

Now is Our Time to Engage in Social Justice

By PRESIDENT MICHAEL CHERTOK

Although we celebrated our Jewish New Year a few months ago, the secular New Year offers another chance for us to reflect and make resolutions. This year, many of us are deeply concerned about the political shift in our nation, and what it means for our country, the Bay Area, and for us as Jews. As I write this, there are many uncertainties. And it is clear that a new administration will move us away from some of the priorities our community cares deeply about. I believe it is imperative for us to take action. Personally, I've been recalling the political climate when Ronald Reagan was elected

"A new administration will move us away from some of the priorities our community cares deeply about. I believe it is imperative for us to take action."

- President Michael Chertok

President in 1980, and again in 1984.

For me, this was a formative period; I started college at this time and became an activist. I researched and wrote about the Nuclear Freeze campaign. I joined the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry. I served as a leader of a gay and lesbian group on campus, and organized rallies to push my university to respond to the AIDS crisis.

Sha'ar Zahav was also deeply engaged in social justice during this period. We were part of the sanctuary movement to provide safe haven for Central American refugees fleeing civil conflict. The congregation not only organized to take care of our own during the AIDS epidemic, we also worked to create changes in funding for research and treatment. And, within Reform Judaism,

our members pushed to gain recognition for gay clergy, and later, for gay marriage. Then, several years ago, we joined the San Francisco Organizing Project (SFOP, now Faith in Action). Together with local congregations and schools, we lobbied the City's supervisors to create Healthy San Francisco to ensure that people in San Francisco without insurance had access to healthcare. These are just a few examples of Sha'ar Zahav's legacy of social action. Part of what binds us together at Sha'ar Zahav is our deep commitment to tikkun olam. In our tradition, these are the (*continued on pg. 14*)



Our Defining Moment

By RABBI TED RITER



On January 20, 2017, we'll wake up to a world of unknowns: What will life be like for me under the new administration? How will the progress we have made over the past eight years be reversed? How will this moment in time define the future of our country and the world?

For some of us, the questions will also be: What is my role now? How am I, as a ____(fill in the blank)_____ going to define this moment for myself? Who am I being called upon to be today? Our Sha'ar Zahav community is asking a similar question: What role do we have in this new climate?

Thought-leaders, pundits and even comedians have been giving us advice on what to do next, how this moment could change (at least temporarily) the course of history, and how to be in this new world. Though I encourage all of us to ask the questions above, I admit that I am still forming my own answer. In the meantime, I continue to return to my Facebook post written the morning after the election: Last night, I watched my daughter sleep. The polls were closed and the election had been called. And, she slept so peacefully. A pack of coyotes howled wildly, closer than I had ever heard before. And, she slept so peacefully. The sun rose this morning. I started making breakfast. And, she still slept so peacefully.

Because she is still only a beautiful 7-yearold little girl, I don't yet know what her life will look like or what this election will mean for her. I don't yet know if she, as a Chineseborn girl who is Jewish through adoption and conversion, will have a lifetime of sleeping so peacefully.

But I do know this: I've written on her mirrored closet door that she is "strong, smart, beautiful, loving, brave and loved." I know that if she holds these ideals to be true and feels unabashed, uninhibited, fierce love from me and others, no election will define her future. No amount of racism, sexism, antisemitism, xenophobia, and hatred will hold her back from experiencing the blessings of the world and living the life she is gifted to live.

May this new era in America be one in which you and I, and my daughter Orli, define ourselves as strong, smart, beautiful, loving, brave and loved.

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What a Sound We Can Make

By CANTOR SHARON BERNSTEIN



Years ago, I had the idea of starting an organization called Musical Alliance of Religions and Peoples. It was during President Bill Clinton's second term, and I fantasized about locking him and Ken Starr in a room and making them teach lullabies to each other until they started getting along. I thought that

singing together — particularly lullabies — was a foolproof form of bonding that would help people establish foundations from which they could work together on resolving deep conflict.

