

“Transcend the Ordinary”

Sivan - Elul 5782

June 2022 - August 2022

IN MEMORIAM - PAUL COHEN

By IRENE OGUS

Paul Cohen was Sha'ar Zahav's President from 1981-82, a teacher, a mentor and for many years the force behind the JGF. He died suddenly on Feb. 21; the following is an excerpt from the eulogy given by Irene Ogus.

On February 25, I delivered Paul Cohen's eulogy. Why? Because he asked me to. Paul asked many of us to do things - often things we didn't want to do or know how to do, but we did them because he asked us. And he supported us all the way, because he wanted us to do it right. Paul cared for us, taught us, baked for us, found us jobs, caregivers, therapists, told us the best flour for baking bread or cakes. He became everyone's grandfather. He was the broker of life, the matchmaker, the yente, the mensch of mensches.



Paul devoted himself to connections. He loved to attend and officiate events, and he didn't merely show up: when I married Suzie he appeared at our home for prenuptial counseling, with a very serious-looking black binder of thoughtful questions that prompted deep conversation. He cared about all our families. On a trip to England, he visited my mother in the Jewish home where she lived, which moved me and deepened our understanding of each other. Paul wore his gravitas like a cloak but he loved a good party and really knew how to throw one, including once “borrowing” a Taraval street car for his birthday. Paul knew his own flaws, so he forgave others. I never knew him to hold a grudge. If you wanted to know about an SZ member who left 25 years ago, he'd been in contact.

“Paul was the broker of life, the matchmaker, the yente, the mensch of mensches.”

Paul traveled ceaselessly for conferences on Jewish life and organization, always teaching, listening, closely following shifts in observance, culture and gestalt - and he brought it all back to SZ. He was a prime mover in SZ's admission into the Union for Reform Judaism; in our acquiring land at Hills of Eternity during the AIDS crisis, when our members had nowhere to be remembered; in leading us out of the desert into the land of respectability. Paul's adoption of SZ's Journey to Judaism program and work with people choosing Judaism brought him such joy and pride - with his traditional background, this was a sea-change for him, but he was like the Pied Piper of SZ, saying “come on in, the water's nice and warm!”

After his last surgery Paul and I had lunch and talked about his eulogy. He wanted me to make people laugh. He was feeling good, but I thought, “this must be the end” - this best of hosts served me Safeway Chicken Pot Pie. Paul was one of my dearest friends, a teacher, and a mentor. His light was still shining brightly when he left us.

Feeding The Hungry pg. 5

Journey To Judaism At SZ

By RABBI MYCHAL COPELAND



Wherever you go,
I will go, wherever
you lodge, I will
lodge. Your people
will be my people,
your God will be my
God.

- Ruth 1:16-17

Ruth, from the
Moabite people, ut-
ters these words to
Naomi, her Israelite
mother-in-law, as we

read on the upcoming holiday of Shavuot. Some see Ruth as the first convert to Judaism; others view her passionate words as a commitment to stand by her Israelite chosen family, since conversion as we know it began later in our history. This story is close to my heart since my wife chose a Jewish life with me many years ago, and these words from one woman to another were our wedding vows.

In our SZ community, there is never any pressure to convert. Many come through our doors or their computer screens exploring their spiritual lives; countless others are partners or family members of someone who is Jewish. All these souls are part of our community, as much as those who are born or converted into Judaism.

And there are those who decide that becoming a Jew is an important part of their spiritual journey - and we welcome them. Hundreds of people have passed through SZ's Journey to Judaism program since its founding. While many made this possible over our 45 years, the principal mover was Paul Cohen z"l, who urged the broader Jewish community, not just SZ, to welcome people into our tradition.

Many who find us are LGBTQ people from religious streams that are not affirming of their identities. The conversion program Paul spearheaded is lay-led and unique. Our Journey to Judaism committee ushers people through their journeys with our Journey Discussion Group and matches them with lay mentors.

How does someone know when they are ready to become a Jew? Paul always said, "when you see the world with Jewish eyes." Paul told me he was moved to tears whenever we welcomed someone into the tradition at Shabbat.

The Zohar teaches that "When a person converts, their soul ... enters beneath the wings of Shechinah." You are invited to a celebration of the many souls that SZ has touched through our Journey program, and to commemorate the pioneering and sacred service of Paul Cohen: this Shavuot, June 5, 4-6:30pm.

