

Son of Brent & Leah Jordan

January 6, 2018

Cole Pressman

Son of Craig Pressman & Sandra Lazovitz

March 3

Rachel and Max Ladenson

Anne Ballen Ladenson

Daughter and Son of Anne Ballen Ladenson & Michael Ladenson

March 10

Sadie Margolin

Daughter of Rachel Margolin

March 17

Raphael Englander

Son of Brian & Juliette Englander

Continued on page 17

Arts & Culture

We Have a Full Calendar of Events!

Betta Kolansky, Eleanor Oxman, & Ellen Fennick

L'Shanah Tovah to you and your family on behalf of the Arts and Culture committee! We hope it is a wonderful new year for everyone.

Please save the dates below and plan to join us for the following fun-filled activities:

On Thursday, November 30, 8 PM, please join us for 1812 Production's very humorous and timely political satire, *This is the Week That Is*. We have reserved 20 tickets at the discounted price of \$31 per ticket. From the website:

"1812's annual political comedy is taking off the gloves and getting ready to hop in the ring with the most unpredictable administration in modern history."

Please send your check, made payable to Society Hill Synagogue, to 418 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106, and include "Arts & Culture event" on the memo line.

We made a tentative dinner reservation dinner at La Fontana Della Citta (1701 Spruce Street—a block away from the theater). If we have 12 or more diners, we will qualify for a three-course-dinner for under \$35 per person, if we pay in cash (no credit cards). This restaurant is also a BYO. If you are interested in joining the group for dinner, please contact Eleanor at 215.574.9645 or email esoxman@comcast.net.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, January 20, 2018, for a Lunch & Learn with auctioneer Barry Slosberg and Rabbi Avi Winokur. Barry will bring items of Judaica for discussion. Avi will reveal their history and purpose in Judaism and Barry will assess their value for the audience.

SHS's annual Inter-**NOSH**-ional Night will take place on Saturday February 3, 2018, at 7 PM.

On Saturday, March 31, 2018, we will have our annual Second Night Pesah Seder in the Social Hall.

On Sunday, April 29, 2018, 1 PM–3 PM, we will our second walking tour of Old Jewish South Philadelphia, led by esteemed historian, Rabbi Lance Sussman. We will begin with a discussion of old Jewish Philadelphia locations followed by a tour the exterior and interior spaces.

2017 – 2018 SHS B'Nai Mitzvah Celebrations Continued from page 16

May 26

Nathaniel Stover Steerman

Son of Maryann Stover & Amy Steerman

June 23

Chuck & Nick Schaeffer

Sons of Brett Schaeffer & Sarah Rottenberg

June 9

Maya Saltzman

Daughter of Matthew & Brooke Saltzman

Social Action

A Very Appealing Israel Appeal

Phyllis Denbo

On Kol Nidre, instead of delivering a traditional Israel Appeal, President Harry Oxman proposed a new approach to supporting our Jewish homeland. A choice among three organizations was offered, each with a different mission, in recognition that there are a variety of positive ways to support the land we love. One option is to purchase Israel Bonds to support the Israeli economy, the focus of our Annual Appeal for many years. A second option would be to make a donation to Hadassah Hospital whose excellent work in health care delivery and research we all know well. A third option is to make a contribution to the New Israel Fund (NIF), the leading organization that advocates for and supports civil society in Israel. Many members of SHS have little or no knowledge of NIF. **The CEO of the NIF will be in Philadelphia next week and is scheduled to speak at Society Hill Synagogue on November 7, at 7 PM.** We encourage you to take advantage of this rare opportunity to learn about the organization, directly from its leader, and have all of your questions about NIF answered.

The Young Friends of SHS

Join Our E-Mail List!

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, pre-Shabbat drinks, and discussions about spiritual exploration. Join our e-mail list to learn about upcoming events.

For further information, please contact us at: (Natalie Lesser) lesser.natalie@gmail.com or (Jordan Segall) segall.jordan@gmail.com.

We invite you to "like" our Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/SHSYoungFriends/

Hazzan's Column

A Return to Business-As-Usual

Jessi Roemer

During the middle days of Sukkot and Pesah, many of us use the greeting “Mo’adim l’Simcha!”. It means “Times of Joy!” and colloquially translates to “Happy in-between-Days-of-the-Holiday!” As the month of Heshvan begins, after celebrating a month’s worth of Jewish Fall holidays, an Israeli rabbi friend of mine likes to greet people with “Mo’adim l’Shigra!”—literally, “Times of Routine!” or “Happy Business-as-Usual!”