Naive? Absolutely – and this was before I considered all of the bands throughout history that fell apart because the members couldn't stand each other. More seriously, I came to realize that music and dialogue cannot, on their own, resolve deep systemic problems and societal rifts. But I still believe in the power of singing. I believe that diverse people can come together in music and song, and from there go to conversation, and then to dialogue, and eventually to understanding and even problem solving. So in November, the week after the most divisive presidential race in US history, we put together an impromptu multi-faith Community Sing at Sha'ar Zahav. We were joined by many folks from both within and outside the CSZ community; in particular, we were blessed to welcome Pastor Jane Mc-Dougle and congregants from Holy Innocents Episcopal Church.

Singing together that night was tonic for the soul: buoyant, deep and life-giving, supported hugely by our pick-up band of Carolyn Reiser, Dan Meer and Nate Levine. We sang "With a Little Help from My Friends," "Love Grows One by One," "Hallelujah," and "The Rainbow Connection" as if our lives depended on it.

We don't know how things will unfold over the next months. But the one thing I know is that the brokenness, the divisiveness can't continue. We've got to reach out to one another, build connections and get to know each other so that we can be there for each other.

We'll be doing a Community Sing again, maybe even again and again, with additional community partners, widening our networks, building strength and resilience together through song.

The vocal cords are made of thin tissue, but oh, what a sound they can make — particularly when we all use them together.

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Future Scholar

Gil'i Zaid, son of Hilary Zaid and Lauren Augusta, will be called to the Torah as a bar mitzvah on January 21. A member of Sha'ar Zahav since birth, Gil'i is a seventh grader at Contra Costa Jewish Day School in Lafayette. He loves baseball and has enjoyed five seasons in the



SHA'AR ZAHAV BAR MITZVAH

North Oakland/South Oakland Little League, where he's known for his outstanding fielding, RBIs and stellar batting average. Gil'i was very happy to petition successfully for a baseball rotation in his school's P.E. program.

He is a superb scholar who loves math. Last year, he was named among the top-ranked national participants in the International Mathematical Kangaroo competition. When he's not knocking tennis balls over the neighbors' rooftops, Gil'i enjoys spending time with his dogs and his friends, pulling taffy and speaking in the patois of online games his parents do not understand.

Gil'i and his mothers and older brother Ro'e Zaid would like to express our special thanks to his bar mitzvah mentor Ami Zusman. Our bar mitzvah preparations would not be possible without the help of Cantor Bernstein, Rabbi Riter, Ora Prochovnick and the amazing families of the 2016/17 B'nei Mitzvah Chavurah.

Online Comedian, Offline Friend

Harry Lahn-Schroeder, son of Deena Lahn and Mary Schroeder, will be called to the Torah as a bar mitzvah on January 7th. He is a lifelong member of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav. Harry is a seventh grader at the Brandeis School of San Francisco. He has many good friends stretching back to pre-school, and he enjoys playing video games with them online and telling jokes and funny stories with them in person. In the summers he attends U Camps, a creative arts camp where he has both acted and directed in original short films. He also enjoys playing flag football and trampoline dodgeball, swimming and riding roller coasters.

Harry would like to thank his bar mitzvah mentor, Merle Malakoff, for his support and dedication.



Animal Rights Activist

Oona Alexandra, daughter of Jessica Alexandra and Tony Villaluna, will be called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah on March 25. Oona lives with two dogs and two cats, her older sister Maxima, and her ima (mother). She is a seventh grader at Aptos Middle School, where she has been a dedicated library assistant since 6th grade. Oona's mitzvah projects included: working at the food bank, cleaning up trash from her neighborhood and Golden Gate Park, working with Kulanu, an organization that works around the world to support isolated and emerging Jewish communities, visiting seniors, and holding bake sales to raise money for the SPCA.

Oona is an avid animal rights activist and has never met an animal she does not want to pet (unless it has more than 4 legs). Oona has followed in her sister's footsteps and participates in GirlVentures, which provides opportunities for girls to rock climb and spend time in the California wilderness. There's nothing



Oona likes better than the challenge of a steep, vertical wall with an overhang. Oona was introduced to the joys of roller derby by her Beit Sefer teacher, Staci, and now dreams of becoming a jammer for a Bay Area team.

