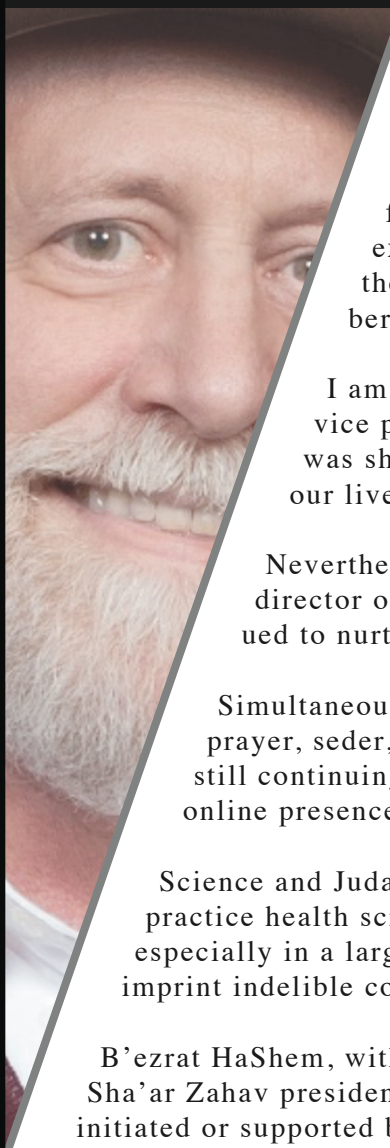




The Jewish *Gaily Forward*

"Transcend the Ordinary"

Sivan 5780 - Elul 5780 / June 2020 - August 2020



A Commitment To Connecting

By MARC LIPSCHUTZ

I have always believed that password protection questions provide a false sense of security. I offer "Where were you born?" as a foremost example. Since at least last Rosh Hashanah, when I gave a drash from the stage of the Herbst Theatre, the vast majority of Sha'ar Zahav members and friends have known my answer to this question!

I am Marc Lipschutz, and it has been my privilege to serve as your first vice president. At the time I was writing this column, my illusion of security was shattered by the prevalence of a virus which continues to deeply affect our lives and overturn our Sha'ar Zahav established customs.

Nevertheless, our extraordinarily dedicated and creative rabbi, cantor, educator, director of community engagement, administrator and facility managers continued to nurture and enhance our holy community while working remotely.

Simultaneously, we continued to maintain connectivity through innovative online prayer, seder, classes and committee meetings. If the shelter-in-place restrictions are still continuing when you are reading this, so will our commitment to remaining an online presence in your lives.

Science and Judaism are compatible and complementary; yet, I do not know when best practice health science will permit us to physically convene as a community again, especially in a large group. However, I do know that the challenges of coronavirus will imprint indelible consequences upon Sha'ar Zahav.

B'ezrat HaShem, with G-d's help, and with your support, I look forward to serving as your Sha'ar Zahav president. My objectives include the further development of many strategies initiated or supported by Nancy Levin during her presidency. These include financial sustainability transparency, new and current leadership development, multicultural sensitivity for Jewish members of color, interfaith families and millennials, innovative technology and enhanced security while remaining a welcoming community. Please partner with me to achieve these goals for Sha'ar Zahav.

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Making Our Way Through Unforeseen Changes

By RABBI MYCHAL COPELAND



The day before we started sheltering in place, I took a trip to the garden shop. I am fortunate enough to have space at my home to plant, but I'm not great at it.

However, with all this time at home, I am an attentive caretaker. While my seeds have been germinating, we

have moved from the probability of a short time in our homes to many months.

During this time, I also started to count the Omer, a practice that originated with our ancestors' tie to the land, spiritually carrying them from one harvest (Passover) to the hope of the next (Shavuot).

In biblical times, they watched as their wheat crops grew from seed into the spring harvest they so relied upon for their survival. As I watch my little sprouts emerge, I feel perhaps a fraction of the hope this counting practice held for them. The process has connected me with the agricultural cycle and attention to detail in a new way. With Shavuot just behind us, I now

have my own harvest to celebrate – carrots, green onions, peas and basil. Our lives have become more monotonous than ever. And yet, simultaneously, each day brings changes we can't possibly foresee.

