

“Transcend the Ordinary”

Adar - Nissan - Iyar - Sivan 5786
March - May 2026

JUDAISM 101

By CANTOR SHARON BERNSTEIN



I am, this year, in my third year of teaching our Sha’ar Zahav Intro to Judaism class. It’s my first time teaching such a course; I’ve taught sections of these classes in other communities, but never the whole shebang.

Over these three years, both while prepping and teaching, I am continuously reminded of the treasure trove that is Jewish life and learning. There is the ever-widening circle of sacred texts and commentaries; the vast array of arts, culture, and practices of Jews living in nearly every corner of the world for over 2,000 years; and, in the sphere of two Jews-three opinions, more philosophy and thought than can be imagined.

It’s not that I’m not already aware of these smorgasbords of study, but approaching them from a 101 standpoint means approaching them anew, of looking at both forests and trees, of walking down this glorious corridor of Jewish pathways, opening doors, and peeking together at what’s inside. My perspective constantly widens and deepens – both through preparing the material at each cycle and through each marvellous question and insight brought by participants in the class.

Mostly, what has been reinforced for me is that we’re all 101 learners in Jewish life, each of us ever at the beginning of a new path. For no matter how far we’ve travelled, along how many roads, there’s always something new to explore. Always the next step, always the tantalizing tidbit to check out, always the exciting connection to be made. It is an endless playground of possibilities to explore, and I do so enjoy playing in it – with the cohorts of 101 students, and with each and every one of you.

By MICHAEL SHRIVER



Each year at Sha'ar Zahav, we must build the financial foundation that allows our community to thrive. Our annual budget depends on a combination of membership commitments, fundraising efforts, and the everyday generosity of our members and friends.

I'm pleased to share that this year we have met—and in some areas exceeded—our goals for Membership and High Holy Day giving. These milestones are critical, and they reflect a deep and ongoing commitment to our shared spiritual home.

Our largest remaining piece is the Rainbow Campaign. As of this writing, we are just \$40,000 away from our \$165,000 goal. By the time you read this, I hope we will have crossed the finish line. If you have not yet made your contribution, I encourage you to call or write me today. Reaching our

Rainbow goal is essential to meeting our overall budget and sustaining the programs, clergy, staff, and services that define Sha'ar Zahav.

In addition to these major campaigns, our budget is supported by siddur sales, program fees, individual gifts, and sponsorships. One meaningful way to give is through donations made in honor or memory of loved ones—marking life-cycle moments such as births, weddings, deaths, or yahrzeits. This is a longstanding Jewish tradition and a powerful mitzvah.

We also offer opportunities to sponsor Shabbat oneg or bimah flowers. Please contact the office to make a donation or schedule a sponsorship.

Your generosity keeps Sha'ar Zahav strong, vibrant, and welcoming—for today and for the generations to come.

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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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TIME TRAVELING THROUGH JEWISH HISTORY AT BEIT SEFER

By RABBI Q



What a long, strange trip it's been! For the past few months, our Beit Sefer students have been riding the Magic Shul Bus and hopping aboard the Tardis! Our winter unit, *Jewish Time Travel Adventures*, was designed around a central question:

How have Jewish communities dealt with hard times? To discover a few of the challenges our ancestors have faced—and the different ways they responded to them—our Beit Sefer students “visited” different eras to learn about their lives — and what wisdom they can share with us today.

We began in ancient Jerusalem, at the precipice of the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans. The community's leaders were divided about how to face the impending crisis: was it better to bargain or battle it out? How would they reimagine Jewish life without a central anchoring point?

Then we jumped forward into the Pale of Settlement, following the Mousekowitz family as they fled pogroms for the unknown shores of America. Next, just a generation later, we met Rose Schneiderman and other Jewish immigrant women, who were on the forefront of American labor activism in the 1910's and beyond.

In January, our time travel took us closer to home: San Francisco in 1985, learning how our Jewish community responded with courage and compassion during the AIDS crisis. Finally, we took our biggest leap yet, back in time to ancient Persia, where Mordechai's strategy and Esther's courage averted Haman's wicked plot.

Through skits, art, music, storytelling, and even Legos, our students are discovering that Jewish history isn't just something to study — it's a sourcebook for resilience, creativity, and care. Every generation has found its own way forward, and our students are learning how to do the same.

Va'ad Members

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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Specifications supplied upon request.

By SHELLI RAWLINGS-FEIN

The Sha'ar Zahav monthly Caregiver group meets on the first Wednesday of each month from 6:30-8pm via Zoom and is open to any SZ member who is caregiving their parent(s) or other close older family members, whether that person lives near or far away. Led by a licensed clinical social worker from the Family Caregiver Alliance, the group provides invaluable peer to peer support as well as helpful information and resources.

Caregivers often feel they don't have time for a support group, but as someone who participated in it for many years over my mom's (z"l) long road of disability and

illness, I can say that we caregivers need to have time and space for ourselves. In fact, the group helped me have **more** and better quality of time for both myself and my mom by helping me make informed decisions and go through the stages of grief, and giving me a safe and confidential outlet to vent, cry, and sometimes even laugh. Did you know that caregivers themselves have high rates of health problems directly related to the stress of caregiving? Don't let that happen to you! Contact Rabbi Mychal and she will gladly talk with you about the group and get you started. Don't wait until "things get worse" - get the support in place now.

