

A Capacity To Adapt

By SUE BOJDAK, Director of Education

It is said about the Jewish people that we have survived longer than many great civilizations and seemingly against tougher odds because of how we adapt. Across time and space the Jewish people have been able to reinvent themselves in ways that both maintain the core of our tradition and enable us to draw from the cultures around us, not just to help us fit in but to enrich our own practice. Take, for example, the Passover seder. It's the most observed ritual in American Jewry today. Originally we lifted it from the Greeks. The commandment to observe Passover and especially to tell the story is totally from the Torah. The practice of a boozy storytelling dinner with commentary and afikoman (Greek word for dessert) is taken right from our neighbors/occupiers.

In this moment of Jewish history as our community wrestles with how Judaism thrives in our increasingly individualized, commercialized, tech-saturated world, it's a comfort that central to our identity as Jews is the capacity to adapt. And how do we do it? We borrow from our neighbors. This time the neighbors are in New York City and Silicon Valley. Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer is a part of a new project called I*Express; I for innovation. The Jewish Education Project in NYC has been developing this program for the past four years and is now piloting it nationally. It is coming to Sha'ar Zahav and three other Bay Area congregations by way of Jewish LearningWorks, our local Jewish education support agency.

I*Express is an educational experimentation/change model built on the principles of design thinking, borrowed from places like the Design School at Stanford and central to the way the tech industry works. At the core is the idea that we "fail, forward, fast." Which is to say the most effective way to test new ideas is to try them, in small risk-minimal pilots, see what works and what doesn't, adjust the model, try again and so forth. It's a different way of making change than say putting together a committee and subcommittees to study a problem for a year or two and then consider making a change another year or two out. It invites a spirit of on-going experimentation.

Increasingly that same spirit of tinkering, or playing with ideas and seeing what happens, is finding its way into secular pedagogy. Kids learn best if they get to play (*cont. on page 7.*)

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Sha'ar Zahav: Imagination of Gold

By RABBI MYCHAL COPELAND



Sha'ar Zahav is Hebrew for Golden Gate. I loved it the minute I heard it, not only because it reflects the spirit of our region (and a gate of the Temple in Jerusalem), but because Jewish institutions often lack creativity in naming ourselves. I grew up at a lovely synagogue called Temple Israel.

The name didn't say much about who we were as a community or how we were different than anyone else. But there is no other Sha'ar Zahav in the entire Jewish universe. I believe that creative impulse in our community goes as deep as our name.

This fall, we read in the Torah about Abraham and Sarah's tent. Because they ran out to greet the strangers passing by their home, the attribute of *chesed*, loving kindness, becomes synonymous with their names. Their tent was open to the four winds to welcome the stranger. The mystical masterpiece, the Zohar, links the word *sha'ar*, meaning gate (as in the openings of their tent) to a word that shares its root, *l'sha'er*, to imagine.

Sha'ar is not just a gate in the literal sense. Sha'ar is also an opening of the mind, of creativity. Out of that mystical opening, new ideas emerge. The Zohar tells us that only the one who can open the gates of imagination can begin to fathom the unknowable God (Zohar 1:103b).

Estelle Frankel's new book, *The Wisdom of Not Knowing* [Shambala, 2017], explores the connection between *sha'ar*'s two meanings. In the mystical interpretation, she posits, Abraham and Sarah's custom of welcoming strangers at their gate was a great act of imagination. They had to envision a world in which all beings are interconnected - a world in which there is no separation between the housed and the wayfarer, and a world in which people could trust one another as they trust themselves.

If we are permitted some linguistic fun, we can translate Sha'ar Zahav as "Imagination of Gold." In our community, we use imagination to break out of prescribed identities and roles that confine us. We use that collective imagination to re-envision the Divine and the language we might use to refer to God. That imaginative spark urges us to challenge power structures. Through this imaginative impulse, we are invited to re-imagine and reinvent ourselves as individuals and as a community.

