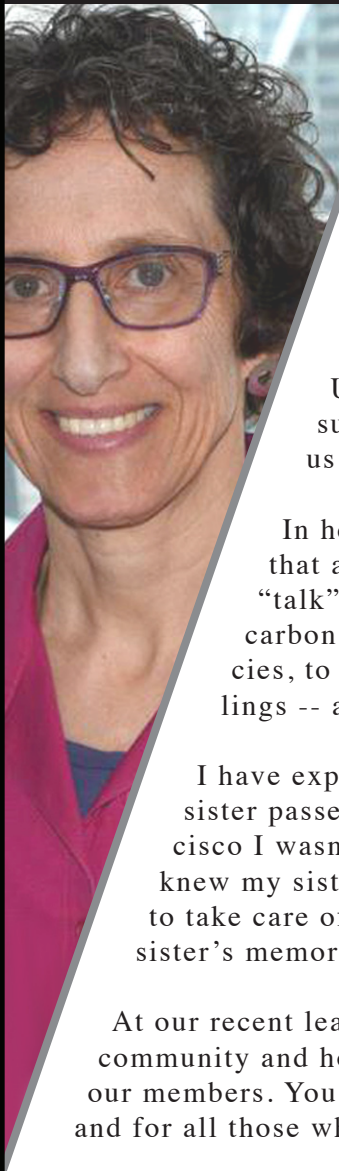




# The Jewish *Gaily Forward*

"Transcend the Ordinary"

Elul 5778 - Kislev 5779 / September 2018 - November 2018



## A Message From Our President

By NANCY LEVIN

**L' Shanah Tovah!** During this season of reflection and hope, I truly appreciate our Sha'ar Zahav community. At High Holy Day services especially, we see so many of our members leading us at the bimah, praying in the pews, volunteering in the aisles and feasting at the oneg at Erev Rosh Hashana and at break-the-fast on Yom Kippur.

Unseen, perhaps, are the Sha'ar Zahav connections, and networks of mutual support that feed and nurture us, especially in challenging times, that make us a community.

In her TED talk "How trees talk to each other," scientist Suzanne Simard says that a forest is much more than the individual trees we see. Below ground, trees "talk" to each other through a pallet of roots, soil, and microbial links. Trees send carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, and nutrients to each other, even to different species, to build others up. The network sends energy to distressed trees and to seedlings -- all to keep the forest organism resilient and sustainable!

I have experienced Sha'ar Zahav's "microbial links" first-hand. In January, after my sister passed away, my family sat shiva in Connecticut. When I returned to San Francisco I wasn't sure if I wanted a shiva minyan at Sha'ar Zahav since no one here really knew my sister. But two Sha'ar Zahav "angels" gently encouraged me and swooped in to take care of everything. That night, surrounded by the Sha'ar Zahav community, my sister's memory was honored and I was truly comforted.

At our recent leadership Advance, we focused on the meaning and importance of building community and how we can provide a sense of belonging, commitment, trust and meaning for our members. You were there for me. I want to ensure that our community is there for you, and for all those who come through our doors for many years to come.

May we all be inscribed and sealed for a sweet, healthy, fulfilling, and productive New Year.

**L' Shanah Tovah Tikatev V'Taihatem!**

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# Blessing Ourselves, Blessing Our World

By RABBI MYCHAL COPELAND



*The holy of holies is the heart of the whole world. - Zohar*

At the High Holy Days, we take stock of our intentions both for ourselves and for the world we live in. If we lose our focus during the year, the chaggim (holidays) are the time we remember and return to living more in line with

our deepest ideals. In the dramatic Yom Kippur afternoon service, we reenact the moment in the days of the Temple when the high priest entered the sacred Holy of Holies. Aaron begged G!d for forgiveness for his own shortcomings over the past year.

Then he asked G!d to forgive his family and community, and finally beseeched G!d for compassion upon the entire world. I envision these three groups as three concentric circles. In the center is the self. The next circle is family and community. The outside circle is the world. Imagine yourself as the high priest. As we close a year filled with many blessings but also intense turmoil, I invite you to ask yourself these questions in preparation for the High Holy Days.