PUZZLER TIME: TRAYS OF HAMANTASCHEN!

By BARB CYMROT

It's the Purim Festival! Five bakers brought in their freshly baked hamantaschen still on trays to be arranged in a pretty assortment for the shul-wide festivities.

There was only one flavor in each hamantaschen and the trays had exactly 12 hamantaschen each.

Can you figure out how many hamantaschen trays had what delicious filling before they were placed on assorted displays?

1. There were more chocolate hamantaschen and pineapple hamantaschen separately available to put on display than the prune hamantaschen.
2. More prune hamantaschen were donated than the poppyseed hamantaschen. Neither was the most amount of any flavor donated to the Purim Festival.

	Pine-apple	Apricot	Poppy Seed	Prune	Choco-late
One Tray					
Two Trays					
Three Trays					
Four Trays					
Five Trays					

3. The pineapple jam hamantaschen was not the most amount brought to the Purim Festival.
4. The most amount of trays for any one flavor of hamantaschen did not have a fruit filling.

Answer at the bottom of page 10

SHA'AR ZAHAV IN THE PRESS: THE DANVERS BUILDING DEDICATION

Friday, May, 18, 1984

HERB CAEN

...dansh floor. Loud cries of "Torah! Torah! Torah!" on Danvers St. Sunday at 1:30 p.m. That's when Sha'ar Zahav, the gay congregation, dedicates its new synagogogue, a former Mormon church. Two members standing at either end of the street will blow shofars, the ram's horn used in ancient days to call the faithful to prayer.

Picture (left):

Herb Caen was a popular daily columnist in *The San Francisco Chronicle* for many years. Sha'ar Zahav co-founder Bernard Pechter was a frequent contributor to the column and no doubt submitted this item.

Pictures (below)

These three photos illustrate the walk that Caen writes about and other parts of the dedication.



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)

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

We are grateful to all our donors! Your generosity supports everything that Sha'ar Zahav does. This issue lists donations from November 8th to January 21st.

SZ is deeply grateful to all who have participated in our Rainbow Campaign; these donations will be listed in the next issue.

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in honor of Michael Shriver's amazing contributions to our community

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in honor of Cantor Bernstein and her joyful presence and guidance at Kai Liu-Grant's bris

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in memory of Pearl Funk

Nina Gordon

in honor of Jonathan Funk

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

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in honor of Deborah Levy

Rose Katz

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in celebration of their upcoming wedding

JANUARY

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in memory of her brother, Richard

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Farkas, and her father, Abe Farkas

Nancy Wecker and Lisa Wuennenberg

in memory of Helen G Wecker and Bonnie Gadless

Flower Sponsors:

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in memory of William (Bill) Goldstein

SHA'AR ZAHAV PLEASE WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS!

NOVEMBER

Seth Meisler (he/him)

Sandy Sohcot (she/her) and Brian Stern (he/him)

Jonathan Frommer (he/him) and Jessica Nall (she/her)

Saida Mahoney (he/him)

Lauren Ho (she/her) and Hannah Blakely (she/her)

DECEMBER

Marielle Berg (she/her) and Marta Fernandez (she/they)

SHA'AR ZAHAV CONDOLENCES

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

In Memoriam

The congregation notes with sorrow the deaths of:

NOVEMBER

Jack Goralsky

father of Miki Goralsky and father-in-law of Ellie Cohen

Steve Kellerman

friend of Ron Edelman

Theresa McCarthy

godmother of Mirac Fittro

DECEMBER**Brelan Jackson**

nephew of Shawn Rosenmoss

Seth Pollack

friend of Sherie Koshover

Alberto Rangel

colleague of Diana Naparst

David Stewart Slutsky

cousin of Gary Winter

Renee Rockower-Wade

cousin of Ernest Friedlander

Marc Wernickfriend of Howard Steiermann, Barb
Cymrot and Michael Chertok**Malinda Peacock**

second mother to Deb Cohler

May Ringquist

friend of Phil Charney

JANUARY**Luba Grungras**

mother of Neil Grungras

Bonnie Gadless

cousin of Nancy Wecker

Barbara Mersky Miller

aunt of Bob Gordon

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

DECEMBER**Timothy Grant and Kelly Liu**

on the birth of their son, Kai Xin Liu-Grant

JANUARY**Brittany and Justin Sookikian**on the birth of their daughter, Eliza
Jean Sookikian**Arthur Slepian**on becoming board president of the
Jewish Community Relations Council

We regret the omission from the December JGF of Jeffrey Lilly's February yahrzeit.

