



The Jewish Gaily Forward

“Transcend the Ordinary”

Kislev - Adar 5786
December 2025 - February 2026

REMEMBERING OUR FOUNDER, DANIEL CHESIR

By RABBI MYCHAL COPELAND



Our beloved founder, Daniel Chesir, died on October 31. The Torah portion on the Shabbat eve when Daniel died was “Lech L’cha,” when Avram is told to leave his parents’ house and everything that is familiar for a new life in an unknown place. Daniel did exactly that when he left his Orthodox family in Brooklyn and moved to California over 50 years ago. Traditional Jewish ritual life was always a part of who he was, although he was headed on a very different path.

In 1977, Daniel, Bernard Pechter z”l, and Shamir Durst founded Sha’ar Zahav as “the gay synagogue of the Golden Gate: a non-sexist, multi-traditional kehillah.” Daniel wrote: “...after our whole lives being scorned by other synagogues and often by our families, we wanted a Jewish community where we could celebrate our lives and relationships.”

Rabbi Yoel Kahn said: “Daniel ... was self-integrated and self-actualized as a queer Jew before any of those words were in common usage, always believing in and living out these essential dimensions of himself with uncompromising integrity.”

Daniel’s mark is everywhere at SZ. But he and our other early visionary leaders also made a major impact on LGBTQI inclusion in the then ambivalent Reform movement, pushing them to accept synagogues like SZ into the fold and changing the way LGBTQI people were represented in the movement’s publications. Daniel served as regional president of the Reform congregational arm, leading them towards greater inclusion. We are indebted to Daniel and our other leaders for transforming the way the Jewish world views LGBTQI people.

But SZ was Daniel’s self-proclaimed greatest accomplishment: “being a founder of Sha’ar Zahav has, without a doubt, been the most significant activity of my life. It has become an organization surpassing anything I could have dreamed of.”

One of our SZ prayers ends: “When I am gone and have left only my name, I know that I will be remembered here.” Daniel will be remembered here. And his legacy is that he built a *kehillah k’dosha*, a sacred community, which ensured that countless other people will be remembered long after they are gone as well. Daniel will be remembered as a groundbreaker and a visionary, but also as a kindhearted soul who lived his life authentically, and paved the way for so many of us to follow in his footsteps.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

pg.6

THIS ISSUE: Book Group / Movie and Theatre Chavurah / Meet the B’Mitzvah & more

By MICHAEL SHRIVER



I am becoming obsessed with our planning for Sha'ar Zahav's 50th Anniversary. I know, it's not until July 2027 (a mere 15 months away), but we are busy planning for our Golden Anniversary – which is going to require a lot of help and support

from this community. And the more I take part in our planning activities, the more I continue to learn about this community that I truly love.

In a recent 50th Anniversary planning meeting, a congregant reminded the group: there are so many achievements, accomplishments, and challenges that many in our community are unaware of, or perhaps take for granted. So many of the things that I experienced when I came to Sha'ar Zahav and made the decision to convert – like the Siddur, lay leaders for services, inclusive language, Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer, the building at 290 Dolores – have a rich and storied past. And I only learned about that history because of members who were (and continue to be) more than happy to tell me the stories.

We love our stories. And deservedly so. Our

experiences, achievements, setbacks, bumps in the road, and amazing successes need to live on. They are more than just the memories of long-time members; they make up the collective story of the present. And I believe that we can only begin to envision our future when we know our past.

I am proud to be a member of a community that has been a change agent. We have brought change to the Reform movement and to the nationwide Jewish community. We created a synagogue specifically for the LGBTQ community when that was a radical act. We addressed the AIDS epidemic, Sanctuary efforts, and reparations. We are working to support trans/gender-nonconforming communities and to provide access to all who need it. I wish I had space for all our other achievements – the impact of this synagogue has been profound and palpable.

As we look towards the incredible milestone that is our 50th anniversary, I hope that we celebrate and honor our past, and also ensure that future generations of Sha'ar Zahav members are able to carry all of these stories into our future.

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HARVEY TURPEN FRIED



Harvey Turpen Fried, son of AJ and Ina Turpen Fried, will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah on December 27, 2025.

Harvey is a seventh grader at Hoover Middle School, where he enjoys both sports and music. Harvey brings passion and enthusiasm to everything he does, from playing trumpet to playing goalie. Harvey also very much enjoys video games, including Roblox.