Oona wants to thank her bat mitzvah mentor Ora Prochovnick, who she says is the "best mentor ever!"

SHA'AR ZAHAV MAZEL TOV

Nachas:

Sept 1st - Congratulations to Andrew Ramer on the publication of his new book, *Torah Told Different: Stories for a Pan/Poly/Post-Denominational World.*

Oct 29th - Congratulations to Shai Garrett Garcia-Goldberg on becoming a bar mitzvah.

SHA'AR ZAHAV CONDOLENCES

May Their Memories Be For a Blessing

Sept

Natalie Fried, mother of Laura Lowe

Jean Chalmers, sister of Tiela Chalmers

Oct

Bertrand Bell, father of Judith Bell

Karen Zullo Sherr,

step-mother of Ellen Novogrodsky, mother-in-law of Stephanie Godt, and grandmother of Avidan and Chava Novogrodsky-Godt

Nov

Robert Hillel Bernstein, father of Ray Bernstein

Your Input Matters

By ADAM POLLACK / Director of Engagement



I get asked all the time, "What does a Director of Engagement do?" My answer is, "you tell me." In other words, my role is to explore why you come to CSZ and to respond by creating programming, communications, member services, and volunteer opportunities

that meet those needs. I'm not a customer service rep, but rather a friendly ear ready to listen to your newest passion, your raison d'etre, and your deepest spiritual needs. I care, and I want to ensure that Sha'ar Zahav continues to be a place where you can see those needs being met.

Since Rosh Hashanah, we have created new opportunities to engage with CSZ. For example, we have increased programming and streamlined communications, making it easier to know what's happening here and to give you ways to participate and shape our community. In 2017 we will also launch new ways for you to organize yourselves around social action projects, learning and social programs.

We also recently launched Sha'ar Zahav's new website, our two-way communication platform designed for conversations between staff and members, and between CSZ and the broader world. This project took several months to complete and required many hours of work by member volunteers. Thank you to them for their time and efforts, for without them our site would not be as useful as it is today. Our website is a physical manifestation of our values: authenticity, empathy, engaging with difference, and commitment. These values can be seen on every page. For example, you will find member stories throughout the site, shining a light on our diversity and the ways Sha'ar Zahav has affected individual lives. I invite you to read those stories, and to return to the website as more stories are added.

"We have increased programming and streamlined communications, making it easier to know what's happening here and to give you ways to participate and shape our community." -Adam Pollack

I also encourage you to share your story, either on our website (contact me for details), via Facebook, or with me.

I am honored to serve Sha'ar Zahav in this capacity. You are a truly talented and dedicated group of individuals that created and continue to build a unique Jewish community.

"Torah is not education, it's transformation." - Rebbitzen Dena Weinberg

You Have to Ask Why

By LEEAHT SEGEV / Director of Education



I recently sat down with Rabbi Riter over lunch to discuss the future of Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer (BSPM). As I talked about specific activities, programs and curriculum ideas, he encouraged me to take a step back and first ask why? Because, he said, to

know where you're going, first asking why makes you fully aware of where you are starting from. Why are our families here? Why do they want a Jewish education for their children? What do they envision those children will look like as Jewish adults? Then we can figure out a program that addresses those whys. So I thought it was only appropriate in my first column as Sha'ar Zahav's Director of Education to share my own personal why. Why am I here? Why do I do what I do?

My grandfather is a Holocaust survivor. Growing up, I remember hearing about his harrowing stories of survival and feeling as if I carried a personal responsibility. My family survived when so many others did not. When my daughter was born, I realized my responsibility was not just in bringing Judaism to my children, but that I had a larger purpose in the Jewish world. I have now found that larger purpose in Jewish education. My why was to educate a new generation of Jewish children. Bigger than that, my goal as an educator was not just to teach them "I realized my responsibility was not just in bringing Judaism to my children, but that I had a larger purpose in the Jewish world."