During the time of sheltering, a sticky-note has been affixed to my screen: What discoveries have you made about yourself today? This question has guided me in my work with our SZ community, through my own process and as I think about our future in a world none of us can picture.

One thing I've learned about myself is that as I hear news, whether it be about COVID, sheltering or my own family, it takes a little while for it to sink in. I take in information gradually, as if protecting myself from too much, too fast. My sprouts-turned-crops remind me of this self-observation as well. Every day holds a little bit of change, too small to really see. But over months, the effect is dramatic.

As we have now counted over three months of a changed world, what discoveries have you made about yourself and our community during this uncertain and precarious time? May we be blessed to continue on the journey together.

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A Message From Our Outgoing President

By NANCY LEVIN



“Organizational resilience” has been described as the ability to anticipate, prepare for, respond and adapt to incremental change and sudden disruptions, to survive and prosper. As I end my two-year term as Va’ad President, I see Sha’ar Zahav through this lens. Central to resilience, we have

become a more engaged community. Our weekly newsletter is brimming with opportunities to connect. New teams and committees are doing vital work for the community (and our world). Young and newer members are emerging as leaders. We tell our stories. We learn from and teach each other. Astute, hardworking and committed, our remarkable Va’ad members, lay leaders, clergy and staff are active and engaged, working together productively, even when we disagree.

We modernized internal systems (ShulCloud) to let you track and update your information, yartzheits, and donations. We provided financial transparency, attracted dozens of new members, and reprinted our Siddur. Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer has retooled with strong leadership and

a new curriculum. We are tackling our persistent budget gap and making tough choices to live within our means. The last few years of domestic terrorism and attacks on Jews shook us to our core. We responded after Pittsburgh by welcoming neighbors and allies to our sanctuary. Our friends from the First Mennonite Church stood vigil, their songs filtering up to the rafters. We upgraded our physical space, including outdoor lighting, closed circuit TV and a new door. We grappled with how to remain welcoming but also vigilant and prepared for threats.

The global pandemic tests our resilience. We reach out to each other though “Hineni Calling.” Our on-line Shabbat services are beautiful (thanks to our clergy, staff and new tech support team), connecting members and friends from the Bay Area to Maine, from Sao Paulo to Qatar. Even with economic uncertainty, many have donated generously, realizing that “There’s No Place Like (our Sha’ar Zahav) Home.” We remain a beacon for queer Jews throughout the world who find in us a lifeline.

I am honored to have served as President, and proud to be part of a community with the grit and vigor to sustain our Sha’ar Zahav spiritual home, one that welcomes the stranger and recognizes the divine spark in each of us.

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Specifications supplied upon request.

B'Mitzvah

By SUE BOJDAK / Director of Children's and Family Education



B'nei mitzvah. Be mitzvah. Both mitzvah. Brit mitzvah. Simchat mitzvah. Ban mitzvah. There are so many possibilities when you are trying to liberate yourself from the gender rigidity of bar or bat Mitzvah, son or daughter of the commandment, our coming of age ritual for young people.

Bar or bat Mitzvah presents a problem to people who live somewhere on the gender continuum or eschew the concept of gender all together. B'nei mitzvah, children of the commandment, has been a go-to stand-in for some time, especially when referring to rituals for a group of people of mixed genders. Alas, b'nei mitzvah has a gender; it is the masculine plural form of Bar Mitzvah. As such it doesn't really meet the needs of singular gender-fluid persons.

After some consideration, including some of the options above, Sha'ar Zahav has landed on b'mitzvah as our new gender inclusive terminology for our coming of age ritual. In Hebrew, b'mitzvah translates to "in mitzvah" or "in the mitzvah." It suggests that when we go through this ritual, whether at age 13 or as adults, we are stepping into a world surrounded by the idea of mitzvah.

When youth arrive at the age of 13, they become responsible for their actions in a new way. They become obligated/commanded/subject to mitzvot and begin to practice, we hope, a more intentional way of walking through the world, one that includes Jewish values and Jewish practices they have chosen for themselves.