Harvey would like to thank Karen Schiller who served as Harvey's amazing mentor for both his drash and the Hebrew. He is also grateful for his family and so many other adults who have helped him reach this day, including Beit Sefer teachers including Ila Cherney, Marty Rawlings- Fein and Andrea Guerra as well as the amazing Rabbi Q. Harvey and his family are so excited to share this moment of joy with our Sha'ar Zahav community.

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

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

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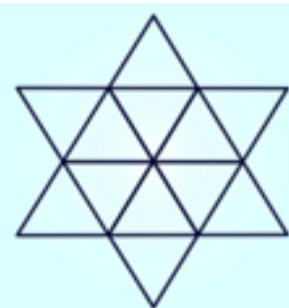
PUZZLER TIME

By BARB CYMROT

#1 Puzzler: Use the clues and grids to solve the puzzle

*Beit Sefer is celebrating Chanukah at Sha'ar Zahav!
What did each person bring?*

1. *Robin and the person who brought the sufganiyot drank lemonade. Jonah drank milk.*
2. *The person who brought the latkes gave sandwiches to Dale and the person who brought the Chanukiah. The person who brought the sufganiyot sat next to Alex and Terry.*
3. *Jonah, Robin and the person who brought the fried cheese balls laughed at the joke told by the person who brought the latkes.*
4. *The person who brought candles showed Alex and Jonah how to moonwalk.*
5. *Alex greeted the person who brought the latkes and the person who brought the Chanukiah at the door.*

**#2 Puzzler:
How Many Triangles?**

	Fried Cheese Balls	Sufganiyot (jelly donut)	Chanukiah	Latkes	Candles
Dale					
Terry					
Jonah					
Alex					
Robin					

Puzzler answers can be found at the bottom of page 6!

By AMI ZUSMAN

Love to read and talk about good books? Join Sha'ar Zahav's Book Group! We're a bunch of book lovers who come together every other month by Zoom for lively, fun, and thoughtful discussions of books with Jewish and/or LGBTQ themes.

The books we read (suggested by those attending) cover a variety of topics and genres, although most often we've chosen fiction or memoirs. A few examples:

- *A Backpack, a Bear, and Eight Crates of Vodka* - Lev Golinkin's memoir of his family's escape from the Soviet Union and not-always-easy adjustment as immigrants in America
- Judy Heuman's *Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of A Disability Rights Activist*

- *Light from Uncommon Stars* by Ryka Aoki - a teenage trans girl and virtuoso violinist, a master violinist who has sold her soul to the devil, and space aliens posing as donut shop owners
- James McBride's *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* - a murder mystery, but really about the intertwined relationships between an African American and a Jewish community
- *The Golem of Brooklyn* - our most recent book, a wild romp by Adam Mansbach

We typically meet every other month on the first Tuesday, 7-8pm. Next meeting is January 6. Come then or any time! For more info, check the SZ calendar or email ami.zusman@berkeley.edu

By MARTIN TANNENBAUM

It all started during Covid when my husband Alex and I read about a poignant and hilarious documentary by Rachel Mason that focused on her modest Jewish parents who were also proprietors of a bookstore that produced and sold gay pornography in West Hollywood. It was streaming on Netflix and we had an in with the filmmaker. How could we resist?

From that initial movie, we decided to form a movie and theater chavurah – to view films and plays that were available online – and then discuss them among ourselves. Since that start in May 2020, we have viewed and discussed over 36 films and plays. They include comedies and tragedies, new and older productions, and are in English – or sometimes not: “God of Vengeance” was in Yiddish.

While not all productions are explicitly Jewish, many are – and several are produced in Israel. We explore how or whether they represent Jewish values, evaluate artistic values and generally leave our conversation thinking more highly of the film or play. Of course, we also ask “Is it good for the Jews?” That question seems to summon the greatest debate.

Join us on the first Wednesday of the month from 6-7:15 pm. It's a charming and diverse group of Sha'ar Zahavniks and we're very welcoming to new participants. Email kerasa@shaarzahav.org to be added to our Chavurah. Our next meeting will be on January 7.

The Jewish Gaily

CONGREGATION SHA'AR ZAHAV

FORWARD



CHESHVAN/KISLEV 5747 DECEMBER 1986

Celebrate Our Chanukah Fiesta

Who can resist the exciting sounds of salsa, the delicious flavors of chili and chichis, and the romance of a quiet beach at sunset.