After so many holidays, a little routine can feel welcome.

For me, part of returning to routine means returning to some of the bigger questions behind my work: What is the purpose of Jewish community, and how can community rituals/activities serve that purpose? For answers, I search both the contemporary scene and Jewish history.

In the Koren Machzor for Yom Kippur, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks offers a wonderful tidbit from historian Yaffa Eliach about business-as-usual Jewish life in interwar Poland: In that time and place, any Jew with a complaint of injustice could interrupt the Torah reading in synagogue to have their case heard before the community. The aggrieved party would bang three times on the table and announce, “I am delaying the Torah reading,” and explain why they were bringing their case directly to the community. At this point, the prayer space would instantly transform into a courtroom: A leader would assume responsibility for the proceedings, the gabbai would announce the arbitrators, and a deadline for resolution would be set. This all had to be done to the plaintiff’s satisfaction before the Torah service could continue. Since Jews were obligated not to skip the Torah reading, the entire congregation had to help set up a process to resolve the grievance.

I love to imagine the human (and comedic) potential in this picture, the theatric possibilities of the shul-turned-courtroom in a pre-sitcom era. I also love this scenario because it shows how, in these communities, active engagement was baked into the structure of communal worship. And I love it because it shows us a shul service that puts humanity first: Listening to community members, righting wrongs, and having the community participate are all valued so highly that they can delay even the Torah reading. From another angle, the operating logic here could be that words of Torah cannot properly be heard until these human needs are addressed.

In twenty-first-century America, it is (perhaps thankfully) hard to imagine an actual courtroom drama taking place in shul during the Torah service. The relationships are different: We don’t exist in just one community where everyone has known us from birth; we move in multiple communities. We have many different obligations, we work more, we travel more. Our concepts of Judaism, work, gender, and public life have shifted, so that we don’t even have one clearly defined group of us for whom it would be mandatory to stay in shul all day and resolve a dispute while the rest of us take up the slack in home life and child care.

The scope of our concerns today is also more global. The pains of loss and injustice that burden us may be community-based, but they may also stem from human-caused climate change or a country and world that seem to be spinning off the rails of human compassion. Or they may stem from inside our own homes.

Some of our problems, needs, and dreams are different from those of Jews of interwar Poland; some are the same. In our current world, we still need—perhaps even more—to be seen and listened to by those who know us. We still seek engagement and justice. We are still creative beings who want to contribute and need, increasingly, reasons to celebrate. We need a place to connect.

Continued on page 20

Religion Committee

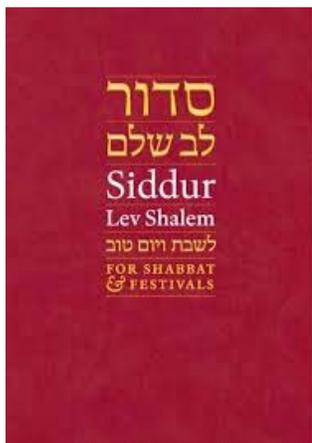
A New Siddur for Shabbat Services

Marc Schwartz & Terry Novick

We hope that the High Holy Days were meaningful and fulfilling and that all of our members had a chance to reconnect with friends and family.

As you may know, we are now using our new prayer book, the Rabbinical Assembly's *Siddur Lev Shalem For Shabbat & Festivals*, at all Shabbat and holiday prayer services. This new prayer book contains extensive modern transliteration and translation and insightful adjunctive readings.

As we have done in the past, we'd like to offer our members the opportunity to dedicate books in memory/honor of loved ones. If you would like to dedicate a book, please send the following information to office@societyhillssynagogue.org:



Your name:

Name for whom the book is dedicated (exactly as you would like it to appear on the bookplate on the inside cover):

In Memory of or In Honor of (indicate which)

Please send a check for \$36 per dedication, made out to Society Hill Synagogue, to 418 Spruce Street, Philadelphia PA 19106, or call the office to charge the fee on your credit card (3% processing fee will be applied). If you have questions, please contact Betty at bettyv@societyhillssynagogue.org or 215.922.6590, ext. #23.

Hazzan's Column Continued from page 19

What does it look like to make Jewish community a place where those things happen?