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We Are Our Stories

By NANCY LEVIN



I recently reflected on the stories our members shared at High Holy Day services. Nico and Marissa, a self-described “typical,” nice Jewish couple – living in Oakland, interfaith, young and queer – met through a shared commitment to tikkun olam (repairing the world). “When we walk into Sha’ar Zahav, we are welcomed to

come as we are. Thank you for making us feel at home.” Christine, a heterosexual non-Jew, raised her children at Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer (our school) and her son to become a bar mitzvah.

“Sha’ar Zahav is a place of radical acceptance, a place where there is room for the divine in all of us.” Tiela, whose grandfather founded two Orthodox shuls, never stepped into synagogue until she found Sha’ar Zahav at age 24. Tiela simply said “yes” and found herself involved in all aspects of community life, eventually becoming our president. And Alan, who, as a young man sitting quietly at a Sha’ar Zahav service, was given a Torah to hold, felt his heart beat against it, and became inspired to help other people find their passion. He found his home co-leading Saturday services,

a small gathering with people from their 20s to 80s, with vastly different connections to Judaism. “It opened my eyes to see religion differently, my heart to people I never would have met, my mind to embracing Judaism on my terms.” I have wondered how people with such different paths have found a home here. I believe the answer is rooted in both Judaism and Sha’ar Zahav history. Our texts teach us that the stone the builder cast aside became the cornerstone. We learn that, because we were strangers, we have an obligation to welcome the stranger.

Being strangers, cast aside from the mainstream Jewish community, is precisely what motivated a group of gay men to form Sha’ar Zahav. But our founders, and others drawn to Sha’ar Zahav, saw that to live Jewishly, we could not stop with just making a place for ourselves. We are obligated to reach out and welcome the stranger, the “other,” and to recognize B’tsem Eloheim – the face of the divine – in each person.

This is not easy, and we are not perfect. We are evolving as a rich community of people, Jewish and non-Jewish, younger and older, LGBTQI, heterosexual and non-binary, people of different races and ethnicities, people on a journey to Judaism. That’s why we love it.

So, bring on the stories.

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From The Place of tzar

By CANTOR SHARON BERNSTEIN



*Min Hameitzar
karati Yah, anani
vamerchav Yah.*

*From the place of
tzar I called to Yah,
who answered me
by widening Yah.
(Psalm 118)*

What is this tzar?
It is most literally
defined as a place of
narrowness, but also
of pain. "Mitzray-
im" (often defined

as Egypt), where we endured slavery, is a place of tzar.

We often find ourselves in tzar. In a place of narrowness, of pain. I sometimes imagine it as the garbage compactor scene of the first Star Wars movie (the real first Star Wars movie ...), with Luke, Leia, Han, and Chewy trying desperately to get out of the muck with the walls closing in. Tzar, to me, is that moment when we are stuck, feeling the walls closing in, our options seemingly extremely limited.

And that is where Yah comes in. The thing that, whatever it is, magically widens possibilities, expands options, increases potentialities. That which makes the path forward feasible, do-able, even exciting. We've all experienced that moment, when we are stuck, sometimes in despair, not seeing a way out, and, seemingly out of nowhere, a gate appears.

That is the purpose of this prayer. Or, really, to call it a prayer feels a bit misleading as it is more of a statement than a prayer. Something that has already occurred, something in David's relationship with the Divine in the Psalms. And based on that something that has occurred, we

draw hope for what might be in the future. If it has happened before, might not one reasonably expect that it could happen again?

We are, many of us individually, and, I believe, all of us as a country and world, in a place of tzar. I say this not in the sense of politics, although we see it particularly in politics, but in the sense of limitations of possibility. People feeling a narrowness: crunched, constrained. The walls closing in, not seeing a way out.

"That is where Yah comes in.
The thing that, whatever
it is, magically widens
possibilities, expands
options, increases
potentialities."

- Cantor Sharon Bernstein

It is particularly in these times that we must hope. We must find a way out. We must believe in the widening that will come. And it will come. We will likely have to work very hard for it, and find ways to work for it together with those who have very different views, with whom we disagree. But it will come.

