

“Transcend the Ordinary”

Adar - Sivan 5783
March 2023 - May 2023

CANTOR'S MESSAGE

By CANTOR SHARON BERNSTEIN



In the Torah (Parasha Vayishlach), Jacob, on two separate occasions, is told – first by a representative of God, and then by God, Godself – that his name is now Israel. He is not the first of our ancestors to have their name changed – Abraham was originally Avram and Sarah was originally Sarai. But I was recently struck by the fact that, in our prayers, such as at the beginning of the Amidah where we pray to the God of our ancestors, we refer to Abraham and Sarah by their new names, but Jacob remains “Jacob.” Why do we not refer to Jacob in prayer by his new name, “Israel”?

I’m thinking that it’s because of the struggle. “Jacob” (Ya’akov in Hebrew) is the one who was always the underdog, who entered the world grasping at his brother Esau’s heel, who was always climbing a steep hill of being in the world. He was challenged, and flawed, as are most of the figures in the Torah, including God. We get to see them struggle with those flaws, sometimes succeeding, sometimes not. And God interacted with them, accepted them, as they were.

What does it mean to pray to the God of these imperfect heroes? To me, it means that we, too, get to be flawed. That when we open our mouths in prayer, in our very personal, very intimate relationship with God, we get to be who we are.

The Torah is anything and everything but a portrayal of what we would call perfection. The concept of perfection is actually an ideal invented later. And I think it’s an ideal that really has not benefited the world, that we have a vision of perfection in our society which is deeply unhealthy. I believe that holding an image of God as one who makes mistakes, and corrects them, and who values and honors that in us, provides a more realistic and much healthier model.

I would also like to say that making mistakes can be a part of being perfect. We are all exactly who we are meant to be, with all the beauties and all the struggles, and I believe that our prayers were designed to embrace us this way.

**Racial Equity
Committee**

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B'Tselem Elohim

By RUTH SCHOENBACH, LARRY BEST, and CLAUDIA BERNARD

The Torah's central description of human beings is that we are created b'tzelem Elohim – equally and uniquely in the image of God. This means Black lives matter, lives of Indigenous People and of all Jews of Color matter. The work of racial justice is holy work, and over our history Jews have done this work in many ways.

Yet, as national research shows, many Jews of Color feel marginalized, ignored, and tokenized by the organized Jewish world, including synagogues. Bay Area Jewry is racially diverse; for Sha'ar Zahav to continue to thrive, we need to reflect that diversity. We must address these issues within our own community so that the relatively small number of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) members feel more supported and welcomed, and not like “the only person like me” at Sha'ar Zahav.

At Rabbi Copeland's initiative, SZ formed the Racial Equity Committee (REC), which has sponsored a rich program of workshops related to racial equity. In November 2022, the Va'ad adopted a Racial Equity Plan, <http://tiny.cc/RJSZ>, which calls for a multi-

faceted approach to creating more racial equity in our community. It asks us to look at our own racism, to create new programming and to do outreach.

We know that making SZ more anti-racist will be a long and imperfect process. Many have been on this journey for a while; others are just starting. We welcome everyone to join in making SZ as diverse and as equitable as possible, and look forward to sharing opportunities for discussion, learning, and action.

REC meetings are the second Tuesday of each month from 6-7:30 PM, with meetings and other events announced in the weekly email newsletter. We invite you to explore with us and join the conversation.

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SZ Archives: From Past to Present

By RON LEZELL

Over the past two years, Sha'ar Zahav members Paul Cohen (z"l), Rob Tat, Alex Ingersoll, Lisa Katz, Mark Mackler, Sharyn Saslafsky and I have tackled organizing the many boxes and computer files containing SZ's rich 45-year history. Our documents include a complete set of minutes from congregational meetings; nearly a complete set of records from Va'ad (Board) meetings; a complete set of Jewish Gaily Forwards from our 1977 founding to present, and a second set lacking only 2004-05; material relating to policy decisions, minutes and documents from most committees, and much more. We also have a cabinet full of fantastic photos, video and media! Our files reflect amazing leadership and awesome challenges over the years, like a December 1978 Washington Post article about our Shabbat service following the assassination of Supervisor Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone, and documents about our political campaign against the Briggs Initiative, which would have banned GLBT people from teaching. And wonderful letters of gratitude from visitors.

But these files are only as good as our ability



SZ members carry the Torah at the dedication of our first synagogue on Danvers Street

to make them readily accessible to the congregation and organizations like the GLBT Historical Society and the Union for Reform Judaism. For that, we need your help!

- **Donate your files:** Do you have any documents from SZ's history, or issues of the JGF from 2004-05?
- **Help us organize:** If you're new to SZ and interested in our history, this is the perfect project!

Help us make the files available: much of the documentation needs to be scanned in order to be readily available. We'd love to hear your ideas for how to make this happen.

If you would like to help our efforts in any way, please contact lezell.ron@gmail.com.