Sound tempting? Then brace yourself, because Sha'ar Zahav's Chanukah celebration, Cafe Latke Grande, will offer all—well most—of these, *plus* a chance to take part in our big raffle drawing of a vacation for two to Puerto Vallarta. Join us for dancing to a professional DJ, entertainment by a special guest star and, of course, our world famous “deep dish” latkes (mit salsa!).

Remember to bring your menorah for our traditional group menorah lighting ceremony, held at 8:30 sharp. In addition, another year-old tradition, our Silent Auction, will be helping to raise funds for the congregation. (If you have a service to donate, please call Ralph Frischman at 626-9915.)

Do join us, and bring lots of friends:

Saturday, December 27
8 pm til midnight
Temple Sherith Israel
California & Webster
Donations: \$5 members, \$7 guests
Dress is colorful

For additional raffle tickets, contact Shirley Liberman (550-1744) or the CSZ office. Also contact Shirley to volunteer to help make this another memorable occasion.



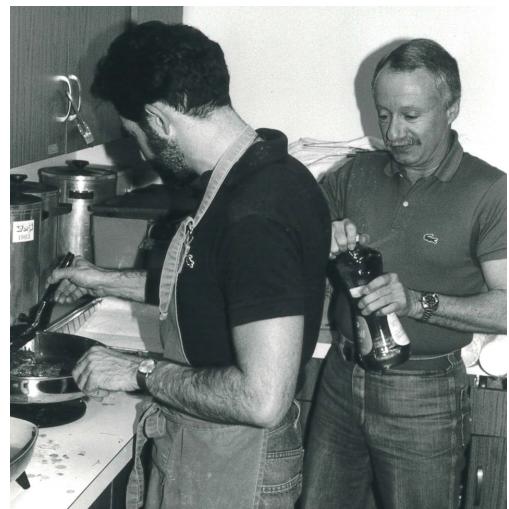
PHOTO BY AMY BLASENHEIM

Pirsum ha-nes: Ritual Chair Daniel Chesir “advertises the miracle” of Chanukah with his usual flair.

Photos 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)

Picture (left):
JGF Front Page.
December 1986, showing
Daniel Chesir z'l lighting
the Hanukkah.

Picture (below)
In SZ's early days the men
always made the latkes
for the Chanukah party.



Puzzler Answers!

Puzzle #1: Jonah brought the Chanukiah, Alex brought the Donuts, Robin brought the Candles, Terry brought the Latkes, and Dale brought the Cheese Balls

Puzzle #2: The Star of David has 20 triangles

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Lesley Wynn
Sam and Brandie Yelland

David Gluck and Christine Young
Polina Zatsman
Gail Zellman
Olga Zilberbourg and David Grenetz
Jonathan Zimman
Aaron Zinman
Edwin Zinman
Louise Zonis and David Fox
Scott Zuccarino
Ami Zusman
David Zusman

Siddur Dedication

Jonathan Funk and John Arnold
 in honor of Steve Mazer

The Welcome Home Project

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

James Carlson
 in honor of Gregg Biggs' Entry in the Covenant
Jonathan Funk and John Arnold
 in honor of High Holiday Gabbais
Ira Hirschfield and Tom Hansen
Eric Weiss and Dan Alpert
Judith Wolfe and Jennifer Hughes

SEPTEMBER

Flowers Sponsors:
Shawn Meir Matloob
 in memory of his mother Shahnaz Rahel Cohanim Matloob and grandparents Mehdi Meir Cohanim and Iran Cohanim

Oneg Sponsors:

David Lowe
 in memory of his husband, Daniel McGoldrick

OCTOBER

Oneg Sponsors:
Marius Greenspan
 in memory of his brother Jerry Greenspan and his parents, Earl and Evelyn Greenspan

NOVEMBER

Flowers Sponsors:
Shawn Meir Matloob
 in celebration of Sarah Grams' conversion

Oneg Sponsors:
Lisa Finkelstein
 in memory of her father, Les Finkelstein

AUGUST

Russ Sharkey - he/him
Marcus Alexander - he/him
Haim Balderas - he/him
Chrystelle Browman- she/her
Deanne Katz (she/her) and Jeffrey Cohen
Mark Epstein
Babs Daitch

OCTOBER

Deb Dauber - she/her
Meredith Benton - she/her
Rebecca Prozan - she/her

Sha'ar Zahav mourns the loss of our member and founder Daniel Chesir, and extends our sympathy to his loved ones.