So it is written: Anani vamerchav yah. God answered with a widening.

Email the Cantor at: cantorbernstein@gmail.com

Noah Friedman

My name is Noah Friedman and my bar mitzvah will be on December 8. I go to Everett Middle School. I am in 8th grade.

These are some things that I like:

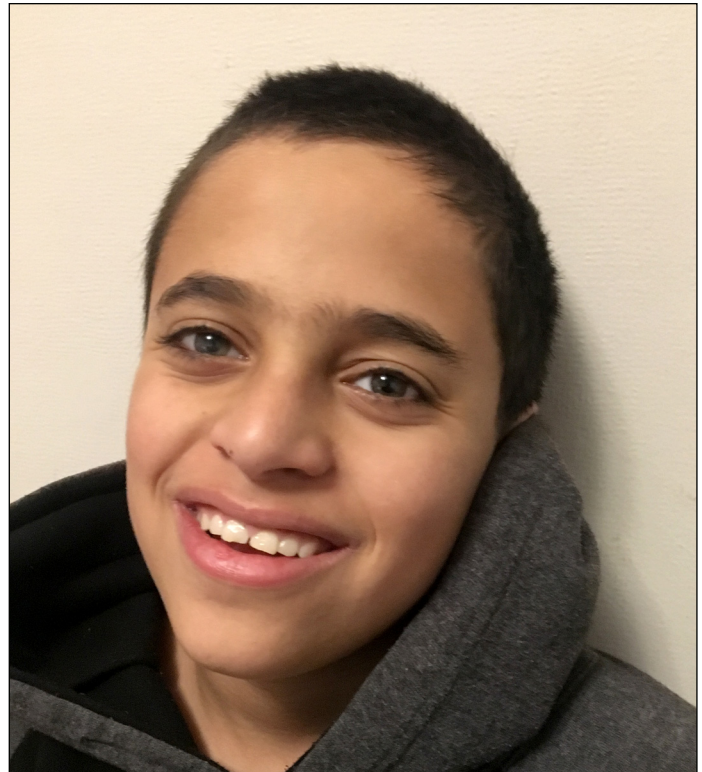
- Nintendo Amiibo
- Star Wars
- Having fun
- Luigi from Super Mario Bros

These are some foods that I like to eat:

- pizza
- burgers
- corn syrup
- Super Mario cereal

I would like to thank the following people for helping me get ready for my bar mitzvah:

- My mentor Avi Goldberg
- Ora Prochovnik for organizing my service
- Bubbie and Zaidie
- My Dad and My Mom



Jason Simonoff

Jason Aaron Simonoff, son of Jonathan Simonoff and Patricia Caplan, will be called to the Torah as a bar mitzvah on February 16.

Jason lives in San Francisco with his parents, his sister, Emma Simonoff, and their cat Sarika. He is in 7th grade at Creative Arts Charter School. His favorite subjects are history and science, and his art specialty is theater.

After school, he plays tennis, goes to chess club, and takes drum lessons (and bar mitzvah classes and Hebrew, of course). He is the one who feeds Sarika, and she loves him for it.

He loves reading adventure stories and seeing movies, especially Marvel. He likes watching the 49ers, playing football and playing Madden.

Lauren Block

By HEIDY ZOHAR RAMIREZ / Director of Engagement

Lauren Block grew up in Chicago. She moved to California to study at Stanford, where she focused on renewable energy engineering. During her time at Stanford, Lauren began working for a solar software company, Aurora Solar, and continued working there after graduating. After living in Palo Alto for five years, Lauren missed city life. When Aurora moved to San Francisco, she was ecstatic and made the move to SZ too.

Lauren plays on a women's soccer team except during ski season, has an "unhealthy addiction" to books, loves good food, good wine, good conversations (optimally, all at the same time), traveling, sailing, hiking, and going to museums and the symphony.

Lauren was looking for a synagogue where she could meet people and engage in both Judaism and community – "I would love to have some other Jews at my next seder!"