- 1) What has changed over the past year for you?
- 2) What has changed for your family or chosen family? Our society? Our nation?
- 3) What has changed in the world?

Next, ask yourself where things are not what they could be:

- 1) Where have you fallen short of your own expectations this past year?
- 2) Do you have family members who have disappointed you?
- 3) How has our nation not lived up to what you believe are its deepest ideals? For what does our country need to do teshuva (repentance)?
- 4) How has our world fallen short of what we hope it could be?

Before leaving the Holy of Holies, Aaron asked G!d for forgiveness and blessing.

- 1) What blessing do you need for this coming year? What would allow you to enter 5779 with a renewed sense of purpose?
- 2) What blessing could be healing for your family? What blessing, and what actions, could we offer in the coming year to help our nation rise to its highest ideals?
- 3) What blessing can we offer our world?

See you at High Holy Day services where we will renew ourselves for 5779 and share our hopes for better selves and a better world.

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## To Change or Not to Change?

By CANTOR SHARON BERNSTEIN



Each year, approaching the High Holy Days, I do some self-reflection and come up with mental lists: things to think about and work on over the coming year, things I'd like to do better, things I want to change. My lists tend to be pretty much the same from year to year. I know I'm not alone in this - change is hard.

The High Holy Days are meant to drop-kick us into the new year with a clean slate, a full heart and soul, and a bucketful of resilience and fortitude. But the sheen often wears off too quickly with us soon hunkered back down into our usual pre-High Holy Day ways.

With that in mind, I've been thinking recently about the possibility of not changing. Or, rather, of looking at change from a different perspective. What if we were to think about it less as changing and more as becoming more fully who we are? Perhaps the High Holy Days can then be seen as an opportunity to scrape off the chaff, see who we are underneath, buff up our souls, and re-focus on that which is central. Groove on ourselves as b'tzelem Elohim, created in the

image of the Divine, and find ways to let our godly selves shine.

Which is not to say that change is never warranted; I certainly have some things I'm hoping to tweak this year. It's more a question of how we see that change and how we see ourselves. Perhaps we can see ourselves in a state of becoming, on a path of being, with the High Holy Days (and many of the other holidays in the Jewish calendar) offering us opportunities to shed light on that path, and dwell more fully in who we are.

Whether it's change or not-change that we're trying to do, the texts and prayers from the High Holy Days can supply ample reinforcement for visioning, centering, gratitude, action, self-improvement, healing, safety, support, and peace/wholeness. We can pick one or two that speak to us, and carry them with us throughout the year, using them as a meditation or guide. May the prayers, teachings, reflections, celebrations, and community that we experience together during this season provide us with many opportunities for being and becoming who we are and who we're meant to be.

Shanah Tovah um'tukah, wishing us all and everyone in the world a year of sweetness, health, safety, love, laughter, and growth.

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## Hillel's Educational Ingenuity

By SUE BOJDAK / Director of Education



The Talmud tells a great story about the famous Rabbi Hillel being approached by a prospective convert.

The man challenges Hillel telling him he will accept Judaism only if a rabbi will teach him the entire Torah while he, the student, stands on one foot. Hillel replies,

“That which is hateful unto you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole of the Torah; the rest is commentary. Go forth and study.” (Shabbat 31a)

I'm picturing the first day of Beit Sefer and a circle full of children on one foot while I hand down Hillel's directive. And that would conclude Beit Sefer for the year. Imagine the relief we would all feel. The kids retreat to the park. The parents return to family errands – or maybe even a walk or the morning paper. Our teachers are free to pursue other interests. Easiest school year ever.

Much is made of Hillel's educational ingenuity and even more of his succinct summation of what lies at the heart of Jewish practice: treat your neighbor as yourself. But as we know in Jewish life and learning, the rest of it, the commentary, it matters. Even more so, the quest for learning matters. And so Hillel's reply to the seeker isn't the summation of the learning; it's the very beginning. Now, “Go forth and study.”

