

“Transcend the Ordinary”

Elul 5785 - Kislev 5786

September-October-November 2025

HEALING THE BROKEN VAV

By CANTOR SHARON BERNSTEIN



Hail to the mighty vav! The 6th letter of the Hebrew alphabet, it's both consonant and vowel (not just one vowel but two, “o” and “oo”), and at 10.38% frequency, is one of the three most commonly used letters, along with hey and yud.

And in Parashat Pinchas, it is broken. Pinchas, after taking it upon himself to run a spear through copulating idolaters, is promised a covenant of peace, *shalom*, by and with God. The word *shalom* contains a vav, which is scribed here in this verse with a fissure in the vertical line that is the primary stroke of the letter.

Rav Hirsch, a 19th century Torah commentator, says that God's promise to Pinchas is called the “reconnected” shalom. Pinchas represents both the breaking of peace and the struggle to restore it: the need to make the *shalom* (peace) *shalem* (whole) again. Rav

Hirsch says that whoever wants to mediate the restoration of a broken peace must make themselves whole.

The vav here in the middle of the *shalom* is called a “broken” vav, but I see it more as a gap, a space, to be filled in, re-connected. If one thinks about the vav as a human form – a vertical line with a hook at the top – the gap comes at the mid-section, where we find our lungs, our heart, our gut, the center of what we sometimes think of as our essence. It is where, when there is a gap in our lives, in our spirits, we tend to feel it physically.

Filling gaps, mending that which feels broken inside ourselves, is terribly hard work, and often without a clear map or manifestation. And yet we do it, and do it constantly. We develop cracks or gaps, and patch them up, and then patch them up again.

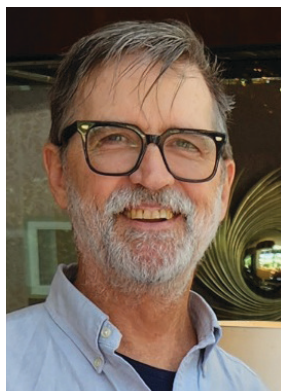
It is, in a way, a microcosm of the High Holy Days, of turning and returning, filling in our vavs, making them whole, and then trekking out into the world to make it whole as well. And, like the multifunctional vav, trying to adapt ourselves as best as we can to different spaces and needs.

May we, these High Holy Days, and throughout the year, find our ways towards repairing our vavs, filling in and connecting the gaps, and building up our strength towards bringing peace and wholeness in the world.

FROM THE
ARCHIVES

pg.5

By MICHAEL SHRIVER



The second-ever publication of the Jewish Gaily Forward (October 1977) contained this description of Sha'ar Zahav:

We are a kehillah or community of people who genuinely like and care about each other, as active Jews, as gays,

as people. We feel strong bonds of kinship as a community. Many deep and lasting friendships can be formed here. Our religious services and social gatherings do not stress formality-we are more concerned with the spiritual and emotional content of what we do.

While so much has changed over the 48 years since that JGF was mailed in a plain brown paper wrapper, I can see and feel the Sha'ar Zahav of today in that description – we are still a *kehillah* of individuals who like, love, and continue to care for each other, and we are still a community that remains concerned with the spiritual and emotional content of everything we do. We continue to strive to

be a better-connected community, a more inclusive and sacred space.

I was struck by reading past JGFs at how much we have grown, adapted, and changed in response to the world around us; and also how much we have changed and improved the world. We have an amazing story to tell. Actually, we have many amazing stories to tell: who we are as a congregation, how we became such an amazing place, and where we see ourselves over the next half-century.

July 2027 will mark our 50th anniversary. We are already beginning to plan programming, celebrations, exhibits, educational events, publications, and more. I invite our whole congregation to be part of this exciting and daunting process. Please reach out to me: president@shaarzahav.org. To do this milestone justice - to our founders and our history - we will need the help of our whole community.