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Susie Idzik
membership@shaarzahav.org

Hineni Caring Community

If you need help or can volunteer to help other Sha'ar Zahav members in need:
Hinenileaders@shaarzahav.org

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Read the JGF online:
<https://www.shaarzahav.org/newsletter/>

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What Our Budget Says About Sha'ar Zahav

By SUSIE IDZIK



It's annual budget time again at Sha'ar Zahav. As with other congregations and nonprofits, a budget tells the story of who we are and how we express our values. How we choose to allocate donations from our membership affirms who we are, and our budget illustrates

how we support ourselves operationally, live our mission, and gather together.

72% of our budget is for staff wages and benefits. Our budget shows that we are invested in our staff, our most vital resource. 16% of our budget is for Operations and Building Expenses, which is the engine that keeps us running.

Operations includes everything from pens to our delicious Onegs; Building Expenses include heat, maintaining the elevator, and other operational expenses. The rest of our budget goes to other essential costs like advertising, storage,

piano tuners and musicians, and Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) dues.

SZ Leadership will be working to create our budget, reflecting on past experiences and with a vision for where we are going. The congregation will vote on the budget at the Annual Meeting on June 7. Budgeting clearly and with purpose helps us to avoid financial chaos. Budgeting realistically helps to avoid financial stress and anxiety.

We cannot create a budget without your support, and we are grateful for all that you give. The Rainbow Campaign is a wonderful giving opportunity. Please support the campaign this year and let's get to 100% participation! The Membership Commitment campaign for next year starts in early summer; consider an increase in your giving to help meet our budgeting goals and support everything our community is and does. Thank you!

Update on Israel Trip

By DEBORAH LEVY

We've received many comments about our fall 2023 Israel trip, and have refined our plans. Engaging with Israel today can be challenging, yet Israel is intricately entwined with Judaism. Our tour company is co-owned by American Jewish and Palestinian Israeli peace builders, and our itinerary is broad, including both historical and modern Israel and a variety of sites and perspectives - and food and fun! I hope you will read how our trip will explore the beauty of Israel and allow us to bring all our perspectives to further a nuanced engagement with Israel, individually and as a community.

Ten days, mid to late October 2023; estimated cost \$3400-4000, including almost everything while in Israel, not including airfare. Single supplement: \$1500.

Many thanks for planning and consultation: Patty Caplan, Andy Schwartz, Rachel Nilson Ralston, Arthur Slepian, Ron Lezell, Marc Lipschutz, Rabbi Copeland, and the 102 congregants who completed our Israel Trip survey.

More information about the trip:
bit.ly/SZIsrael2023

Educator's Column

Goodbye and yasher koach to SZ's amazing Educator, Sue Bojdak, who's starting a wonderful opportunity elsewhere but will remain part of our congregation. And welcome to Liz Jaroslow, our new Interim Educator!

By LIZ JAROSLOW



Life has a way of coming full circle, bringing us back where we came from when we least expect it. When my oldest child yearned for an alternative way to engage with religious school, we searched for an inquiry-driven curriculum and found a home for all of us at Sha'ar Zahav.

Years later, I have had the pleasure of working with and learning from Sue Bojdak at Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer.

My professional path has also circled around: starting as a Jewish educator, then to secular settings, and back to Judaism. And so I find myself happily serving as Sha'ar Zahav's Interim Director of Education for young ones from birth through adolescence. I am honored to extend a hand forward as Sue extends a hand back to pass the baton.

This spring, we are joyfully learning about Jewish rituals in BSPM, growing our Three Stars Havdalah for tots and partnering with Or Shalom to launch a Teen Havurah. I am looking forward to guiding these programs!

By SUE BOJDAK



"Rabbi Hanina said: I have learned much from my teachers and even more from my friends, but from my students I have learned the most."
(Talmud, Taanit 7a)

I have often told my colleagues in these past four and half years that I have the best job in Jewish education. It's like having my own magical learning lab, and the person doing the most learning is me! Here are three big things I've learned about learning that I am taking with me:

- When you make more space for more ideas the learning is so much richer.
- You don't have to know where you are going in order to get somewhere fabulous; you just have to trust the process.
- You never know which contribution is going to bring the whole enterprise together, so honor each contribution as if it were the keystone to our collective success.

May Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer and each of us go from strength to strength. Thank you for being my teachers!