Sha'ar Zahav

290 Dolores Street
San Francisco CA 94103

VOICE 415-861-6932
WEB <http://www.shaarzahav.org>

Sha'ar Zahav is a member of the Union for Reform Judaism, the World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Jews, California Interfaith Power & Light, and the San Francisco Interfaith Council

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Sha'ar Zahav Staff

RABBI Mychal Copeland
(x301) rabbi@shaarzahav.org

CANTOR Sharon Bernstein
(x308) cantorbernstein@gmail.com

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
Sue Bojdak
(x302) education@shaarzahav.org

DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION
Susie Idzik
susie@shaarzahav.org

ASSISTANT DIR. OF ADMINISTRATION
Kerasa Tsokas
Kerasa@shaarzahav.org

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New President, New Year, New Goals

By MARC LIPSCHUTZ



On Shavuot we affirm participation in the history of the Jewish people. We were all present at Sinai, and together received Torah.

At Sha'ar Zahav we affirm participation in our community, and are each essential to the success of our holy congrega-

tion. With HaShem's help, during my presidency we collectively developed new leadership, increased multiculturalism, engaged technology, enhanced security, and expanded our reach, while remaining prayerful, vibrant, and welcoming throughout a pandemic. I am delighted to share, pending your vote at our hybrid Annual Meeting on Wednesday, June 8, that Deborah Levy will become our new president, effective July 1, 2022.

Deborah and I have worked together on goals for the new fiscal year. With the help of our Va'ad, Rabbi Copeland, Cantor Bernstein, Sue Bojidak and teachers Ila Cherney, Liz Jaraslow and Andrea Guerra, Susie Idzik, Kerasa Tsokas, Matt Diana, Jason Ashworth, and you, we look

forward to increasing and sustaining support for:

- Services, ritual, education, our Rabbi and Cantor
- Anti-racism and inclusionary policies, work, and action
- Greater accessibility, including through technology
- Fundraising and fiscal strategies to support our good work
- Physical and virtual security
- Promotion of Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer and Sha'ar Zahav committees
- Creating positive change at SZ and in the world by stimulating congregational participation and collaboration among Social Justice committees
- Effective communication and broad congregational access to agendas and resources
- Congregational trip to Israel

Please offer Deborah your support!

From Deborah: I am honored to be nominated to serve as Sha'ar Zahav's President. I cherish Sha'ar Zahav, and look forward to actualizing our goals, and to leading, with the community, a safe, healthy, equitable, and financially and environmentally sustainable Jewish home at Sha'ar Zahav.

Task Force Leaders Jewish Gaily Forward

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membership@shaarzahav.org

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To reach the JGF editorial team:
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DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Steve Davis:starspringsf@yahoo.com

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ADVERTISERS: contact Susie Idzik
susie@shaarzahav.org or at 415-861-6932,
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Specifications supplied upon request.

How To Make A Musical

By SUE BOJDAK



As volunteer teacher Danny Kodmur told me last summer, nothing's really more Jewish and gay than musical theater. With that the seed was planted. "Musical theater" didn't become our curriculum focus; that was already set as anti-bias education. But it became a possibility.

One of the great blessings of project-based learning is that it's iterative: you start off in a direction with content you want to explore, and then you get to see what happens. What ideas bring the kids alive? What choices are they making about their learning? What possibilities open up? In the first week of the year the 5th-6th grade class, giddy about being together again, took the day's "value word" - kavod/respect - and turned it into a kind of performative chant. And that musical theater seed got watered.

In her effort to make anti-bias frameworks concrete for K/1/2 students, teacher Ila Cherney had them imagine a town and populate it with characters wrestling with inclusion issues. Suddenly we had an original story. Meanwhile, the 5/6 students were struggling to make meaning out of Rabbi Hillel's teaching, "If I am not for myself..." by listening to songs that others had made from this famous quote and writing their own. Now we had original music.

And just like that we were turning the story into a script, writing new songs, adapting the lyrics of pop tunes, choosing parts, blocking scenes, making sets, and figuring out how to include our Zoom students in the show. It turns out that musical theater is not just quintessentially gay and Jewish. It's also a collaborative medium where we get to practice our values while we make a story out of them. It's a project with multiple points of access, where students can each find their own way to connect.

And it's super fun, engaging, and joyful, bringing light and laughter to the serious and important learning we did on anti-racism, disability rights, and anti-Jewish bias. Amen.

Feeding The Hungry

Sha'ar Zahav is helping to feed the hungry by volunteering at local food banks! SZ's Social Action Committee organized well-attended volunteer days in San Francisco and Berkeley around Yom Kippur 2021 and February 2022.