I see what this looks like on Sunday mornings, when the SHS building is abuzz with people and classes. I see it when the building staff sweetly joke around with the kids and the rabbi. I see it when community members offer their time and talents to fill a community need. I see it when a community leader speaks loving words to a Bat Mitzvah. I feel it in a service when everyone is singing a familiar tune together or joining in to sing a tune they've just learned. I see it in a roomful of people dancing in circles on Simhat Torah.

I also like to imagine how a community can become even more of what it wants to be. How do we continue to shape our synagogue environment so that human needs are addressed on a human scale? How do we make sure our spaces are even more inviting and our worship even more interactive? How do we bake in ways of reaching out to one another?

I would love to hear your thoughts on these questions! Please feel free to contact me to talk about these issues or anything else. I look forward to seeing you and talking during our down time of business-as-usual and to celebrating together during Hanukkah!

Mo'adim l'Shigra!

Social Action

Two Opportunities to Learn More About Refugees

Phyllis Denbo

Speaker Event at BZBI: Understanding the Refugee Experience

On Wednesday, November 8, at 7 PM, at Temple Beth Zion–Beth Israel (BZBI), join us for a conversation between Harriet Levin Millan, a prize winning poet and author, and Rabbi Rachel Grant Meyer, Director of Education for Community Engagement at HIAS National. In her recent novel, *How Fast Can You Run*, Ms. Millan tells the story of the real life experience of Michael Majok Kuch, one of the “Lost Boys” of Sudan. In the context of the book, Rabbi Meyer and Ms. Millan will discuss the refugee experience, its individual consequences, and the work that can be done to rebuild people’s lives with safety and dignity. After the conversation, there will be a book signing and light dessert reception.

The program is being co-sponsored by Society Hill Synagogue. As sponsor affiliates, SHS members will be charged a reduced entrance fee of \$10.

BZBI is located at 300 South 18th Street.

Annual HIAS Refugee Thanksgiving

Join HIAS PA to celebrate Thanksgiving with newly arrived refugee families. Society Hill Synagogue has participated in this joyful occasion for several years—providing and serving food, setting up and cleaning up, and engaging with Philadelphia newcomers as they first experience this uniquely American tradition.

The event will take place on **Sunday, November 19, from 3 PM until 6 PM**, at Old Pine Community Center, located at 410 Lombard Street.

Below is a list of requested donations and services. Please contact Jordan Segall at Segall.Jordan@gmail.com to indicate which items/services you would like to contribute. We suggest that you offer at least two choices, as some may have already been selected.

Bring 2 gallons of juice or soda, 24 bottles of water, a cooked turkey, a Kosher cooked turkey, a starch dish, a vegetable dish, a dessert, or snacks for volunteers.

or

Bring 10 long rectangular tablecloths, 50 pairs of disposable food prep gloves, napkins for 300, paper plates for 300, plastic cups for 300, or plastic silverware for 300.

or

Set up children’s corner, set up decorations, set up tables and chairs, heat food and carve turkeys, pack and hand out leftover food, or clean up.

Havdalah Down the Shore Photo Gallery





Words From Our Hatan Torah and Kallat B'reishit...

In case you were unable to attend the luncheon on Saturday, October 14, when this year's Hatan Torah, Jonathan Weiss, and Kallat B'reishit, Gail Massey, shared wonderful details about their lives, Jewish journeys, and long history of engagement at SHS—here is a summary of their remarks below:

Jonathan Weiss

First, let me say thank you to the past Hatanei and Kallatot for bestowing this honor on me. I am truly honored to be named as the Hatan Torah for this year. My sense of gratitude for this is only slightly outweighed by the obligation to give this speech about what brought me here, and why I've been active in the community. I should start by saying that my general philosophy of speaking is to follow the three "Bs" (Be sincere, be brief, be seated, which is a quotation from FDR. I'll add that I always thought it was supposed to be "be amusing, be brief, be seated"). I'll do my best to deliver on both the authentic FDR saying as well as the alternative facts version of the saying.

I think it's worth saying that I don't have a linear path to describe my spiritual autobiography, so I am going to describe some vignettes or scenes from the path. In design, we like to refer to this sort of development as "iterative," which is a pretentious way of saying "roundabout."