Lauren heard about Sha'ar Zahav from someone who used to be a member until they moved to the South Bay. This past member gave SZ rave reviews, so Lauren showed up for Yom Kippur services and has loved the community ever since!



Welcome Our New and Returning Members!

July 2018

Carla Mays & David Capelli
Rebecca Stern & Anand Nair

August 2018

Paul Bendix
Gene Falk
Leah Hammond
Bonnie Kates
Eileen Lynette & Charlene O'Neil
Miriam Menzel & Jim Musselman
Larissa Queiroga Da Silva & Nimrod Grinvald

September 2018

Lauren Block
Samantha Hymanson
Geri Kahn
Jonathan Kaplan & Jackie Wong
Nina Raff & Annie Winters

October 2018

Marla Allen
Shijia Bobby Lu
Mindy Oppenheim
Matt Rich
Vicens Sanmartin

Miriam And Jim

By HEIDY ZOHAR RAMIREZ / Director of Engagement

Miriam Menzel and Jim Musselman are two retirees who have lived in the Ingleside neighborhood of San Francisco for about 30 years. Jim is a photographer and Miriam is an eternal student.

Jim and Miriam care about the environment, saving the commons, and the beauty of creation. They also care about the richness that religious tradition and beliefs can bring to our lives. They connected to their religious and cultural roots relatively late in life.

Jim and Miriam are an interfaith couple who believe no single tradition holds a monopoly on wisdom or paths to God. To quote Michael Franti, "Music's too big for just one station and God is too big for just one religion!"

Miriam currently studies Hebrew with the hope of being able to understand Hebrew scripture and prayers without the loss of immediacy and meaning that often occurs with translation. She is hoping to celebrate a bat mitzvah someday at Sha'ar Zahav.

Jim learned that 50% of his ancestry derived from Swiss Mennonites. Jim and Miriam attend services both at First Mennonite Church of San Francisco (which meets in Sha'ar Zahav's building) and at Sha'ar Zahav.

Two things that brought Miriam and Jim to Sha'ar Zahav were their dedication to social justice and our radical welcoming (not just tolerance) of diversity. Jim and Miriam find



Sha'ar Zahav services to be beautiful and inspiring, and they are impressed with the Sha'ar Zahav Siddur.

They have greatly enjoyed the people they have met here. They love Rabbi Mychal and Cantor Sharon, and are very excited and grateful to be here.

SHA'AR ZAHAV / EDUCATION

(CONTINUED FROM THE FRONT COVER)

with ideas, materials, notions, and see what works and what doesn't.

It's more interesting for sure, than regurgitating formulas, facts or ideas that have been handed down; it also develops more creative thinkers and problem-solvers.

This kind of education cultivates people who can develop ideas no one has thought of yet, play with different technologies, and have the fortitude to keep trying when something fails.

At Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer we are excited to tinker at every level and create new possibilities for the Jewish people.

The Joy of Break-fast!



Preparing the Yom Kippur break-fast takes a lot of work and, if the smiles in this picture are any indication, it's also a lot of fun. Thanks to everyone who made sure we got fed. From left to right: Carolyn Pines, Judy Schwartz, David Langdon, Nancy Meyer, Eileen Lynette, Judith Wolfe, Irene Ogus, Laura Lowe and Kathleen Friedlander. *Photo by Jenny Hughes*

Music In The Mishkan Celebrates Its 20th Season!

Our own Cantor Sharon Bernstein, preeminent interpreter of the Yiddish song repertoire, will once again join violinist Randall Weiss and The Bridge Players for the 20th season of Music in the Mishkan.

The chamber series will present three concerts in 2019:

- February 3
- March 24
- May 26

Mark your calendars!

This season will highlight four piano trio masterpieces: Mendelssohn's two Piano Trios (in D minor and C minor), Dvorak's "Dumky" Trio and Beethoven's "Archduke" Trio. In addition, Cantor Bernstein will present a collection of

Yiddish songs entitled "Doubly Suppressed, Doubly Forgotten."