Interested in SZ's history? Check out <https://archive.org/details/jewishgailyforward> - almost all the JGFs since our founding!

Sha'ar Zahav

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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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By DANNY SHAPIRO



In a time when antisemitism is rising and weighing heavily on many hearts, some of us are asking: What can we do to support one another and strengthen our community?

A friend from my yeshiva days in Jerusalem recently

told me she was searching for a way to create a safe space — where Jews can come together to share, process, feel heard, and connect during these difficult times. I was reminded that this space already exists for so many at Sha'ar Zahav — a home where we are seen, supported, and strengthened, especially in moments like these.

This was the very reason for founding Sha'ar Zahav: to be a place where LGBTQIA+ Jews can be their full, authentic

selves — to feel understood, to belong, and to support one another during critical times.

We must continue this holy work and be a community that shines as a beacon of inclusivity, connection, and support for all. As the High Holidays approach, I invite all of us to carry our founding vision forward — in our homes, in our synagogue, and in how we show up for each other during these sacred days and the uncertain times ahead.

Read the JGF Online!

The JGF can be found online. Read current and previous issues at:

<https://www.shaarzahav.org/newsletter>

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Warren Baim, Andrea Korsunsky, Quinn Martinez, Josh Muller, Tirtza Pearl, Shelli Rawlings-Fein, Brandie Solovay, Michael Tyler, Neil Young

Membership

Danny Shapiro
danny@shaarzahav.org

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If you need help or can volunteer to help other Sha'ar Zahav members in need:
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MAHLOKET MATTERS: CONSTRUCTIVE DISAGREEMENT

By RABBI Q



Love Judaism's traditional openness to challenge and debate? Check! Feel a sense of dread in the face of interpersonal conflict? Also check!

Turns out that's true for lots of us. But what if we could see disagreement not solely as divisive or destabilizing, but potentially generative and relationship-deepening? Jewish sources describe a type of constructive disagreement they call mahloket l'shem shamayim, argument for the sake of heaven, in which we deeply engage in conversation with curiosity, humility, and a desire to understand.

Easier said than done, of course! In response to "living in a moment of unprecedented breakdown in civil discourse," the Pardes Institute developed Mahloket Matters, a methodology that draws on Jewish texts and social psychology to foster our capacity for

individuals and communities to engage in constructive disagreement. Sha'ar Zahav has supported brave conversations as a community: for example, holding space for divergent voices about Israel and its neighbors. I'd like to build my comfort with mahloket l'shem shamayim in my own leadership. To that end, I am participating in Pardes' Senior Educational Leaders' Fellowship, a 14-month cohort-based program for Jewish educators that began this past summer and will culminate in an Israel-based study retreat next summer. In addition to studying classical texts from the Mishnah and Talmud, we are using principles from Non-Violent Communication, protocols from Resetting the Table, and other varied tools to strengthen our skills and build our comfort with navigating conflict as community leaders.

I look forward to sharing what I learn and putting it into use in my work at Sha'ar Zahav.

SHA'AR ZAHAV MEET THE B'MITZVAH

Talia Meltzer

Talia Meltzer, daughter of Rebecca Foster and Jamie Meltzer, will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah on October 18, 2025.

Talia is a seventh grader at Charles Armstrong School, where she proudly embraces her identity as a dyslexic learner. She brings creativity to everything she does—from ceramics to performing in musical theater to playing with the Eastside Eagles soccer team

in San Francisco. She finds joy in nature, hiking steep trails in Kauai and Yosemite and visiting beaches as often as possible. Talia is also a devoted animal lover, especially when it comes to her dog, Vincent.

Talia would like to thank her incredible mentor, Shelli Rawlings-Fein, for her support and care over the past year and a half. Talia is also grateful to her Beit Sefer teachers, including Ila Cherney, Marty Rawlings-Fein, and Rabbi Q, and to Jo Ellen Kaiser for her guidance in writing her drash. Talia and her family feel deeply thankful to be part of the Sha'ar Zahav community.