- Leeaht Segev

Torah stories or Hebrew. It was to help these kids find their own why. Why is it important to be Jewish? Why is there still relevancy for Judaism in our modern world? My personal history and my questions inform my vision of what a religious school should be. For me, it's not solely about school. Yes, it's important to teach Hebrew, Torah and holidays and we absolutely should teach these Jewish components. Yet, if we only focus on these subject matters, then we lose that why.

If we balance book learning with the search for deeper meaning, we create a future generation of Jewish adults who see the beauty in Judaism — the community, the values, and the deep spirituality that being part of such a rich tradition brings to our lives. They will engage in Jewish learning not just until they are 13, but for their whole lives. That is my why.

BSPM VOLUNTEERS NEEDED — Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer is looking for congregants to volunteer in the school on Saturday mornings. Here are some of their needs: Hebrew tutors to work with small groups of students and volunteer leaders to run special group projects, such as music, art, filmmaking, and gardening. Have another special skill you could teach? Contact Leeaht Segev, Director of Education, at education@shaarzahav.org for more information.

The Rabbi Search Is On!

By ALEX INGERSOLL & KAREN SCHILLER

By the time you read this, the members of the Rabbi Search Committee will be reading through resumes, setting up interviews and preparing to recommend to the Va'ad the one candidate who we believe is the right person to become our next "settled" rabbi. How did we get to this point and what is your role in all this?

Back in May, Michael Chertok asked each of us if we would be willing to co-chair the Rabbi Search Committee. With the help of Michael, Rabbi Riter and Cantor Bernstein, we assembled a committee consisting of Immediate Past President Laura Lowe, Sha'ar Zahav co-Founder Daniel Chesir, Ray Bernstein, Don Fisher, Rachel Nancollas, Mark Pressler and Judy Schwartz. At our first meeting in August, we discussed our responsibilities to the Sha'ar Zahav community and started detailing the rabbinic qualities which would best serve our congregation.

Because Sha'ar Zahav is a member of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), we have access to the placement services of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR). Using the information that you had given us during the strategic planning process and the Listening Campaign held shortly after Rabbi Angel left, plus the reports we got from LightBox Collaborative's work, and with very helpful input from Rabbi Riter, Cantor Bernstein and the Va'ad, we crafted an application that represents who we are as a congregation that "transcends the ordinary" and outlines the qualities we desire in our rabbi at this stage of our history. We submitted the application right after the High Holy Days and we immediately started receiving resumes.

So what comes next? The committee will be interviewing candidates by phone or skype - to learn more about them and to narrow the field. Then the top candidates will be invited to visit us in person – both to engage in more comprehensive interviews and to meet the congregation. While we aren't allowed to ask candidates to lead a service or give a drash, we will create opportunities for them to interact with members of the congregation in some way.

By March or April early spring, we hope to have identified the one person who we feel is the right rabbi for us. We'll bring our recommendation to the Va'ad, who will decide whether to bring our recommendation to the congregation at the Annual Meeting, where members will then have a responsibility to vote on whether or not to hire the candidate. Our new rabbi will join us on July 1, 2017.

Questions? You can reach the committee at shaarzahavrabbisearch@gmail.com.

SHA'AR ZAHAV DRASH : JEWS OF IRAN

Focus on Shiraz

PRESENTED BY RON LEZELL

Please join me at services on Friday, March 10th (the night before Purim), when I'll deliver a drash focusing on my December 2016 return visit with the Jewish community of Shiraz, Iran where I will be for the first two nights of Chanukah. I'll also speak about my visit to Hamadan and what is traditionally considered to be the tombs of Esther and Mordecai, once Iran's most important Jewish pilgrimage site.

Following services, you're invited to stay for a slide show and Q&A.