Scene 1—Jonathan as a kid. I grew up in the suburbs of Washington DC and attended a conservative shul there, Ohr Kodesh. I was generally a Hebrew School nerd, although not always a huge fan of observance, possibly more interested in some of the unusual activities such as the annual "matzah meet," where different classes would create skits and songs about the Passover story. In retrospect, one of the things I think had a big impact on me was my mom's participation in an Adult Education class called "PEP," which stood for "Parent Education Program." Meeting monthly at one member's house or another, and led by one of my favorite Hebrew School teachers, my initial reaction was that it was a periodic imposition on my life where there'd be awesome food prepared, but it was not for me. In retrospect, it had much more meaning. Long before the phrase "lifelong learning" was familiar to me, PEP was a clear demonstration of that idea. This class went on for approximately 30 years, spending the first six or seven years working to analyze Genesis line by line. As I got older and heard bits of what the class entailed, I was impressed that a number of the parents (including my own) were challenging conventional beliefs and practices.

Scene 2—Midrasha Hebrew Theater

Post-B'nai Mitzvah and post-Confirmation, there was a community-based Hebrew High program at the local JCC in Rockville, MD that drew kids from all over the DC area. I took Ulpan (although I think I've forgotten nearly all of it by now), and Hebrew Calligraphy (which I still remember). Mostly what I remember was getting a ride to the program with my older sister who was in the Midrasha Hebrew Theater. She and her friend, Marsha Chack, would practice singing in the car—every day all year long—working on the close harmonies of the "Ed Sullivan" song from *Bye Bye Birdie*. It was so much fun to listen and sing along. I knew I wanted to get involved, so the following year I joined the cast, playing Mayor Shinn in "The Music Man." I had been involved in plays and musicals at school before, but now the script had been translated to Hebrew, which made it that much more challenging and satisfying. I don't remember my lines, but I remember the refrain "Tsuris... Tsuris... Tsuris... Yesh po b'River City!" among others. (Shiv'im v' Shi-shah trombonim b'rosh mitzad.)

Continued on page 25

Scene 3—College in New York City

A number of my closest friends were Jewish (more than in High School); really, there was more of a connection to Jewish culture rather than observance. Maybe being in New York City with such a large Jewish population led us to react the way many secular Jews in Israel did at the time—saying that just living in NY was Jewish enough. After a few years, though, I started going to weekly Shabbat services and Shabbat dinners with a group called Reform Jews at Columbia, because the co-leader of that group was my friend Abigail Wolf. She's the reason I went, but I also really connected with the close community of this group, which was lead by a guitar-playing young Rabbi who introduced me to some new melodies. Plus, there was an emphasis on understanding what it was we were saying. To this day, when I recite the silent Amidah, I sing the "Adonai, S'fatai Tif-tach" prelude to myself in the melody that I learned at RJC.

Scene 4—Philly Bound

When I graduated from Architecture School, I moved to Philadelphia in 1992, where Abigail was in medical school. I was working at a job that demanded long hours, including weekends. One of my colleagues who used to come in on Saturday afternoons was my friend Adam Levy, who would often talk about how he loved spending Shabbat at SHS. When Abigail was pregnant with Ned, we visited SHS on Adam's recommendation. We joined but were not very involved at first. I remember that we met Dan and Dana Feinberg (Dana was also expecting, and Sam was born around the same time as Ned) at an event for new members and having awkward interactions with Rabbi Caine, who seemed very interesting but hard to connect with, one-on-one.

Unfortunately, it was only a few years later that I saw SHS's supportive community come together at Adam's funeral, which occurred during the first month of Avi's tenure here. There was an amazing outpouring of grief and support from this community and beyond.

Not long after that, Abigail and I took Avi's "Nuts and Bolts" class—I remember Harry and Eleanor were also in our class—and it was a true revelation to me to take on an adult point of view toward religious material that I'd last studied as a teenager. So when Avi offered a parents' class during Sunday School, we were ready to get involved. We actually found a great group of like-minded parents who agreed to meet during Sunday School hours in the three weeks between Avi's monthly teaching sessions. Self-directed, we chose our own agendas and rotated discussion leadership duties. Every Sunday, we met at Java Coffee on 4th Street for several years. It was as close as I've come to my mom's PEP class, and it was a great experience. It was fun to explore many different sides of Judaism—food, superstitions, myths, and practices—both at home and in the synagogue. I hoped we were encouraging that same idea of life-long learning to our kids that I learned from my parents (now that I was old enough to appreciate them).