Kudos to coordinators Tirtza and Barry Pearl in SF and Shawn Matloob in Berkeley, long-time food bank volunteers. Because all the volunteers at these events thought so highly of their experience, the SAC will be sponsoring quarterly volunteer opportunities.

Feeding the hungry and helping the less fortunate members of our community are among our commandments as Jews to help heal the world.

Future dates and opportunities to volunteer will be announced soon; for more info and to sign up, contact Tirtza Pearl at 415-595-4492 or Tirtza.Pearl@gmail.com.

José Angel Hernández

By PAUL COHEN, BRAD FRIEDMAN, AND RABBI REUBEN ZELLMAN

(Former JGF editor Paul Cohen, z"l, began work on this piece before Paul's death in February 2022)

Sha'ar Zahav member José Angel Hernández, z"l, died on January 3, 2022. In the last few years José threw himself wholeheartedly into our community. Last summer he volunteered as co-conductor with Brad for the Northeast SF B'Yachad group. He created warm and friendly gatherings, including leading Havdalah for us at the labyrinth at Grace Cathedral last summer.

He helped build a small community that was saddened by his passing but happy to have known him even for just a few months. Reuben knew José in one particular dimension of their mutual lives: music. In addition to both being members of the SZ community, José and Reuben were colleagues at San Francisco's Community Music Center. José had an enormous, arresting operatic tenor voice. Before he died he was preparing to apply for doctoral work in vocal performance, had been accepted into the SF Symphony Chorus, and was to appear this spring in an opera about Frida Kahlo at the Mexican Heritage Plaza Theater in San Jose. When he sang, when he even talked about singing, he would fill with anima-



tion; his passion was obvious, and it was a joy to witness a sweet, kind person experience such love through his art.

SHA'AR ZAHAV CONGREGATION

All Beit Sefer and SZ families are invited to a retreat on Labor Day weekend: September 2, 3, & 4 (not including Monday). For more information about the program, registration, and costs: <https://sites.google.com/view/csz-retreat/home>

SHA'AR ZAHAV NEW MEMBERS

MARCH

Salem Condello
Daniel Redman
Sara Rose Tannenbaum

APRIL

Lianne Minnis
Judith Katz

SHA'AR ZAHAV MAZEL TOV

JANUARY

Sam Luckey & Kendra Froshman
on the birth
of Audrey Dorian Froshman-Luckey

MARCH

Timothy Grant & Kelly Liu
on the birth of Luna Liu-Grant

APRIL

At The Ukrainian Border

By ARTHUR SLEPIAN

On March 15, I was part of a national delegation of two dozen Jewish Federation leaders that traveled to Warsaw and then to the Polish-Ukrainian border. We came to bear witness to the tragedy, to get a sense of the scale of the crisis, to listen to the stories of the refugees and the aid workers and volunteers - and most importantly, to become storytellers and ambassadors to bring this back to our Bay Area community.

It was the eve of Purim, but there were no masks, no costumes, no drunk partygoers, and no groggers drowning out Haman's name. We did not need to conjure a villain out of the past - we were staring at the consequences of present-day evil right before our eyes.

The scale of the crisis is almost unimaginable. We stayed at a hotel directly across from the Central Warsaw train station, where hundreds of people are arriving by train and bus every hour. Almost all the refugees are women and children, with some elderly men. The husbands and fathers are back home, defending their country and fighting for their freedom. People arrive with a backpack, or a suitcase, or their possessions in a plastic garbage bag. Some have made the journey with their pets.

While there are vast numbers of refugees, each family's story is unique, each one worth listening to. Among the many we heard: Anna fled Ukraine with her six-year-old son and three-year-old daughter: When she and her husband learned that the Russian army had been shelling a nearby nuclear power plant, her husband told her, "You have 15 minutes. Just save our children and go!" The trains were overcrowded with people desperate to leave, and Anna and her children, plus six other women and nine other children, were crammed into a four-person train compartment. The journey to Lviv took 22 hours. "I held my daughter in my arms for the entire trip and by the end I could not feel my arms."

Fredrik, a man in his 80s, had been a professor at a university in Kharkiv for more than 50 years. He did not want to leave his life in Ukraine, and when his daughter finally convinced him to go, he wore his slippers, as if he'd be returning home soon. He spoke slowly, haltingly, the trauma of his experience etched on his face.

"While there are vast numbers of refugees, each family's story is unique, each one worth listening to."

The refugees told us about children being frightened by the sounds of shelling, gunfire and missiles going off all day and all night long. Of air raid sirens reverberating every few hours and having to hide for hours under staircases because no bomb shelters were available.