With this issue of the JGF we introduce a new feature: From the Archives. Sha'ar Zahav has amazing archives (which are currently being organized and catalogued by the Archives Committee), including documents, photos and video going back to our founding. Also, there's almost every single issue of the Jewish Gaily Forward since September 1977, which can be viewed and searched here: <https://archive.org/details/jewishgailyforward>. To the right is a reproduction of the first issue of the JGF, 48 years ago this month.

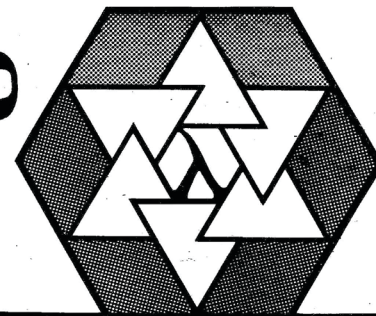
Picture (right):

Courtesy of Robert Tat and the Archives Committee

Do you have digital photographs or video of Sha'ar Zahav activities or events? The Archives Project, documenting our history, would like to have copies. Contact Lawrence Helman (heytheresells@gmail.com) or Robert Tat (rob@roberttat.com)

THE JEWISH GAILY FORWARD

NEWS MAGAZINE OF
SHA'AR ZAHAV
THE CONGREGATION OF
THE GOLDEN GATE



VOL. 1
BOOK 1

Box 2107 San Francisco, Ca. 94126

SEPTEMBER 1977
ELUL 5737

Shalom

MAY YOU HAVE A GOOD AND SWEET YEAR! "5738"

WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO CELEBRATING OUR FIRST HIGH HOLIDAY SERVICES

PLEASE JOIN US. Kol Nidre to be performed by Daniel Reiter of the
"Oakland Symphony"

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Services

Location: Glide Memorial Church, Ellis and Taylor

Days and Time: Sept. 12th, Monday evening, 7:30 P.M.

Sept. 13th, Tuesday morning, 10:30 A.M.

Sept. 21st, Wednesday evening, 7:00 P.M. for KOL NIDRE

Sept. 22nd, Thursday morning, 10:30 A.M.

Sept. 22nd, Thursday evening, 5:30 P.M. for CONCLUDING SERVICES

1.k

SHA'AR ZAHAV SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

PURSUING JUSTICE, DEMOCRACY, AND FAIRNESS

By NANCY WECKER AND NEIL J. YOUNG

What is the Social Action Committee all about? Weddings, marches, postcarding, distributing blankets, clothing, and food, housing advocacy, immigrant support and much more:

Hunger & Homelessness: *When you reap the harvest in your field and overlook a sheaf in the field do not turn back to get it; it shall go to the stranger, the orphan, and*

(continued on page 10)

Please contact the SZ office if you have any questions or comments about this section.

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We are grateful to all our donors! Your generosity supports everything that Sha'ar Zahav does. This issue lists donations through July 23.

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Justin and Brandie Berenstein
in memory of Allan Berenstein

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in memory of Carol Carlson, Ken Carlson, and Ron Carlson; in memory of his mother, Jan Tuzzolino

Ila Cherney and Kathy England

Ann Daniels and Jonathan Zingman

Joseph Feiner
in memory of Donald Feiner for Father's Day

Lisa Finkelstein

Rebecca Foster

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in honor of Bright Singjaroen's graduation from SFSU with an MA in Business Analytics

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Myra Gross

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in memory of his mother, Sophie Stulberg Lezell

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In honor of and with thanks to Kerasa Tsokas, Alan Gordon and Ron Edelman for a beautiful *aufruf* service for Anna and Jack

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John Arnold

in honor of Jon Funk's birthday

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in memory of Paul Cohen z"l and Ray Bernstein z"l:

Rose Katz

in honor of Ina Turpen Fried receiving
a Guardians of Truth Award from the
Human Rights Campaign Foundation

