

"Transcend the Ordinary"

Adar 5781 - Sivan 5781
March 2021 - May 2021



Revealing Headlines / By MARC LIPSCHUTZ

Did anyone read the headlines? I am referring to the *Goshen Gazette*, which on 15 Nissan 2448 proudly proclaimed "Jewish Nation Left Egypt!" *The Kabbalah Courier* competitively headlined actions which lead from slavery toward liberation: "We Were Physically Removed from Confining Limitation" and "We Later Stood Firm, Removed Confining Limitation, and Revealed Unlimited G-dliness."

During the last few years, United States headlines documented multiple leadership failures. We endured racial divisiveness, police brutality, and incitement. During the last few months, we withstood a direct assault on democracy while experiencing a global pandemic. Nevertheless, headlines reported, "We Stood Firm, Replaced Confining Leadership, Developed a Vaccine, Removed Limitation, and Revealed Hope."

I am now brimming with hope. Sha'ar Zahav worship is inspiring, Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer curriculum is innovative, adult programs are stimulating, and our finances are sound. Vaccinations are being distributed as we create our post-COVID future, through our Rainbow Campaign and Congregational Survey. Your participation is essential as we plan beyond the pandemic, further remove limitation, and reveal unlimited potential. Planning requires investment, revealed knowledge, and vision. Please respond to Rainbow Campaign volunteers. Please reveal your generosity and invest to increase our vitality. The participation of everyone among our Sha'ar Zahav community is necessary to ensure the success of our Rainbow Campaign.

Please respond to our Congregational Survey. Reveal your individuality, needs, and passions, which will empower Sha'ar Zahav to provide worship experiences that move heaven and earth, programs that create invigorating learning adventures and tikkun olam opportunities, and social events that increase connection and joy. Comprehensive survey participation is imperative to envision and design our future, and to build our plan that will move us beyond the pandemic and forward through the next two years, from Strength to Strength. Please help to create our new *Jewish Gaily Forward* headlines.

With a strong hand and an outstretched arm, HaShem removed us from the confining limitation of Egypt precisely 3333 years ago. Liberation continues throughout Sha'ar Zahav and the United States. With your involvement we will ensure that all congregant voices are heard, that everyone is valued, and that democracy prevails. We will remove limitation, write new headlines, and further reveal G-dliness. Many of us will experience a second year of solitary seders while all of us will know that we are never truly alone.

May we celebrate a freilichen [festive] and revealing Pesach.

Remembering

Ray Bernstein - pg. 4

Hinei Mah Tov

By CANTOR SHARON BERNSTEIN



Hinei mah tov, u-mah na-im, shevet achim/achayot/kulanu gam yachad. These are the words we sing at Sha'ar Zahav when we come together as a community. It is our gathering call, one could even say our mission statement. Our siddur translates it as: How good and pleasant it is for brothers and sisters, for

everyone, to dwell together as one.

Delving more deeply into the words: Hinei – Here! Look! Now! It is related to “Hinen,” which means I am here, present, showing up. It is what Abraham says in response to God’s call: where are you? Hineni. Here I am. Mah tov – “Mah” means what, so this literally means “what good,” as in what enormous good there is here.

Shevet – To sit, to dwell, to settle, to be. Achim – brothers; Achayot – sisters; Kulanu – all of us, all genders. Gam – also, moreover Yachad – related to “echad” (one), it means together, unified, united. When we sing these words – and enact them by putting our arms

around each other, virtually, and eventually again in person, we are saying that we are here, we are together, we are united. That this is good. That we can be here, and we can be here, be who we are, all we are, in whatever state of mind or body we happen to be in at the moment, and that it’s not just okay, it’s good. Hinei Mah Tov is the first line of Psalm 133.

It is a “shir hama’a’lot,” a psalm of ascension, one of the psalms historically recited while walking up the steps to the ancient Temple. Those steps were uneven – each of different height and depth -- so that one had to pay close attention.

So it is with togetherness: while the embrace that begins and ends our services might come to feel automatic, it is actually an act of stepping up, over and over again.

Togetherness isn’t always easy. It sometimes involves overcoming stark differences and challenges, but where there’s the mutual intent, as we know in our community, it is possible.

It is a gift that we give to ourselves and each other. Psalm 133 ends with “chayyim ad ha-olam” – May there be life forever. Blessed be our life-giving community that stretches our arms out and says how good it is to be together.

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The Blessing of Volunteer Teachers

By SUE BOJDAK

Last spring, faced with long-term budget challenges and rising anxiety about how COVID would impact our individual and collective economic well-being, we made a decision to shift from paid teaching staff at Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer to an all-volunteer staff.

At the time of the decision, few of us could have imagined we would make that transition in the middle of a prolonged pandemic and an all-virtual school year.

Remarkably, all three of our Saturday teachers, Ila Cherney, Andrea Guerra, and Geneva Rust-Orta, agreed to continue teaching for all or part of this school year.