MUSIC OF THE NIGHT: A BROADWAY CONCERT AND SING ALONG

Let out your inner Broadway star! Join Cantor Leigh Korn and Cantor Sharon Bernstein in a scintillating evening of song, featuring tunes from your favorite shows plus a smattering of new songs to tickle your fancy. Reception to follow. Members \$10; non-members \$20.

Saturday, January 28, 8pm Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, San Francisco

Saturday, February 4, 8pm Temple Isaiah, Lafayette

For more information and to purchase tickets, please call **415-861-6932** or visit **www.shaarzahav.org**.

SHA'AR ZAHAV VA'AD NOTES

By MARC LIPSCHUTZ

During the September 2016 Va'ad meeting we:

- Were taught by Larry Wexler that our challenges, journeys, and achievements were also experienced by our Torah ancestors.
- Welcomed Leeaht Segev, our new Director of Education, and Adam Pollack, our new Director of Engagement.
- Documented ending fiscal year 2015-2016 with a surplus, in part due to members generously contributing to our Rainbow Campaign.
- Continued to logistically plan for our High Holy Days return to the Herbst Theater.
- Reviewed progress on designing a new CSZ logo.
- Approved a motion to use scholarships and payment plans to accept all children into BSPM, with non-member families with kindergarten through third grade students paying in full.
- Discussed a preliminary proposal for a grant submitted to the Jewish Community Federation for enhanced marketing of Siddur Sha'ar Zahav.

During the October 2016 Va'ad meeting we:

- Were taught by Marc Lipschutz that the Days of Joy of Sukkot and Simchat Torah are most fully experienced following the Days of Awe, and that separation, return and joy are all harmonies within the song of Ha'azinu, sung by Moses to us on the final day of his life.
- Renewed our first mortgage, with a relatively small principal, at a favorable rate, after completely paying off our second mortgage.
- Reviewed High Holy Days services held at the Herbst Theater, and shared overwhelmingly positive feedback provided by members and guests, along with a few suggestions for improvement. Our new logo was also positively received. Furthermore, generous donations completely covered our increased costs.
- Approved a motion to submit a formal grant request to JCF to create, package, and market CSZ liturgy.

All CSZ members are invited to attend Va'ad meetings, usually scheduled on the third Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m.



Sponsored by the Rabbi Julius and Pearl Funk Musical Events Fund.

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Claire Axelrad and Mark Pehlavan Andy Fyne & Richard Mikles with sincere appreciation for condolences given to Richard and me by members and clergy of this congregation on the passing of my mother

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Sept 9-10

Oneg by Jeffrey Auman in honor of Nathan Kling Flowers by Alice Harron in memory of her mother Bernice Kahn Harron

Sept 16-17

Oneg by David Lowe in memory of his beloved husband Daniel McGoldrick

Sept 23-24

Oneg by Marius Greenspan in memory of his father Earl Greenspan

Oct 7-8 Kiddush by anonymous

Oct 14-15

Oneg by James Carlson in memory of his grandfathers, Arthur Carlson and Filippo Tuzzolino Flowers by Joan Goldman in memory of Abraham & Ruth Goldman

Oct 21-22

Oneg by Yvette & Pierre Adida in memory of their sister-in-law Jeanne Kamra Pigeard

Oct 28-29 Kiddush by Jeffrey Auman in honor of Sharon Heath

Chai Fund (Cantor)

Jan Half

in honor of Sharyn Saslafsky's birthday

Oct 28-29

Flowers by Boaz Garcia-Goldberg in loving memory of Shai's birthmother Rabecca Daarud and his birth-grandfather Mike Daarud Oneg by Lisa Katz in memory of Norm Katz, her father Kiddush by Garcia-Goldberg family in honor of Shai Garrett Garcia-Goldberg becoming a bar mitzvah

Nov 4-5

Oneg by Jeanne Redseker & Diana Buchbinder in memory of Helen Buchbinder Kiddush by anonymous

Nov 18-19

Oneg by Mark Mackler & Wendell Choo in memory of Mark's mother Phyllis Mackler Flowers by Karen Schiller in memory of her father, Jay Leon Schiller on the 50th anniversary of his death