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in memory of Mirtha Beal

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in memory of his mother, Lee Shotland

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in honor of past and present Va'ad
members and officers

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wedding

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Chevalaz

SHA'AR ZAHAV

**PLEASE WELCOME
OUR NEW MEMBERS!**

MAY

Sasha Pikul (he/him)

Gregg Drinkwater (he/him)

JULY

**Olga Zilberbourg (she/her) and David
Grenetz (he/him)**

Jack Schell (he/him)

Valeriya Epshteyn (they/them)

Jaimie Cohen (she/her)

Glenn Rosenbluth (he/him)

Henry Machtay (he/him)

Ruth (R.E) Carsch (she/her)

SHA'AR ZAHAV

CONDOLENCES

In Memoriam

The congregation notes with sorrow the
deaths of:

MAY

Nicole Baron

cousin of Stephen Hauptman

JUNE

Lucille Ormay

friend of Scott Kramer, Michael Tyler,
and Amy Schustack

Peter Weinrobe and Maury Greenberg

friends of Kay Magilavy

JULY

Cherry Ramee

aunt of Kirsti Copeland

Dori Ross

mother of Paul Peninger

Lorraine C. Guerra

aunt of Andréa Guerra

Got something to celebrate? Send your Mazel Tov Announcements to office@shaarzahav.org to be included in future newsletters.

JUNE

Parker Pevitz and Margret Tabunda
on their wedding

Ellie Rose Akbar and Jim Chowdry
on the birth of their baby

Phil Charney
on his son Jules opening a pizza restaurant

JULY

Katie Bondy and Eugene Rabinovich
on their wedding

Kelly Thiemann
on her retirement

Va'ad Members and Officers for 2025-2026:

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Bob Gordon – Recorder
Sara Haber – Vice President
Andrea Korsunsky – Board Member
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Neil Young - Va'ad Member

Rebekah Mayne
on officially joining the Jewish people with mentor Deborah Levy

Gregg Biggs
on officially joining the Jewish people with mentor James Carlson

Margret Tabunda
on officially joining the Jewish people with mentor Frank Yellin

JUNE

Michael Argenyi
on officially joining the Jewish people with mentor Warren Baim

Mary Crawford
on officially joining the Jewish people with mentor Rose Katz

SHA'AR ZAHAV YAHREZEITS

We regret the omission in the last issue of the August yahrzeit of Alan Ferrara

SEPTEMBER

Judith Cohen

Jeffrey Lewis Cohen

Penny Dachinger

Lee Gierson

John Golebowski

Kevin Johnson

Alice Katz

Elliot Klein

Bernard Pechter

David Pierce

Mike Rankin

Edith Schwartz

Diane Swanson

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Phillip Yanofsky

OCTOBER

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 Annye Bone
 Maely Daniele Dufty
 Osna Elsa Frischman
 Robert Gutterman
 Rabbi Benjamin Marcus
 Henry Mautner
 Jeffrey A. Miller
 Glenn Murray Miller
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 Lisa Niebauer
 Duane Kearns Puryear
 Victor Villaluna
 Andrew Zysman

NOVEMBER

Donald Albert
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 William David Holt II
 Forrest Kincade
 Harvey Levine
 Elaine Lewis
 Andy McDonald
 Harvey Milk
 George Mintzer
 Milton Murland
 Chuck Norton
 Tristano Palermino
 Sidney Rosenthal
 Ruth Shaber-Wishner
 Rose Truffias Steinberg
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 Lillian Yanofsky

KEVER AVOT V'IMAHOT (HONORING THE MEMORIES OF OUR ANCESTORS AT GRAVESIDE)

By JAMES CARLSON

During the High Holy Days, we remember those who have gone on before us: our fathers and mothers, friends and loved ones. Sha'ar Zahav's commemoration includes a cemetery service on the Sunday between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: *Kever Avot v'Imahot*, Honoring Our Ancestors. Metaphorically, we're lighting yahrzeit candles in our minds for the many people who have impacted our lives, and remembering the Sha'ar Zahav members who have passed. And in keeping with the theme of Yom Kippur, we contemplate the time – hopefully many years in the future – when we too will be remembered by those whose lives we have touched.