Concerts begin at 4:00 p.m., followed by a wine and cheese reception. You can order tickets by calling the office at 415.861.6932, or by finding a link on the CSZ website (www.shaarzahav.org). Don't miss these beautiful concerts in our lovely sanctuary!

Sunday, February 3
Randall Weiss, violin
Victoria Ehrlich, cello
Marilyn Thompson, piano

Piano Trio No. 2-Joachim Turina
Euterpe and Polimnia-Joachim Turina
Duo for Violin and Cello-Zoltan Kodaly
Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 49-Felix Mendelssohn

Nachas:

Jill and Britta Pomrantz on the birth of their son Sam on September 5
 Torie Kromnick and Yuval Gnessin on their marriage on October 14, 2018
 Gam Galindo and Martin Fenstersheib on their marriage on October 21, 2018
 Marissa Guerrero and Nico Rosenstone on their marriage on October 26, 2018
 Ruby Cymrot-Wu and Molly Webster Joplin on their marriage on November 18, 2018

SHA'AR ZAHAV CONDOLENCES

September

Fred Keene,

father of Meg Keene,
 father-in-law of David Mishook,
 grandfather of Judah and Lillian

Kevin Johnson,

former member

Max Cohen,

nephew of Helen Cohen and Mark Lipman

David Winters,

father of Annie Winters,
 father-in-law of Nina Raff
 and grandfather of Reuben and Giovanni Winters Raff

Sara Richshafer Koshover,

mother of Sherie Koshover

Sylvia Best,

mother of Larry Best and
 grandmother of Jazmine and Adam Leung-Best

SHA'AR ZAHAV YAHREZEITS

December

4 Marilyn O'Keeffe
 9 Nicholas Papadopoulos
 9 Isa (eesa) Leah Cymrot-Wu
 18 David Glassberg
 20 Norman David Kramer
 21 Walter Palmer
 22 Elijah Michael Silverrod MacLachlan
 24 Phyllis Mintzer
 28 Gerald (Jerry) Rosenstein
 29 Allan Craig

January

3 Aaron Nacamulli
 9 Jerome Davis
 14 Cheryl Orvis
 18 Keith Fenton
 20 George Ash
 21 Nathan Eli Weinstein
 27 Bill Ashley-Dobbin
 29 Ziggy Gimnicher
 30 Allen Harris

February

1 Steven Richter
 2 Stephen Walters
 4 John Atteidg
 5 Helga Hahn
 6 Ronald Wilmot
 14 Barbara Rosenblum
 16 Rabbi Jason Gaber
 17 Seth Charney
 20 Evelyn Slenker
 23 Leland Vogel



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 Don Fischer
 Louise Fischer
 Robin Fragner
 Michael Frank
 Jim Frazin
 Estelle Freedman
 Jason Fried
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 Jason Friedman
 Nicholas Friedman

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August 10

Flowers by James Carlson

in memory of his mother, Jan Tuzzolino

August 17

Oneg by Alice Harron

in memory of her mother, Bernice Kahn Harron

August 24

Oneg by Laura Lowe

in honor of Allan Berenstein

September 14

Oneg by David Lowe

in memory of his husband, Daniel McGoldrick

September 21

Oneg by Marius Greenspan

in memory of his father, Earl Greenspan

September 28

Flowers by Lisa Katz

in memory of her father, Norman Katz

Oneg by Sheri Koshover

in memory of her father, Gabriel Koshover

October 5

Flowers by Gloria Geller and Jane Herron

in honor of Bina Herron-Geller

Oneg by James Carlson

in memory of his grandfathers,
Arthur Carlson and Filippo Tuzzolino

October 13

Flowers by Avi Goldberg and Will Garcia

in honor of Boaz Garcia Goldberg

Oneg by Annie Atura Bushnell

in memory of her grandmother, Dorothy Bendersky

October 19

Oneg by Paul Cohen and Bob Gutterman

in memory of Fay Cohen and David Gutterman

October 26

Oneg by Laura Lowe

in memory of her father, Sidney Lowe

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.

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