When adults choose to become b'mitzvah they engage in a period of Jewish study and careful consideration of their relationship to mitzvot. In either case, it is the immersion in mitzvot that is at the heart of the b'mitzvah experience.

"When youth arrive at the age of 13, they become responsible for their actions in a new way."

- Sue Bojdak

And so we arrive at b'mitzvah and invite our youth, adult seekers and one another to immerse ourselves in the world of mitzvah, in a world where we are responsible for ourselves, accountable to one another, and working to build a more perfect world through our practice of Jewish values and traditions.

SHA'AR ZAHAV NEW MEMBERSHIP

NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS

Scott Bergman
Sophia De Anda
Isa Elfers

Rebecca Fenn
Franco Martinez
Arthur Meiersen
Julie Panda

Debra Reabock
Ryan Seffinger
Sen Talley

A San Francisco Native Returns

By REBECCA FENN

I am a 31-year-old San Francisco native transplant. Although I was born in San Francisco and raised in the South Bay, I left California after high school with a certainty that I would never return permanently. However, like most predictive thoughts that I have had in my life, that was a silly thing to think.



This past August, I moved back to San Francisco with my partner, Charlie, and have loved being so close to my family and childhood friends again. This past week, my brother had his first child, and although I cannot see him in person yet, I am so grateful to be nearby for this event and cannot wait to get my new-aunt hands on that sweet baby. Before moving to California, I worked as a contracted outdoor educator for four years, moving seasonally among New York City, Florida, Colorado, China, and Connecticut.

Included in my Outdoor Education communities are New York City Outward Bound, North Carolina Outward Bound, Eagle Rock School and The Wilderness School.

“Upon moving to San Francisco, I was searching for community and spiritual guidance.” - Rebecca Fenn

When I moved to San Francisco, it was to continue working in this field, and I spent a few months working at a high school and a few months working for Environmental Traveling Companions. Unfortunately, our current health crisis has impacted the outdoors industry, and although everything is on hold at the moment, that does not change my eagerness to get back to working with youth in challenging, beautiful and unfamiliar natural environments. One of my hopes in moving to San Francisco was to reconnect with my spirituality. For most of my adult life I have practiced Judaism in small ways on my own.

Being in frequent motion as a seasonal employee, I did not always have the ability to build a community outside of those who I was in direct contact with. I have spent many Jewish holidays scrounging together makeshift supplies on a canoe, or in my backpack, and dedicating a whole five minutes to observe in solitude. Upon moving to San Francisco, I was searching for community and spiritual guidance.

This year has not gone how I predicted, but joining Sha'ar Zahav has been a true silver lining during an upsetting time in history, and an unusual but joyful time in my personal life.

Spotlight On Our Members: Amy Schustack

By MARK MACKLER

Amy Schustack has been an active SZ congregant, first as a member of the Children's Education Board and now as a member of the Va'ad, from the moment she and her husband Michael Tyler arrived here from the East Coast. How and why she wound up at SZ is the subject of this edited version of our recent conversation.

MM: What brought you to San Francisco, and what brought you to Sha'ar Zahav?

AS: We had high school friends who were living in the Bay Area, and we visited them several times while we were on vacation. It didn't take long for us to realize that this was where we wanted to live. I fell in love with the social culture, the openness and the opportunity to really define ourselves in the way we chose. We finally moved to the Bay Area around 1999. Next, I found Sha'ar Zahav. Right from the start, it felt like this is where I belonged. I never had any doubts.

MM: I think we'd agree that SZ can make everyone feel comfortable regardless of their particular religious values. What was your religious upbringing like?

AS: My family grew up as Jews who were proud to be Jews, but we really weren't observant at all. No synagogue, no temple, no Hebrew school, no Bat Mitzvah for me. But I learned so many vital, life-affirming Jewish values from my parents. Most important were the values of honoring and respecting everyone. For example, my father was a pharmacist who worked in Greenwich Village. I remember him coming home from work on the night of the Stonewall Riot and telling his little girl (that little girl was me!) about what was happening in the Village and how it was "a long time coming." He was so supportive of equal rights for everyone.