However long you've been part of our community, this short, contemplative service is touching and meaningful. And whether or not you have personally had a loss in your life, you are welcome - this service is for anyone wishing to contemplate life and death amidst supportive community. The service begins at 10 AM on September 28, at the Sha'ar Zahav section of Hills of Eternity Memorial Park in Colma, and will be informally livestreamed. A fabulous potluck will follow. Watch the weekly email for more details; we hope you'll join us!

PURSuing JUSTICE, DEMOCRACY, AND FAIRNESS (cont.)

the widow (Deuteronomy 24:19-22) - We provided food at Night Ministry's Shabbat services and Passover Seder at 16th & Mission Street Plaza and fresh produce from apples to zucchinis at SF-Marin Food Bank; and blankets, jackets, and socks at Gubbio Project (clothing donations welcome in SZ lobby).

Democracy: *Tzedek, tzedek tirdof - Justice, justice you shall pursue (Deuteronomy 16:20)* - John Lewis Memorial Voter Engagement Group wrote thousands of postcards empowering underrepresented voters, and the effort continues; contact Tirtza Pearl at tirtza.pearl@gmail.com. We joined "No Kings" and MLK Day marches.

Immigration Rights: *The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Leviticus 19:33)* - Teams accompany asylees with support and safe resources for food, shelter, medical and legal, and even an LGBT

wedding. We organized Immigrant Justice panels informing and inspiring activism.

Honoring our community: *A time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance (Ecclesiastes 3:4)* - We organized a work day at the National AIDS Memorial Grove. From the National AIDS Memorial website: "Sharing the story of the struggle against HIV/AIDS, we remember, in perpetuity, the lives lost, we offer healing and hope to survivors, and we inspire new generations of activists to fight against stigma, denial, and hate for a just future."

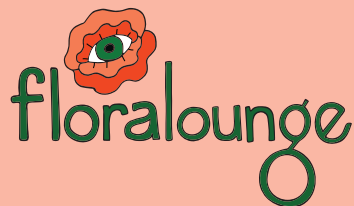
Join us: *And the work of tzedakah shall bring peace (Isaiah 32:17)* - We work together in community to advance human rights, justice, democracy, food and housing security, in the spirit of *Tikkun olam* (repairing the world). Whatever your passion and interests, come join our group. Contact Nancy Wecker (nwecker@earthlink.net) or Neil J Young (neiljyoung@yahoo.com) for more information.

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HIGH HOLY DAYS



2025 / 5786

Sha'arZahav

High Holy Days
Be Yourself. Be with us.



Most High Holy Day services will be both on Zoom and in person at the Herbst Theater (401 Van Ness Avenue). See the SZ website and weekly email for details.

SAT., SEPT. 13 – L'eil S'lichot
7:30 PM - Zoom only

MON., SEPT. 22 – Erev Rosh Hashanah
7 PM

TUES., SEPT. 23 – Rosh Hashanah Day 1
9:30 AM - Morning services; in-person family program

2 PM - SF picnic, Tashlich, & optional beach cleanup (service will be informally livestreamed); East Bay in-person picnic & Tashlich

3:30 PM - Zoom gathering & Tashlich

WED., SEPT. 24 – Rosh Hashanah Day 2
9:30 AM - At Sha'ar Zahav

SUN., SEPT. 28 – Kever Avot v'Imahot (Honoring our Ancestors)
10 AM - At Hills of Eternity Cemetery, Colma; in person and informally livestreamed. Potluck lunch to follow.

WED., OCT. 1 – Erev Yom Kippur/Kol Nidre
7 PM

THURS., OCT. 2 – Yom Kippur
9:30 AM - Services and activities continuing throughout the day