Several years later, I made the "mistake" of taking the time to raise issues and concerns about the Hebrew School with Education Director Merle Salkin and found myself on the Education Committee. Within a year or so, I was the Chair of the committee when Marsha Heit took the opportunity to step down after many years at the helm. My mom cautioned me, saying that the Education Committee was the gateway to her joining the Board and assuming the presidency at her own synagogue. I knew that would never happen to me. I think we all know where this is going. Note to self—"Listen to your mother."

Conclusions:

From the perspective of the outsider, it's easy to feel like we want to give ideas about the way things should be, to say what we think is wrong with the larger group or organization, and insist that "someone oughta do something!" I feel like I spent a lot of my time feeling that way about issues in the synagogue—"They should change this, or they should do things this way." After a while, I realized that there is no "they"—we are the "they," and if we want things to change, we need to show up and work to change them.

Continued on page 26

At first I was afraid to take on a role in synagogue leadership, but at each step I have been welcomed and encouraged. It's been very rewarding to become part of the "they"—to recognize our successes and understand where we fall short. Being involved on the Education committee, on the Board, on the Executive Committee, as President, as Past President—and now as a member of the Building Committee—that participating in SHS activities and initiatives is a really rewarding experience. As much as I've given to SHS, I've received much more in return in terms of support from the leadership, staff, and the members.

There are a lot of ways that I connected to Judaism and to SHS—through music, art, food, and education—but all of it comes back to finding community. After I had been a member for a number of years, I found out that my office is close to where Al Sutnick lives. I used to run into Al and Mona as they walked past my office towards their gym to work out, and it gave me a warm feeling to run into a friend when I wasn't expecting it.

You get out of a community what you put into it. Seven years ago last May, my older sister Sarabeth passed away suddenly, and I received incredible support—first, in a call from Avi when I was in Washington for the funeral and Shiva, and later when the SHS community arranged a local Shiva minyan at our house when we'd returned. I don't want to dwell too much on that, but the support of this community (and Hazzan Jessi, who came and sang an El Maleh Rachamim at the Shiva as well), meant more to me than I can ever express.

Once again, I want to thank you all for granting me this honor, and humoring my (not as brief as I might have been) comments regarding my pathway here. Thank you for being my community until now, and in the years to come.

Gail Massey

Thank you, Terry, for the introduction. You should know that Terry and others did all the heavy lifting in the activities she mentioned that I helped with in her introduction. I was the side person—usually just arranging for the food. But, it seems that the way to a synagogue congregation's heart is through its stomach!

I am very humbled by this honor. I love this tradition that Avi brought to SHS and try to attend the luncheon every year. So, a little about me.

Judaism has always been part of my life. My father helped start two synagogues when I was growing up—one in Springfield, Delaware County, and the other in Miami. He was acting Rabbi much of the time. I went to Sunday School in fire houses, and Hebrew School was often in our living room or basement. I am not particularly religious or spiritual, but I do have a great appreciation of tradition. Holman's and my wedding in 1970 involved a Reform Rabbi and an Episcopal Priest. We moved here in 1974, the year the storefront synagogue in West Philly closed its doors. We attended High Holiday services at Hillel and participated in a few short-lived havurah.

In the summer of 1976, we started synagogue shopping. (We had already found a welcoming church, St. Mary's on the Penn campus.) We went to one synagogue. It was too churchlike for my Episcopal husband. We tried a second synagogue. It was much too formal. They used fine china at the oneg, and we were the youngest couple there by at least 20 years. Finally, we visited SHS, and it was JUST RIGHT! We arrived during the July 4th weekend of the bicentennial. We were greeted by a little old lady in colonial garb. Of course this little old lady, Rebecca Helbein, was probably younger then, than I am now. Anyhow, this young interfaith couple was welcomed and treated with respect by this warm intergenerational congregation. We were very comfortable in a liberal, egalitarian congregation.

It wasn't until many years later that I realized most Conservative congregations at that time were not egalitarian. In addition to the leadership of Ivan Caine and Alan Cohn, student rabbis from the RRC—including Richard Hirsh, Lee Friedlander, and, more recently, Nathan—have contributed to the vibrancy of the synagogue.

Continued on page 27

Now, some memories.

Parlor Meetings.

We had a West Philly parlor meeting. I met Fran Gallun's parents way before I met Fran and Len.

Break-the-Fast Meals.