MARCH**Seth Charney****Eileen Cohen****Isabel Fishman****James Harris Freedgood****Fred Hahn****Theodore G. Mendonça, Jr.****Pearl Lewin****Michael Lipson****Florence Nacamulli****Noah Nacamulli****Paul Nemrow****Ernie Richards****Jamie Rosen****Neill Rosen****Leslie Benjamin Rosenberg****Evelyn Slenker****Marvin Steele****APRIL****Alvin Baum****Sanford Bernstein****Abraham Cohen****Norma Faini-Pick****Donna Fein****Ronald Gertz****Adam Harris****Dennis Mitchell****Michael Randall****Howard Rinkoff****Robert Serman****MAY****Allan Altman****Eugene Bender****Robert Coffman****David Delroy****Steve Goldstein**

Liselotte Huth
Richard Inlander
Jack Jacobs
David Loebel
James Perkins

Nanci Stern
Thomas Yazman

MAX KORSUNSKY



Max Korsunsky is the son of Oleg and Andrea Korsunsky and will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah April 18th, 2026.

Max lives in San Francisco with his parents and younger brother, Jonah. He's a 7th grader at Rooftop Elementary who loves reading, riding bikes with family and friends, camping, and playing baseball. Known for his strong work ethic and incredible empathy toward animals, Max is a kind and loyal friend who balances schoolwork, baseball practice, and Bar Mitzvah prep with ease and confidence.

Max is deeply grateful to his mentor, Martin Tannenbaum, Cantor Bernstein, and all the Beit Sefer teachers who have generously dedicated their time and energy to helping him grow and strengthen his Jewish identity.

PRIYA GRUNWALD



Priya Grunwald, daughter of Ruchira Shah and David Grunwald, and sister of Ranu Grunwald, will be called to the Torah on March 28, 2026.

Priya is a seventh grader at Thomas Edison Charter Academy, where she's a member of the newspaper staff of the TECA Times. She's also passionate about music, and is in her ninth year performing with the San Francisco Girls Chorus. In her free time, she enjoys reading, watching the Golden State Valkyries play, and drinking copious amounts of boba.

Priya would like to thank her mentor Nancy Levin, who has been a wonderful support and guide for Priya over the past year. She would also like to thank all her Beit Sefer teachers through the years as well as Cantor Sharon Bernstein who has so generously shared her love for Torah and music with Priya.

Puzzler Answer

Hamantaschen donations: 1 tray of prune. 2 trays of pineapple, 3 trays of poppy seed, 4 trays of apricot, 5 trays of chocolate

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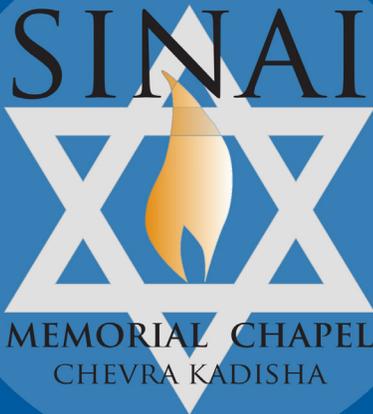


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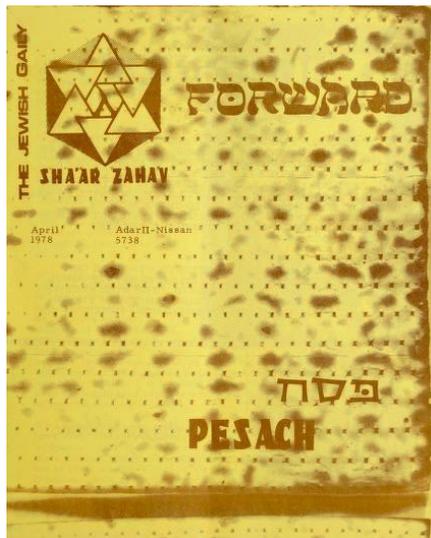
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SAVE THE DATE Passover Community Seder — April 2, 6PM Registration Coming Soon



It has been traditional to have 3matzot at the Seder table, representing Cohen, Levi, and Israel. In recent years a 4th matza "The Matza of Hope" has been added to signify unity with oppressed Jews in Russia.

WE OF SHA'AR ZAHAV ASK THAT A FIFTH MATZA "THE MATZA OF FREEDOM" be added to the previous four. To symbolize our DESIRE & DEMAND for basic human rights! We ask our Kindred Congregations, and all Jews, Gay and Straight, friends and families to take this fifth "Bread of our affliction" and pray:

BLESSED ARE YOU, ADONAI OUR GOD, SOVERIGN OF THE INFINITE. COMPASSIONATE CREATOR IN WHOSE IMAGE WE ARE ALL CREATED. GRANT SIGHT TO THOSE WHO BLINDLY SEE ONLY THEMSELVES REFLECTED IN YOU. THEIR BLINDNESS CAUSES OUR PAIN! MAY WE SEE PAST THE DISTORTED SELF-IMAGES THRUST UPON US,, & SEE OURSELVES IN YOUR LITE WE ARE STRONG-WE ARE MYRIAD & PASSIONATE WE ARE ONE & WE WILL BE FREE!!
amen

Dan-Rob-Shamir

Pictured above: The cover and an article from the JGF Passover issue of April, 1978