One of the unique challenges of running a congregational school is how little time we have. Often we feel that we are trying to deliver the whole of Jewish life into this carefully balanced moment that kids and families carve out from among their many other obligations and com-

mitments. Into those few precious hours, 75-80 hours over the year or about two and a half weeks worth of secular school, what wisdom do we provide? We can look to Hillel's educational model for guidance. You start with the essence and you end with the invitation. You give students a piece of learning that is succinct but also challenging and surprisingly complex, and then you invite them to wrestle with it.

Let's take Hillel's instruction, which is totally straightforward until you try to live it: what does it mean “what is hateful to you”? What if I hate doing an activity that others love?

“We can look to Hillel's educational model for guidance. You start with the essence and you end with the invitation.” - Sue Bojdak

What if I am hateful to myself and I don't realize it? Who is my “neighbor”? How near or far do they have to be to matter or to be beyond my consideration? What if there's a hateful thing and I have to make a choice between myself and my neighbor? Who do I choose? And so we have commentary, we have study, and we have an invitation to wrestle with how to be a Jew.

At Beit Sefer, our mission is not to teach all of Torah while the children and families stand on one foot. It's to open up the study, to invite people of all ages into the wrestling; wrestling with the text, each other, the sacred, the tradition, and ourselves so that we can learn how to be Jews, yes, but also so that we can learn how to be neighbors. Let us go forth together and study.

Email Sue at: [education@shaarzahav.org](mailto:education@shaarzahav.org)

## The Legacy Fund: Why?

By NANCY MEYER

Sha'ar Zahav has been my family and my home since a sunny afternoon in 1978 when I ran into two friends who told me about a new gay synagogue. That Friday night I went to the Gay Center on Grove St and began my relationship with Sha'ar Zahav. I knew very little about my Jewish heritage at that time, knew nothing about the



service, and knew none of the tunes. Gradually I learned, became part of the community, and decided to study for a bat mitzvah. My bat mitzvah was the first of many life cycle ceremonies. In

1983, I met my wife Marilyn, z"l, at services. In 1993, she and our newborn son Daniel went to the mikvah as part of her conversion to Judaism. He also had his baby naming at SZ. In 1997, Marilyn developed cancer. The loving care from our community, both before and after her death, carried us through. And I can only say that her funeral and the ensuing shiva were beautiful, warm, and comforting. Daniel grew up at SZ. He attended Beit Sefer and became a bar mitzvah in 2006. His first job was playing guitar for Tot Shabbat and at tashlich. His godparents and my dearest friends are longtime members. SZ has been a source of strength through the death of Harvey Milk, the AIDS epidemic, and many other personal and political crises.

So the question is, how do we give back? With our hearts and prayers and volunteer activities, but also financially. Sha'ar Zahav's Legacy Fund is an important part of our long term financial planning. I have made the fund a beneficiary of my will, and it was an easy thing to do. For the love of who we are and what we do, I hope that you will too.

## SHA'AR ZAHAV COMMUNITY

### Kever Avot v'Imahot

By FLORENCE NACAMULLI

Sha'ar Zahav dedicated a section of Hills of Eternity Cemetery during the height of the AIDS epidemic. Since then we observe the Jewish tradition of visiting the graves of loved ones during the time of the High Holy Days. Our rabbi and a lay leader create a spiritual space where members and friends recall those who came before us, wherever they may be buried. Our visit is always scheduled on the Sunday between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Join us this year on September 16 at 10am for a service followed by a potluck brunch. This annual pilgrimage is one of life, memory, and community.



If you do plan to attend, please call Florence Nacamulli at **415-468-3237**, food coordinator.

## Gam & Marty

By HEIDY ZOHAR RAMIREZ / Director of Engagement

After being together for over 10 years, Gamaliel “Gam” Galindo and Martin “Marty” Fenstersheib will be married at their home in San Jose in October.

They first met while singing in the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus. Gam was living in San Francisco and Marty was living in San Jose. Their relationship blossomed, and Gam moved to San Jose to be with Marty.