Two brave souls, Larry Best and Beth Sousa, have stepped up to lead the way as we learn how to integrate new people as one-unit (7-8 weeks) Saturday teachers. And we have two fabulous Hebrew tutors who have joined our team, veteran B'Mitzvah mentor Laura Lowe and Beit Sefer graduate Isabel Lahn-Schroeder, zooming in from NYC.

Each of them brings myriad gifts, especially their commitment to learning, and each receives the joy of connecting with our fabulous young people.

Many thanks to all! Ready to join the effort in the coming year? **Contact Sue Bojdak at education@shaarzahav.org today.**

SHA'AR ZAHAV INTRODUCING THE BAT MITZVAH

Maelis Perlman

Maelis Perlman will be called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah on May 15. Maelis lives in San Francisco with her parents, Ezra and Shireen, and her little sister, Marella. Maelis is a 7th grader at Katherine Delmar Burke School. Her friends would describe her as extravagant and bright. She enjoys singing, dancing and listening to music in her spare time. She is a member

of her school's vocal ensemble and was just in a musical production of *Newsies*, produced by Musical Theatre Works.

She is funny and energetic and makes all her friends laugh. Her mitzvah projects include volunteering at the zoo to help teach people about animals.

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Specifications supplied upon request.

Basking In The Joy Of A Good Deed

Introduction By PAUL COHEN

Our community was deeply saddened by Ray's unexpected and tragic death, less than a year after his mother died.

While none of us can predict our date of death, the pandemic has reminded us of how fragile life has been for so many of our family and friends.

One of the ways in which we can leave a legacy of the values we have lived by is by providing a bequest for the future benefit of Sha'ar Zahav.

We are both proud and sad to reprint Ray's Letter of Intent, from the December 2016 edition of the JGF.

May his memory be for a blessing!



I'm so privileged to be able to live in San Francisco. I have a beautiful flat, in a building purchased with strangers after 9/11, when the market wasn't sure there would be a tomorrow. There are times when I think I should give up my home, because I don't deserve such a great place. Surely refugees could use it better! But where would I go then? I never think this all the way through.

Sha'ar Zahav provided me with a solution: After I'm gone, the congregation can have my house. This plan offers multiple advantages. First, there's no need for me to exit the house now to achieve a righteous outcome. Second, I'm secure in the knowledge that experts in the congregation will know how to sell the flat.

Third, I am confident that the proceeds will fund important community services at CSZ. Fourth, I've reduced the burden on my executors, which is a good thing, because they will already be knee-deep in books, art, supplies, and miscellaneous junk.

The process was extremely simple. I signed a very simple form and gave it to the congregational representative for the Legacy Campaign. Then I had a chat with an attorney about my wishes. (Alternatively, I could have followed instructions from Nolo Press about making a will for myself.) Then I basked in the joy of a good deed.

You'll have your own reasons for leaving something for the future of our congregation. Maybe it's an important life-cycle occasion, when CSZ was a particularly important part of your life. Maybe it's the day-to-day constancy of a congregation being there for all of us. Maybe it's a recognition of the difficulty of leaving any meaningful mark behind.

Consider letting CSZ use your resources after you don't need them. May *our* memories be for a blessing.

By Ray Bernstein z"l

Sarah Grams and Lisa Finkelstein

By LILIANA PELIKS

Hello new and old friends and friends-to-be!

Our names are Sarah Grams and Lisa Finkelstein - colloquially called the "Gramelsteins." Well, no one really calls us that but that is what we call our WiFi network. We are new-again to Sha'ar Zahav. Thanks for having us back!

We left the congregation for several reasons but primarily because we moved from the Castro where we could walk to shul to the Outer Sunset where we can walk to Ocean Beach. We figured we would find a new congregation on the west side of the city but alas – nothing outshines the authentic hamish [friendly, comfortable] community of Sha'ar Zahav. We were both raised primarily in the Midwest, so a down-to-earth and chill atmosphere is important to us both.

Sarah works during the day as a Genetic Counselor at San Francisco-based "Invitae." She is really an artist at heart, loving to play and make things out of wood and glass. Lisa is currently employed by Sinai Memorial Chapel Chevra Kadisha and the Northern California Board of Rabbis. If Lisa isn't volunteering with one of her favorite nonprofit groups or reading at the beach, you are likely to find her counting shooting stars



alone in our backyard hot tub, decompressing from this COVID balagan [mess].

Together we love to garden, and watch Lisa's orchid collection grow out of control, travel when there isn't a global pandemic, wander into Golden Gate Park with our dog Pete, and listen to all types of music. Our hearts are filled with a very close family of two brilliant nieces Sadie and Ori, brothers Jeffrey and Daniel and our six parents, Sheryl, Rick, Ruthie, Les, Bob and Jean.