MM: I understand that, later in his life, your father joined Sha'ar Zahav?

AS: That's right. As the years went by, he moved here to be with us. He joined Sha'ar Zahav, and SZ brought him a lot of joy. Incidentally, my father is buried in the SZ section of Hills of Eternity.



MM: You were elected to the Va'ad which, based on my own experience, can be very time-consuming and sometimes stressful. So, I must ask: What were you thinking?

AS: I had been serving on the Education Committee, but the Va'ad provides me with a way to address even more issues that are important to me. How do we want to define ourselves as a congregation? How do we honor our history as a people and as a religious institution? What has enabled Sha'ar Zahav to make it to 2020, and what do we have to do to ensure our viability?

MM: Any surprises?

AS: Yes, and they're all positive. I like the commitment of everyone on the Va'ad to respect and listen to each other. All of us take our "caretaker" roles very seriously.

- Elijah Jatovsky (a 2006 SZ bar mitzvah) on his appointment as a Foreign Service Officer for the US Department of State. Elijah's first posting will be at the US Embassy in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He is currently working at the State Department in Washington, DC while learning French and Haitian Creole. Elijah's parents are SZ members Ron Lezell and Naomi Jatovsky.
- Barbara Cymrot on the birth of her grandbaby, Avi Isaiah.

SHA'AR ZAHAV CONDOLENCES

MARCH

- 13 Dina Simonoff,**
mother of Jonathan Simonoff

APRIL

- 3 Lynn Wasserman,**
mother of Reva Luftman,
mother-in-law of Adam
and grandmother of Riley and Nora
- 5 Barbara Bernstein,**
mother of Ray Bernstein
- 6 Jacques Caulin,**
friend of Martin Tannenbaum and Alex Ingersoll

APRIL (continued)

- 6 Joel Hauptman,**
brother of Stephen Hauptman,
brother-in-law of Trudi Hauptman
and uncle of Zach Hauptman
- 11 Siu-Shyong (Sherman) Lin,**
father of Patricia Lin
- 22 Mark Shroeder,**
brother of Mary Shroeder,
brother-in-law of Deena Lahn
and uncle of Isabel
and Harry Lahn-Schroeder

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in honor of Howard Steiermann's birthday
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in memory of my father, Neil Gilbert Aumen
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in memory of my mother, Elaine Polsky
and my grandmother, Rachel Polsky
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in memory of my friend, Masha Zakheim
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being elected board chair of the
San Francisco Jewish Community Federation

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MARCH

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Sha'ar Zahav member, Fred Hahn
- 24 Zoom sponsored by Ira Hirschfield**
in memory of my brother, Jack Hirschfield

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in honor of Sharyn Saslafsky,
my life partner whom I met at Sha'ar Zahav!

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in honor of the rabbi and cantor

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 15 Barry Siegel
 16 Richard Rath
 17 Joe Zygielbaum
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 30 Phillip Resnick

AUGUST

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 4 Jordan Berger
 5 Ernie Weinstein
 6 Jay Platt
 7 Mark Landsberger
 16 Peter Rosenfeld
 18 Elliot Schneck
 28 Jay Feinstein

***Mishkan Ga'avah: Where Pride Dwells* / Edited by Rabbi Denise L. Eger**

Sha'ar Zahav is well-represented in a new book titled *Mishkan Ga'avah: Where Pride Dwells*, which includes selections from Siddur Sha'ar Zahav written by Maggid Andrew Ramer, Rabbi Reuben Zellman and Kevin Johnson, z"l, as well as others. A collection of prayers, poems, liturgy and rituals for LGBTQ people, *Mishkan Ga'avah* is an exciting new publication from the Central Conference of American Rabbis, that highlights all aspects of Jewish and LGBTQ life. The book can be purchased by going to ccarpres.org



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Saturday, September 19

Rosh Hashanah

Sunday, September 20

Second Day Rosh Hashanah

YOM KIPPUR:

Sunday, September 27

Erev Yom Kippur / Kol Nidre

Monday, September 28

Yom Kippur