Dec 2-3

Klezmer Shabbat sponsored by Alex Ingersoll & Martin Tannenbaum in memory of Larry Tannenbaum

Dec 9-10

Flowers by Patty Caplan in memory of her father David Ralph Caplan

Dec 16-17

Oneg by Ellen Press in memory of Marvin Press, her father

Dec 23-24

Oneg by Wayne Bender in memory of Herman Bender, his father

Your contributions help us realize our commitment to building and maintaining a vibrant, living community for Congregation Sha'ar Zahav. A donation can be a meaningful way to honor friends or family, engagements, anniversaries, graduations, for special thanks, or to memorialize a loved one. Collectively, with your financial support, we continue to prosper, grow, and celebrate our future.

SHA'AR ZAHAV FROM OUR PRESIDENT

(continued from the cover)

acts of kindness we do to repair the world. Members of our community have found so many ways to make this commitment in their own lives. Many of us are employed in nonprofit, educational and government institutions in which this is our full-time job. Others (and sometimes the same ones!) have made deep commitments of their time as volunteers for a variety of causes. And members of our community have been extraordinarily generous in donating money.

Over the years, we've engaged as a community in a variety of ways. Sometimes we've acted in direct volunteer service to others, such as organizing brunches for AIDS patients at Kaiser and delivering meals with Project Open Hand. We've also done advocacy work with the sanctuary movement and the Healthy SF initiative. We may be drawn to one or other approach at different points in our lives; both are essential ways to raise our voices and make a difference. Now is our time to once again engage in social justice work as a community! Whether you're already involved or would like to start to engage in this work, I invite you to join with our Sha'ar Zahav community. Please share with us the organizations and movements that you're involved with and care deeply about. Invite us to come with you to volunteer. In the year ahead and beyond, our community needs you, and perhaps you need us too.

Please join us in creating opportunities for meaningful social change. Together we can build on our legacy of commitment to social justice and our experience of how to be most effective in this work. Together we can gather holy sparks of light and make a difference in the Bay Area, our nation and the world.

Michael can be reached at **president@shaarzahav.org**



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- 3 Aaron Nacamulli
- 0 Jerome Davis
- 14 Harry Clint Bigglestone
- Keith Fenton 18
- 20 George Ash
- 26 Cheryl Orvis
- 27 Bill Ashley-Dobbin
- 28 Nathan Eli Weinstein

February

- 1 Steven Richter
- 2 Stephen Walters
- 4 John Atteridg
- Ronald Wilmot 6
- 10 Helga Hahn
- 14 Ziggy Gimnicher
- Allen Harris 14
- 14 Barbara Rosenblum
- 15 Allan Ellis
- 17 Rabbi Jason Gaber
- 23 Leland Vogel
- 25 Evelyn Slenker

March

6

7

- Pearl Lewin
- Isabel Fishman
- 8 Seth Charney
- 8 Batya Kalis
- 16 Theodore Mendonca Jr.
- Jamie Rosen 16
- 21 Rabbi Sanford Lowe
- 23 Noah Nacamulli
- 23 Paul Nemrow
- 28 Neill Rosen
- James Harris Freedgood 31
- 31 Marvin Steele



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MUSIC IN THE MISHKAN CELEBRATES ITS CHAI (18th) SEASON!

Please join us in a special celebration of Music in the Mishkan's chai (18th) season on Sunday, March 5. Randy Weiss, Cantor Sharon Bernstein and the Bridge Players will present a musical extravaganza that includes Mozart, Brahms, Yiddish songs and a few surprises.

The concert begins at 4:00 p.m., followed by a celebration and reception. You can order tickets by calling the office at (415) 861-6932, or by finding the link on the CSZ website (www.shaarzahav.org).

The full program is listed below.

Sunday, March 5: A Musical Extravaganza! String Quintet C Major, K. 515—W.A. Mozart

Yiddish Songs—various composers Piano Quartet in G minor, Op. 25—Johannes Brahms

See you in March for this wonderful celebration!