In Memoriam

The congregation notes with sorrow the deaths of:

AUGUST

Joan Strober Gordon
 cousin of Eli Andrew Ramer
Marsha Hilsenrad
 sister-in-law of Marjorie Hilsenrad
Stephen Jatovsky
 father of Naomi Jatovsky

John Parrish

friend of Ora Prochovnick

Suzanne Ronigermother of Lori Roniger and grandmother
of Pita and Judy**Sanford Shapir**

friend of Michael Bettinger

SEPTEMBER**James Kleerup**

friend of Tony Harris

Maurice Bernard Millman

uncle of Gary Goldstone

OCTOBER**Ruth Dick**

mother of Stuart Dick

Charlotte Katz

mother of Robert Katz

Barbara Pines

sister of Carolyn Pines

Rosalie Rosenbaum

friend of Steve Elman and Tom Holt

Hilda Truehart

cousin of Sharyn Saslafsky

Jerome Trupin

father of Laurie Trupin

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

OCTOBER

Dvorah Lewis and Joshua Selesnick
on getting married

NOVEMBER

Marty Rawlings-Fein
on becoming a Rabbi
Sarah Grams
on converting to Judaism

DECEMBER**Clark Beebe****Allan Craig****David Glassberg****Mildred Goldstein****Norman David Kramer****Elijah Michael Silverrod MacLachlan****Marilyn O'Keeffe****Walter Palmer****Nicholas Papadopoulos****Sol Segal****Frieda Shaber****Jerry Sharlin****Kathy (Pixie) Swanz****Richard Wilson****JANUARY****George Ash****Bill Ashley-Dobbin****Robert Baldock****Beth Berenson****Ben Blachman****Jerome Davis****Keith Fenton****William Goldstein****Jose Hernandez****Arthur Judelsohn****Phyllis Mintzer****Israel Miranski****Aaron Nacamulli****Cheryl Orvis****Eugene I. Pearl****Martha R. Pearl****Gerald (Jerry) Rosenstein****Soraya Vorster****FEBRUARY****John Atteridge****Tauby Auerback****Paul Cohen****Rabbi Jason Gaber****Ziggy Gimnicher****Allen Harris****Zadie Heart****Batya Kalis****Mordechai Kashtan****Rabbi Sanford Lowe****Hyman Margolis****Steven Richter****Ada Rosenbaum****Barbara Rosenblum****Ephraim Troy****Leland Vogel****Stephen Walters****Nathan Eli Weinstein****Ronald Wilmot**

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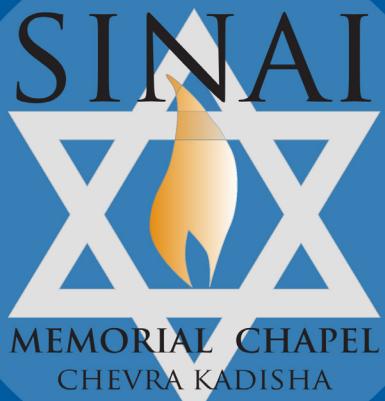
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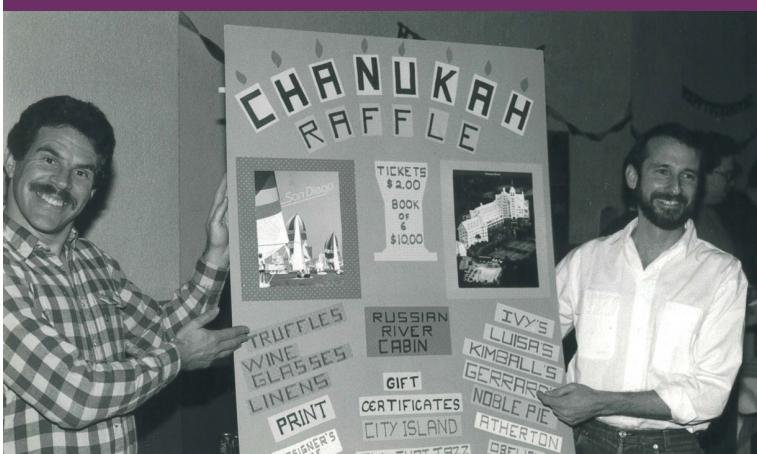
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**Join us for Hanukkah in the Castro on December 15
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for more info!**



*Sha'ar Zahav Chanukah raffle,
c.1984*

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