At some early break-the-fast I worked with Stan Woloff's parents before I knew Stan and Judy.

Midi-Fairs.

The most memorable one was the year that the Philadelphia Department of Public Health decided to visit all the local outdoor festivities. I was at the food table. We got wind that the inspector was walking towards our fair. We had a tray of Eleanor Jarosh's delicious homemade knishes on the table. What to do??! Linda Goldner, who was at there helping out, was wearing a long skirt. She sat on a chair. We put foil on the tray of knishes and quickly hid it under her skirt. I stood in front of the chair. The inspector strolled into the courtyard. The hotdogs were fine. They were either on the grill or in the ice chest. The cookies were fine. No need for strict temperature control. He never saw those knishes. Phew! Does anyone actually think the knishes would have been sitting in the sun for more than 10 minutes anyway, before they were gobbled up by hungry fair-goers?

I also have a waffle iron that I bought at Roger Bryan's flea market booth at the fair. I've never used it. If the person who donated it would like it back, it's still in the same condition as it was when they dropped it off.

Ecology retreats.

With Debra Caine's guidance, SHS sponsored family ecology retreats for several years. They were held before Memorial Day, when there was still a bit of chill in the air, before the cabins were spruced up for the summer. There were guest leaders, and usually there was a theme. The theme one year was not to waste anything, including food. There is a Hebrew phrase for that, but I don't remember it. I do remember this story though. To set the scene, I must remind you that Rabbi Ivan Caine was a bit of a germophobe. At lunchtime, my daughter, Esther, took a large helping of child-friendly macaroni and cheese. But, being a picky eater, she didn't like it. Standing right next to her was Rabbi Caine. She proceeded to scrape her unwanted cheesy pasta right onto his plate. OH NO! WHAT WOULD HE DO? HE ATE IT!

Synaplex.

It was a program started by Rabbi Phil Warmflash of the Jewish Learning Venture. The idea was to have several different activities going on at once at the synagogue to engage people with varied interests. As you can see if you look at the Saturday morning schedule even now, this has had a lasting influence on SHS. Let me tell you about two of my favorites.

The first was a program about the Abayudayan Jews of Uganda, featuring a guest speaker from that community. The Abayudayan Jews invented a form of Judaism, only to discover years later that an established Jewish religion already existed. I decided to try and make a Ugandan style lunch for the occasion. I consulted the Internet and a friend of my daughter's who had spent a few months in Uganda in the Peace Corps until she and her parasites returned to the states. I was very flattered when our guest not only cleaned his plate but went back for seconds.

The second program featured teens from the Urban Nutrition Initiative. This was a program started at the University of Pennsylvania that taught nutrition principles to local West Philly high school students. They taught them about farming, cooking, and carpentry.

Continued on page 28

These teens then took over the SHS kitchen and produced a remarkable meal, partly with produce they had grown. So, I hope you'll excuse me if I spend part of Saturday mornings at the farmers' market purchasing their fresh produce.

Mentoring and caring for children.

Holman and I have two children. Alan is here today with his wife Jessica and two sons, Arlo and Asa. Many of you know Esther. She was the first Ann Spak Thal graduate to be hired to teach here, and she taught many of your children in Sunday School. As an example of the warmth of the congregation towards our children—when Esther moved to her South Philly apartment, she was immediately invited for Shabbat dinner with the Ziskind family.

Merle Salkin was a mentor to both of my children. In Esther's case, she also had an important mentor outside of SHS, Gwendolyn Bye, her dance teacher. I think sometimes they were in a tug-of-war for Esther's time; but, in the end, they both won. Esther is currently the Dance and Cultural Arts Director at the JCC in Omaha.

Merle also managed to keep Alan here through Hebrew High. And there is a great picture of Merle and Alan sharing a camel ride in Israel. Now Alan is teaching Arlo about Judaism.

Esther's wedding.

Staci said I had to talk about Esther's big SHS wedding and the twinkle lights. The Social Hall needed to be decorated. Now, I can decorate tables, but this room was daunting. So, I bought yards and yards of periwinkle tulle and a couple of glue guns, invited a few artistic friends (including Staci and Fran), and gave them free reign. Alan and his cousin, Will, hung the twinkle lights. The room was transformed! And two credits to add. The day pre-school restarted, I called to see when it would be convenient for me to come in and put back the Playschool decorations that we had removed. I was thrilled to learn that Staci had already taken care of this chore! Alas, at some point the twinkle lights came down. Then an event was scheduled that really needed those twinkle lights, and Alan actually agreed to re-string them around the poles once again.