Gam is a native Californian who attended Columbia University in New York. He has lived in France and Spain. After an early career as a classical composer, he decided to attend law school. He currently has a busy law practice in San Jose focusing on immigration law. Marty

grew up in Pennsylvania, where he became a pediatrician. After moving to California, however, he focused on public health. He was an early provider of HIV/AIDS care in Santa Clara County. Marty served as the Public Health Officer for the County of Santa Clara for many years.

Gam and Marty enjoy the outdoors and are often found hiking or biking on nearby trails. They are both musicians. Gam is a pianist and has composed original works, including a string orchestra piece commissioned by the San Jose Chamber Orchestra.

He hopes he can take a break from lawyering to write more music. Marty now sings with the Silicon Valley Gay Men’s Chorus and has begun studying the violin. He has also discovered a love of street photography and has traveled extensively. He hopes to produce a one-man photo exhibition someday.

Marty grew up in a Conservative Jewish family in Pittsburgh and was an early member of Sha’ar Zahav for a short time. Gam grew up in a Catholic home in Los Angeles, but he recently discovered he has Sephardic roots. With the guidance of Rabbi Copeland and a mentor, he is currently studying for conversion to Judaism.

Marty and Gam readily attend High Holy Day services at Sha’ar Zahav and participated in the Community Seder this past Passover. They look forward to becoming more active members of the community, albeit from San Jose.

## Welcome Our New and Returning Members!

Ben Gaster  
Marty Fenstersheib & Gamaliel Galindo  
Warren Baim

Andrew Ramer  
Ada & Jerry Rosenbaum  
Carla Mays & David Capelli

## Bina Herron Geller



Rimona “Bina” Herron Geller will be called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah on October 6. Bina lives in San Francisco with her parents Alana and Robert, sister Sofia, and her three guinea pigs, Chip, Chocolate and Cookie.

Bina is an eighth grader at James Lick Middle School in San Francisco. She is a stellar student and an avid reader. She is passionate about musical theater,

and enjoys performing and singing in plays in school and beyond. Ask her the lyrics from most contemporary musicals and she will probably know! She is a critical member of her school’s pop and Latin band on the trumpet and also likes to debate current events with the Lick debate team.

Bina has been a member of student government during the past two years of middle school, elected perhaps due to the creative campaign videos she and her sister made involving guinea pigs and promises to make school more fun. She is a wonderful friend, makes a mean fried rice, and can make charoset without a recipe. Her mitzvah projects involve helping homeless people get meals. Bina and her family are very thankful to Karen Schiller for her patience, kind support, and teaching.

## Boaz Isaiah Garcia-Goldberg

Boaz Isaiah Garcia-Goldberg will be called as a bar mitzvah on October 13 to read Parsha Noach from the Torah and to share a teaching on this ancient story with our congregation, his family, classmates and friends.

The story of Noah and the flood and redemption of the world is a good fit for Boaz. Boaz loves animals and all living creatures, especially his two dogs Quasimodo and Tango.

Boaz attends 8th grade at Esther B. Clark School in Palo Alto, and has many interests: biking, motocross, boogie-boarding, soccer, basketball, rap music, hip-hop, and R&B music. He enjoys creating electronic beats as well as YouTube unboxing videos, texting, instagramming and cracking jokes. One of Boaz’ great loves is muscle cars especially Camaros and Mustangs. Boaz is also a leader in his after-school community at the Boys & Girls Club. Boaz volunteers preparing meals at Project Open Hand for the homeless, and children and seniors living in



poverty. Boaz believes that everyone deserves to be treated fairly in the world.

For Boaz’ mitzvah project he has selected Project Open Hand and he encourages everyone who can, to give to this incredible organization: <https://www.openhand.org/donate>

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in memory of my parents,  
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in memory of her father, Meyer Jacob Harron

**May 11-12**

Oneg by Naomi Jatovsky and Ron Lezell

in honor of the Peace Corps

**May 25-26**

Oneg by Arthur Slepian

in honor Frank Giaoui, Kol Koleinu,  
and the World Conference of GLBT Jews

**June 2-3**

Oneg by Sara Zender and Paul Cohen

in memory of Mark Feldman

**June 8-9**

Flowers by Laura Lowe

in honor of Sadie Rawlings-Fein's bat Mitzvah

Saturday Kiddush by Anonymous

**June 22-23**

Flowers by Anonymous

in celebration of Pride!