The Jewish Agency for Israel has taken over the entire Novotel hotel in Warsaw. Hundreds of refugees are living there; conference rooms have become processing centers where staff and volunteers meet individually with refugee families to develop a plan for next steps. Each family's needs or wishes are different: Do they want to consider aliyah to Israel? Are there other parts of Poland or Europe that would make sense for them?

From Warsaw, we traveled to the Polish-Ukrainian border crossing at Mydeka. Among the first things refugees see as they walk through the gate into Poland: an Israeli flag and the tents set up by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the medical teams of Hatzalah and Rescuers Without Borders. Volunteers offer

them a bottle of water and an apple, and there are tents filled with clothing, toys, diapers and places to rest.

Relief agencies from all over the world, both religious and non-sectarian, have come to offer the refugees sustenance of all kinds as well as assistance with transportation and relocation.

The scene is both heartbreaking and inspiring. Thousands of refugees are fleeing the horrendous evil that has been unleashed on their people and their country and they are met at the border by love and compassion and the best of what humanity has to offer. But there are not enough beds, not enough staff, and not enough resources.

We could see the trauma and stress in the faces of the refugees, and also in the faces of the professionals and volunteers with the relief organizations: people working with not enough sleep, often volunteering for acts of great bravery and courage.

For those of us here in the Bay Area, in the safe confines of our homes, this moment is calling to us. Not just to each of us individually, it is calling to us collectively, to our communities, to our generations.

Kol Israel eravim zeh el zeh: We are all responsible for one another. Let us respond with our voices, with our checkbooks, and with all the resources and skills with which we have been blessed. There is so much at stake.

Arthur Slepian is an SZ member and past president and is the current Board Chair of the Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund.

Sha'ar Zahav mourns the loss of our past president and beloved member Paul Cohen, and extends our sympathy to his husband, Bob Gutterman.

In Memoriam

The Congregation notes with sorrow the deaths of:

FEBRUARY

Shirley Alice Coburn,
grandmother of Rebecca Stern

Ada Rosenbaum,
mother of Rabbi Copeland,
mother-in-law of Kirsti Copeland
and grandmother of Asher and Jonah Copeland

Miriam F. Zinn,
mother of David Zinn
and mother-in-law of Lydia Zinn

Daniel Fox,
father of Martin Fox,
father-in-law of Meagan Fox
and grandfather of Josephine and Naomi Fox

Robert Rosenbaum,
uncle of Rabbi Copeland

Naomi Harris,
mother of Sasha Harris-Cronin
and Leah Hammond

MARCH

Barry Pollack,
uncle of Adam Pollack

Sheila Klaiman,
mother of Mark Klaiman
and mother-in-law of Virginia Donohue

APRIL

Mark Tannenbaum,
cousin of Martin Tannenbaum

Douglas Chalmers,
brother of Tiela Chalmers

Christine Cziko,
friend of Ruth Schoenbach and Lynn Eden

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in memory of Laura Lowe's Uncle Bill

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in honor of 100th year of the birth of his father, Roy Biggs

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in honor of Alex Ingersoll's special birthday and in memory of her mother, Bobbi Schiller

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in memory of Sam Lezell

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in honor of Rabbi Copeland, James Carlson, and Jonathan Funk for honoring their daughter Luna during her Simchat Bat

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Berna Sorscher

David Stein

Peter Stein

Robert Tat

Qianya Vinson

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Eric Weiss & Dan Alpert

Judith Wolfe & Jennifer Hughes

Nina Wouk

Regina M Wurst

Ami Zusman

In memory of Ada Rosenbaum:

Alice Harron

Ron Lezell

Robert Tat

In memory of Douglas Chalmers:

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in memory of Paul Cohen

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Nancy Wecker's mother

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Emanu-El will teach their favorite gems of Torah.

We Were All at Sinai: June 5, 4-6:30 pm,
at Sha'ar Zahav, in person and Zoom:

Celebrate the many fellow travelers who have
joined the Jewish community and honor the
memory of Paul Cohen z"l, who spearheaded
our Journey to Judaism program.

**Check your email
for more information!**

**All SZ Members are invited to
attend the Annual Meeting on
Wednesday, June 8, 2022,
in person or via Zoom.**

We will offer a light dinner at 6:00 PM,
followed by our hybrid meeting at 7:00,
including voting for new officers, Va'ad
members, and our 2022-23 budget.

Watch the weekly email for registration links