So, the reason I am at SHS is because the people here support each other. I want to thank everyone who has made, and will continue to make, this synagogue such a wonderful place.

November Anniversaries

Alan Ominsky & Marlene Lachman
Steven Datlof & Diane Harrison
Steve & Lisa Eizen
Robert & Wilma Bass
Michael & Holly Gorsen
Neil Cohen & Debra Weissbach
Jim & Julie Wilson
Jerome & Lois Rosenberg
Andrew & Jane Newman
Kinney Zalesne & Scott Ziff
Jeremey & Fran Newberg
Jay & Phyllis Denbo
Jud Aaron & Sue Snedden

December Anniversaries

Jerome Kranzel & Rian Berger
Amy & Adam Shapiro
Dan Bogen & Erica Ginsburg
Joshua Cooper & Jamie Cooperstein
Michael Rochester & Carole Le Faivre-Rochester
Jordan Segal & Natalie Lesser
Len Weinberg & Fran Gallun
Harvey & Bonnie Weiner
Alan & Deborah Casnoff
Jonathan Weiss & Abigail Wolf
Michael Roe & Joy Lander Roe
Stephen & Susan Lesnoff
Andrew Seaberg & Nella Bloom

November Birthdays

Alexander Botwick
Rachel Goldfinger
Andrew Newman
Lillian Shemtov
Jacob Wycoff
Patricia Ryan
Richard Huggett
Henry Gutstadt
Gabrielle Applebaum
Fanny Korman
David Ladov
Jacqueline Pack Segal
Mark Dembert
Ira Kauderwood
Sarah Levitsky
Lia Oxman
Arthur Cherry
Scotty Jordan
Ron Kaiser
Edward Kaplan
Alan Tobacman
Laura Bottaro
Sophie Bottaro
Nancy Burd
Frank Goodman
Micah Hart
Marcie Ziskind
Deborah Casnoff
Sara Chrismer
Aaron Edelman
Sarah Schoenholtz
Maxwell Nelson
Sosi Shelley
Cora Michaels-Koenig
Grace Siegel
Eryn Appel
Terry Novick
Ronald Spiegel
Pelley Brown
Rina Mitchell
Rebecca Rohtbart
Sophia Rick Yudell

December Birthdays

Roberta Jacobs Meadway
Emily Zimmerman
Jessi Roemer
Wendy Brookstein
Stanton Salkin

December Birthdays cont'd

Sarah Buse-Morely
Meranda Love
Ella Marchant
Holly Gorsen
Howard Sedran
Joel Chernock
Ezra Edelman
Evelyn Eisenstadt
Myron Bloom
Ariana Eizen
Myra Silverstein
Joanna Hart
Arthur Shapiro
Wendy Greenspan
Talia Femia
Joanna Bottaro
Max Ladenson
Phoebe Ladenson
Robin Schatz
Steven Eizen
Judith Lalli
Roberto Pace
Barry Slosberg
Ned Weiss
Allison Benton
Aaron Wolson
Margot Oxman
Barbara Spector
Steven Gendler
Joshua Goldwert
Thomas Kline
Hannah Myers
Daniel Weil
Alexander Ehrlich
Abigail Gendler
Joan Goodman
Steven Greenberg
Clara Landes
David Paskin
Stanley Woloff
Cole Pressman
Ira Silverstein
Rebecca Buse-Morely
Lisa Coran
Stephen Klasko
Isaac Torchinsky-Field
Barbara Miller
Jamie Cooperstein
Samuel Datlof
Joel Hirsch
Lindsay Saligman