**July 6-7**

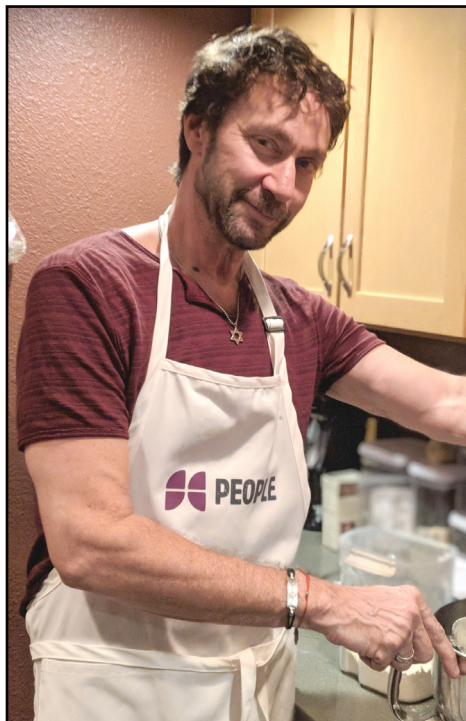
Flowers by SZ Past Presidents

in honor of Nancy Levin, our new president

Oneg by Laura Lowe and Arthur Slepian

in honor of the installation of  
the officers and Va'ad members

## Bread & Shabbat



"My Shabbat begins as I carry the freshly-baked braids to Sha'ar Zahav. The first time I baked challah for the synagogue, I didn't really think about why, I just wanted to share. But, once everyone gathered round and recited the motzi while touching the bread I made, I felt a connection to the shul and a deeper connection with Shabbat. It made my journey that much sweeter."

- Mark Pressler

## Condolences

### May Their Memories Be For a Blessing

#### May

Paul David Olson,  
brother of Jenni Olson

#### June

Edith "Edie" Ross,  
beloved mother of Beth Ross

#### July

Bob Bonwitt,  
cousin of Paul Bendix

Bella Cook,  
mother of Paul Margolis

Willie Michels,  
uncle of Alan Michels

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## September

- 1 John Golebowski
- 3 Lee Gierson
- 5 Bernard Pechter
- 6 Elliot Klein
- 11 Daniel McGoldrick
- 13 David Pierce
- 17 William Korthof
- 18 Penny Dachinger
- 24 Mike Rankin
- 25 Jeffrey Lewis Cohen
- 28 Rabbi Benjamin Marcus



## October

- 6 Jeffrey A. Miller
- 9 Duane Kearns Puryear
- 12 Andrew Zysman
- 13 Harry Clint Bigglestone
- 18 Henry Mautner
- 24 Glenn Murray Miller
- 25 Harvey Levine
- 25 Richard D. Wright
- 29 Michael Mohr

## November

- 3 Forrest Kincade
- 7 Donald Albert
- 9 William David Holt II
- 11 Bruce Apter
- 11 Sidney Rosenthl
- 15 George Mintzer
- 16 Chuck Norton
- 22 Tristano Palermino
- 27 Harvey Milk

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**[www.shaarzahav.org](http://www.shaarzahav.org)**.

### **ROSH HASHANAH:**

**Sunday, September 9**

7:30 pm Erev Rosh Hashanah

**Monday, September 10**

9:30 am Rosh Hashanah Services

**Tuesday, September 11**

9:30 am Second Day Rosh Hashanah Services,  
at Sha'ar Zahav, 290 Dolores Street

### **YOM KIPPUR:**

**Tuesday, September 18**

7:30 pm Erev Yom Kippur/Kol Nidre Service

**Wednesday, September 19**

9:30 am Morning Service

1:30 pm Mincha Service

2:30 pm Niggun Service

3:30 pm Study Sessions

5:30 pm Yizkor and Neilah

7:30 pm Break-the-Fast