SHA'AR ZAHAV NEW MEMBERS

NOVEMBER

Mahri Bahati
Vici and Gary Goldstone
Bari June Gregory

DECEMBER

Deldelp Medina
Stephanie Rendino

JANUARY

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Hans Lindahl and Rose Wong
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in memory of his father, Robert Bernstein

In memory of Ray Bernstein

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in memory of Marcia Burney, Barbara Levin
and Ilse Steirman

and in honor of Michael Tyler's milestone birthday

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in memory of Ilse Steirman

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in memory of his mother, Helga Hahn

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in honor of Ora Prochovnick

Bonnie Kates

in memory of her grandfather, Maurice Pozanek

Susan Leff and Brad Post

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in celebration of the naming of Naya Loftus Nguyen

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in honor of Richard Meyerson

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in memory of Marilyn O'Keefe

Richard Meyerson

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in memory of Sylvia Yellin

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in honor of Deborah Levy

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in honor of the wedding
of Michael Chertok and Anthony Sauler

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in memory of Ilse Steirman, Sylvia Yellen
and Jerry Rosenstein

Jacqueline Shelton and Craig Miller

in memory of Ilse Steirman

Marc Wernick

in memory of Ilse Steirman

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in memory of Barbara Caplan, Betty Elman,
Bernice Frantz, Barbara Levin, Jerry Pressler,
Payah Prochovnick and Edis Robinson

High Holy Days 5781

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Helen Bruno and Kevin Stein

Patty Caplan and Jonathan Simonoff

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Judith Cohen

Emery Cohen-Wallach and Linda Wallach

Rin Coleridge

David "Duke" Crestfield

Barb Cymrot

Carol Dawson Rose

Emily Dorian

Ron Edelman

Linda Edelstein and Marion Gillen

Steven Elman

Louise Fischer

Ben Gaster

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Marius Greenspan

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Leah Hammond

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 in creating High Holy Days 5781
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Mindy Oppenheim
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Barry and Tirtza Pearl
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 in creating the beautiful
 Mincha service on Yom Kippur
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 in celebration of their wedding
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 in honor of Tim Grant's conversion
Kelly Thiemann and Ann Bauman

Finding Balance in Our Lives with Mussar

By MARK PRESSLER

When Hashem, our G-d, created humans, we were given a job description. "Be like me. Be Holy." Hashem endowed human creation with the same attributes just to make it easier for us to fulfill our job description.

After all, Hashem created us for no other reason, but Chesed (Loving Kindness). Hashem also shows an inordinate amount of Savlanut (Patience) because G-d could, at any time, end this whole shebang. But G-d doesn't, no matter how much we insult the commandments.

Savlanut and Chesed are but two of the attributes that make Hashem holy. If we emulate or imitate Hashem so that we too can be holy, we need to show Chesed and Savlanut as well, using Hashem as our example.

Shevil Ha'Zahov is the Golden Road, Moderation (another of the attributes), but more importantly it is the middle path in all of the attributes. But how do we find that middle road, the Shevil Ha'Zahov?

Well, just as Hashem made it very easy for us by giving us what we need to be holy, the rabbis did the same thing and developed the practice of Mussar.

Mussar is a flexible and very practical method of finding balance in our lives and it fits in very well with our modern lifestyles. Hashem makes it easier for us to be holy, the rabbis also make it easier for us to be holy, and Sha'ar Zahav also makes it easier by having the Mussar Chavurah.

You are invited to join the chavurah. We meet once per week – but it's also a 'drop in when you feel like it' group. Each week we have amazing discussions that make an impact on our lives for the better. We also learn how to use the practice of Mussar to balance the Attributes (the Soul-traits or Middot).

Contact Mark Pressler (markpressler@gmail.com) for chavurah info and a Zoom link.

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- 25 Zoom service sponsored by Wayne Bender**
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- 22 Zoom service sponsored by
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in celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary

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on their wedding

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on their 40th wedding anniversary
- **Gerry Llamado and Arthur Slepian**
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on the occasion of their wedding

JANUARY

- **Trudi and Stephen Hauptman**
on their 50th wedding anniversary

- * **JoEllen Kaiser**
for her High Holy Days Leadership

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uncle of Larry Best
- 19 Edis Robinson,**
mother of Nathan Robinson and Jacob Robinson
- 19 Marcia Burney,**
sister of David Wasserman
and sister-in-law of Neil Hart

NOVEMBER

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friend of Phil Charney
- 4 David Shneer,**
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father of Nina Wouk
- 12 Jerry Pressler,**
father of Mark Pressler
- 14 Philip Emmanuel Faria,**
father of Mary Faria,
father-in-law of Deborah Farkas
- 17 Roma Jean Sticklemeyer,**
grandmother of AJ Turpen Fried
- 18 Anna Pierini,**
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- 22 Adelaide Greenberg Rosen,**
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- 28 Dr. Alan William Kaplan,**
father of Jonathan Kaplan

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Passover in Community 2021

FIRST NIGHT - SATURDAY March 27th
Celebrate in safety at home!

SECOND NIGHT - SUNDAY March 28th
Congregational Seder via Zoom!

LEAVE EGYPT WITHOUT LEAVING YOUR HOME!

This year's Sha'ar Zahav Second Night Passover Seder will be on Zoom, led by Rabbi Copeland and Cantor Bernstein. We invite you to set your table for the holiday and get ready to rejoice together in our liberation!

Pre-registration will be required - look for information in your inbox in the coming weeks.