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in memory of his father, Herman Bender
and friend, Joakim Andersson

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in memory of Bob Emerson
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in memory of Suzie Langdon z"l and her
lovely life

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in memory of Phyllis and
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in celebration of Martin Tannenbaum's
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in honor of Solomon Steinfield's Bar
Mitzvah

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in memory of Kevin Tai

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in memory of her mother, Hilda Cohen
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*In honor of Phil Charney's "Reprise" Bar
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in thanks for a fantastic Klezmer
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in honor of her b'mitzvah

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The family of Michael Tyler,**Amy Schustack, and Scott Kramer**

in memory of Scott's mother Myra Kramer,
and Amy's father William Schustack

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in honor of her b'mitzvah

Sha'ar Zahav mourns the loss of our members, and extends our sympathy to their loved ones:

William (Bill) Goldstein
husband of Christopher Archuleta

In Memoriam

The congregation notes with sorrow the deaths of:

NOVEMBER

Yemi Getachew,
friend of Gam Galindo, Shawn Matloob and Geri Khan

Rose Silverman,
aunt of Sharyn Saslafsky

Jan Leary,
friend of Benny Lunine

Doris (D'vora bat Sarah) Kaufman,
aunt of Stuart Dick

Deborah Klein,
mother of Janet Klein
mother-in-law of Lisa DiGirolamo

DECEMBER

Pat Holt,
friend of Irene Ogus

Irwin Berstein,
father of Ruth Bernstein

Rita Ryan,
grandmother of Meagan Fox

Jim Mott,
friend of Nancy Levin
friend of Alice Charap

Evey Torre-Bueno,
cousin of Amy Schustack

Gordon Ashworth,
father of Jason Ashworth

Ruth Cohen,
grandmother of Dwyn Asher

JANUARY

Floyd Stuart,
father-in-law of Tiela Chalmers

Eileen Kates,
mother of Bonnie Kates

Regina Kirschner Rosenzweig,
mother of David Rosenzweig

FEBRUARY

Bernice "Bea" Pressler,
mother of Mark Pressler
mother-in-law of Robert Tannenbaum

MARCH

Isabel Fishman
James Harris Freedgood
Theodore G. Mendonca, Jr.
Batya Kalis
Pearl Lewin
Michael Lipson
Rabbi Sanford Lowe
Noah Nacamulli
Paul Nemrow
Neill Rosen
Marvin Steele

APRIL

Alvin Baum
Geoffrey Bayley
Stanford Bernstein
Abraham Cohen
Norma Faini-Pick
Ronald Gertz
Adam Harris
Dennis Mitchell
Michael Randall
Robert Serman

MAY

Allan Altman
Eugene Bender
Robert Coffman
David Delroy
Richard Inlander
Jack Jacobs
David Loebel
James Perkins
Nanci Stern
Thomas Yazman

NOVEMBER**Zach Hauptman and Zebulon Dezern**

on their wedding

Jonah Goldstone

on his b'mitzvah

Sadie Post

on her b'mitzvah

DECEMBER**Mike Shriver**

on his b'mitzvah

JANUARY**Phil Charney**

on his "reprise" bar mitzvah

Tiela Chambers

on her b'mitzvah

Joseph Feiner

on his b'mitzvah

M Eifler

on their b'mitzvah

Yuridia Ruhama Yisraeli

on her b'mitzvah

Sue Bojdak

on her new position as the Director of Congregational Learning at B'nai Tikvah in Walnut Creek

Your contributions help us realize our commitment to building and maintaining a vibrant, living community for 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.

This Service Brought to You By ...

We have become used to online access to Sha'ar Zahav events over the past two-plus years: Shabbat services and b'mitzvahs; High Holy Days, including multiple services with live captioning and workshops; shiva services, funerals and unveilings; meetings, classes and special events. But did you know that this privilege is the result of a wonderful, ongoing effort by a host of volunteers and our Va'ad (synagogue board)?

Volunteers with professional experience in online production donated time, equipment and expertise. Our Va'ad reorganized the budget to support funding for the Zoom accounts, equipment, and cabling that have allowed us to offer hybrid services after moving back to in-person services. And our amazing, generous team of volunteers on and offsite make our Zoom gatherings possible — providing on and offsite tech support, and acting as "hostx" greeters and service guides for folks attending online. Special thanks

to everyone who's helped make this happen, including: Carey Averbook, Ann Bauman, Gregg Biggs, AC Bowen, Tiela Chalmers, Ann Daniels, M Eifler, Rebecca Fenn, Andy Fyne, Timothy Grant, Thomas Gurinkas, Sara Haber, Tony Harris, Geri Kahn, Jo Ellen Kaiser, Jonathan Kaplan, Sharon Kubo, Nancy Levin, Gerry Llamado, Kay Magilavy, Ronnie Mason, Martin Rawlings-Fein, Mike Rosenberg, Alex Rosenberg, Karen Schiller, Mike Shriver, Sondra and Brandie Solovay, Marika Straw, Laurie Trupin, Larry Wexler, Ami Zusman, and the Disability and Accessibility Committee.

If online access has been meaningful to you, please consider joining the fun and becoming part of the Sha'ar Zahav techcorps and Hostx team! No expertise needed — we are delighted to train. Contact Sara Haber at sara.fay.haber@gmail.com to volunteer or for more information.

JANUARY

Brittany Covert (she/they) and
Justin Shookian (he/him)
Alisa Dichter (she/her) and
Timothy Lesle (he/him)
Veronica Essex (she/her)
MJ Maccabee



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Celebrate PASSOVER with us!

Passover begins the evening of April 5.
Watch your weekly email for details
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Seder and more! We'll once again
have online participation, so you
can join from wherever you are.