November 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
					5:30 PM Young Families Group 6:15 PM Kabbalat Shabbat Service	Vayera 9 AM Torah Study 9:30 AM Bar Mitzvah of Jacob Mono
5 9 AM SS 11 AM HS 11 AM Israel Trip Presentation	6	7 7:15 AM Minyan 4:15 PM HS	8 7 PM Joint Immigration at BZBI 7:30 PM Pirke Avot & Spiritual Direction w/ Rabbi Berman	9	10 5 PM Playschool Shabbat Dinner 6:15 PM Kabbalat Shabbat Service	11 Hayyei Sarah Veterans Day 9 AM Torah Study 10 AM Shabbat Services 10:15 AM Shabbat Study w/ Rabbi Berman
12 9 AM SS 9:15 AM Nuts & Bolts w/ Rabbi 11 AM HS 11:15 AM Nosh & Schmooze w/ Rabbi	13 7 PM ECM	14 7:15 AM Minyan 4:15 PM HS 7 PM The Not-Quite-Annual God Lecture w/ Rabbi	15	16	17 9 – 11 AM PS Open House 6:15 PM Gimel Dalet Class Service & Dinner	18 To'ldot 9 AM Torah Study 10 AM Shabbat Services Society Hill Fall Clean Up Day
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
9 AM SS 11 AM HS 11 AM The Jewish Nation w/ Rafi Licht		7:15 AM Minyan 4:15 PM HS 6:30 PM SHSpirit in Song 7 PM Anti-Semitism 7:30 PM Intro to Hebrew	12:30 PM Playschool Dismissal 1 PM Office Closes	Thanksgiving Day Building Closed 	Office & Playschool Closed 6:15 PM Kabbalat Shabbat Service	Vayetzei 9 AM Torah Study 9:30 AM Bar Mitzvah of Harry Feinberg
26	27	28	29	30		
Building Closed	7 PM BDM	7:15 AM Minyan 4:15 PM HS 6:30 PM SHSpirit in Song 7 PM Anti-Semitism 7:30 PM Intro to Hebrew	7 PM Education Committee Meeting	Arts & Culture Theatre & Dinner Offsite		

December 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
					6:15 PM Kabbalat Shabbat Service	Vayishlah 9 AM Torah Study 9:30 AM Bar Mitzvah of Scotty Jordan
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9 AM SS 9:15 AM Nuts & Bolts with Rabbi 11 AM HS 11 AM The Jewish Nation w/ Rafi Licht		7:15 AM Minyan 6:30 PM SHSpirit in Song 7:30 PM Intro to Hebrew	Playschool Parent Conferences 7:30 PM Pirke Avot & Spiritual Direction w/ Rabbi Berman		GWCTS Friday Only-No Service	Vayeishev 9 AM Torah Study 10:15 AM Shabbat Study w/ Rabbi Berman 10:30 AM Vav Class Service
10	11	1 st Candle 12	13	14	15	16
9-11 AM SS/HS 11 AM Hanukkah Happening	7 PM ECM	7:15 AM Minyan 6:30 PM SHSpirit in Song 7:30 PM Intro to Hebrew	Hanukkah Day 1 	Hanukkah Day 2	Hanukkah Day 3 Last Day of PS 5:30 PM Young Families Group 6:15 PM TGIShabbat & Hanukkah Celebration w/ Bob & Dan Blacksberg	Miketz Hanukkah Day 4 9 AM Torah Study 10 AM Shabbat Services
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Hanukkah Day 5 9 AM SS 9:15 AM Nuts & Bolts with Rabbi 11 AM HS 11:15 AM Nosh & Schmooze w/ Rabbi	Hanukkah Day 6	Hanukkah Day 7 7:15 AM Minyan 4:15 PM Last Day of Hebrew School 6:30 PM SHSpirit in Song 7:30 PM Intro to Hebrew	Hanukkah Day 8		6:15 PM Kabbalat Shabbat Service followed by Shabbat Dinner w/ Chinese Food	Vayiggah 9 AM Torah Study 10 AM Shabbat Morning Services 10 AM Meditative Service
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Building Closed	Christmas Building Closed	7:15 AM Minyan 6:30 PM SHSpirit in Song 7 PM BDM 7:30 PM Intro to Hebrew			6:15 PM Kabbalat Shabbat Service	Va'yhi 9 AM Torah Study 10 AM Shabbat Services
31	1	2				
New Year's Eve Building Closed	New Year's Day Building Closed	7:15 AM Minyan 7:45 AM PS Resumes 4:15 PM HS Resumes 7:30 PM Intro to Hebrew				

SOCIETY HILL SYNAGOGUE

418 Spruce Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Avi Winokur, **Rabbi**
Nathan Kamesar, **Student Rabbi**
Jessi Roemer, **Hazzan**
Harry Oxman, **President**
Betty van de Rijn, **Executive Director & Keshet Publisher**
Sahar Oz, **Education Director**
Gloria Parris & Ali Kaplan, **Playschool Co-Directors**
Staci Schwartz, **Keshet Editor**

