



Vine

FROM RABBI ZEMEL

THE CHALLENGE IN DEFINING WHAT MAKES US JEWISH TODAY

DEAR FRIENDS,

These days, Jewish identity is hard to define. It wasn't always so. Not that long ago, in fact, Jewish identity was viewed primarily through the lens of ethnicity.



Ethnicity comes with quantifiable markers. In college anthropology, I learned them as language, food, and blood,

which carry and perpetuate identity. In the early years of the 20th century, Yiddish was the shared language of American Jews. The immigrant generation that arrived in those years did not, by and large, teach their children Yiddish. These immigrants were deeply motivated by the desire to acculturate. They strove to become Americans. By the middle of the 20th century, Yiddish had largely disappeared from the American Jewish landscape. Everybody spoke English, which opened the door to a broader American social life.

Food reflects eating habits that bring members of an ethnic group together around the kitchen table. The Jewish dietary laws of keeping kosher codify traditional Jewish eating norms. But as with Yiddish, those norms also quickly departed mainstream American Jewish life in the last century. Now, they mostly make an appearance on holidays or during life-cycle events. Going out for Chinese food on Christmas Day is now considered a Jewish eating tradition.

Blood is in-group marrying. With the non-Orthodox intermarriage rate now hovering near 70 percent, this ethnic marker, too, is a vestige of the past.

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Is the House Next Door in Micah's Future?

BY FRAN DAUTH

HOW TO BALANCE taking time to analyze Temple Micah's long-term goals against making sure the synagogue doesn't miss a rare opportunity to acquire the property adjacent to its existing facility.

That was the dilemma confronting more than 150 Micah members Dec. 17 who responded to a call from Temple President Ed Lazere to offer input on the possible purchase of the so-called "house next door."

Ultimately, however, the conversation was about two separate issues: the current space constraints on Temple Micah and planning for a future Temple Micah, complicated by the fact that the only property contiguous to the synagogue happens to be on the market now.

Earlier in 2017, Micah bid on the

property but lost to another bidder. Subsequently that purchase collapsed and Micah officials learned the house might again be available.

"Some say," Lazere quipped, "it is Micah's manifest destiny" to buy the five-bedroom house. "We could lose it again, so we need your input," he said, adding that it is "important to understand the resources required are substantial" and that it might take several years to see a new facility on the site.

No consensus was reached during the lively hour-and-a-half discussion that ensued, nor was any vote taken. Ideas were thrown out. Questions were raised. Suggestions were made on how to proceed.

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They Were Here in the Beginning and Are Still Here Today

BY FRAN DAUTH

IT WAS THE 1960s, a time of political fervor, particularly in Washington. Many of them lived on Capitol Hill or in Southwest. Many worked for the federal government, inspired by the new president John F. Kennedy. Mostly they were young and looking for like-minded friends.

Together they created the Southwest Hebrew Congregation in 1963, which was renamed Temple Micah in 1968 and moved to the present location in 1995.

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"Every person shall sit under his grapevine or fig tree with no one to make him afraid."
MICAH, CHAPTER 4, VERSE 4

Vine

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FACING THE FUTURE AND ITS COST

BY ED LAZERE

I'm writing again about space at Temple Micah. It's an important topic, and a lot has changed since my October column. In that edition of *The Vine*, I described a committee formed to plan for Micah's long-term needs: The Futures



Committee. Since then, the house next door once again became available, which means the future is now. We may need to act fairly soon if we want that land to be part of our future.

We held a congregation-wide meeting in

December to share what we know and to solicit your questions and comments on the possibility of buying the house. There were lots of great questions, and we had answers to some of them—but not all. Thanks to everyone who attended.

I want to share some of the highlights, and what we've been doing since then.

Some things are fairly clear. If we buy the house, it will cost around \$2 million, and the intent would be to tear it down and build something new connected to the Temple. Converting the house to meet commercial code requirements would be expensive and wouldn't necessarily give us the space we want. That kind of cost just for land may be shocking, but the reality is that expanding outward will be costly no matter what we do. We need to start facing—and planning for—that reality.

Other questions were harder to answer, or at least we don't have answers to them right now. Some people wanted more information on how exactly additional space would be used. Temple Micah needs more space for the Machon, office space, and meeting space. And we hope a larger Micah will include other innovative spaces. But there are no specific space plans, no architectural draw-

ings yet. In fact, the board and staff want to get community input before making these decisions. Another unanswered question is whether expanding by building over the parking lot—and creating underground parking below it—would be more cost efficient than buying the house next door. We are trying to figure that out but don't know right now.

Working through all of these would take a while and could mean losing the house. Some people at the meeting, and in follow up communications, suggested separating the short-term opportunity of buying the house from the task of figuring out our longer-term needs. And that is what we have decided to do. I believe there is value in buying the house, which would require short-term action, and then spending the time to assess how we want to expand. If in the end we decide that expanding on that land is not in our interest, we could re-sell the house. That's not a great outcome, but it is better than losing the house and then deciding that we really wanted it.

Following the Dec. 17 meeting, a small group gathered to determine the best way to finance the house: What is the right ownership structure? How much of Temple Micah's reserves should be devoted? What are the financing options, and what would the costs be? Would it make sense to rent the home out while we develop longer-term plans? (The answer seems likely to be "yes.") Can we cover the annual operating and mortgage-servicing costs within the Temple's existing budget?

The answers to those questions will help shape our next steps. Temple bylaws require the congregation to vote at an in-person meeting (no absentee ballots) to acquire real estate, so we will come back to you if we are ready for a vote.

We also will soon share with you our plans for gathering your input on Micah's future. Thanks for being a part of this important effort.

THE FEAST: THE CHALLAH AND CARAMEL EDITION

BY ALEXANDRA WISOTSKY

I LOVE TO cook. Savory, pastry, bread, whatever, I love to do it all. So, one day I emailed the editors of *The Vine*, with a crazy idea: a regular cooking column, featuring a different Micah member and one of his or her favorite recipes. Soon, *The Feast* was born.

Now I had an article to write, so I contacted Robert Weinstein. Some of you may know Weinstein and his wife, Judith Capen, as the architects of the Temple Micah building, but I know him for the delicious caramels that he made for the Temple's auction last year. (Save the Date: March 10th!). Robert was gracious enough to give me two of his favorite recipes, each with a delicious story.

When Robert and Judith lived in Cincinnati in the 1970s, the wife of one of his colleagues made her own bread, including a basic white loaf. "I loved it, asked her for the recipe and she gave it to me. That was the beginning of serious bread cooking in my life," Robert said.

Robert took that recipe for basic white bread and turned it into braided challah, later to become known as Temple Micah Challah. "When our children, Kirby and Owen, were in their b'nai mitzvah years I made challah for almost all of their classmates' b'nai mitzvah. I would bake it at the Temple and it would be warm when it was time for the kiddush (sometimes a little too warm). There were mentions of the smells wafting up into the sanctuary, distracting, while the service was still going on," Robert said.

The legend of the Temple Micah Challah continued to spread as Robert taught 3rd grade bible studies at Micah for about 12 years. One class each year was dedicated to a

challah-baking lesson. The now-famous challah made its debut at the Temple Micah Auction, when Robert teamed up with Richard and Susan Lahne to offer a challah baking class for a few years.

Robert Weinstein, architect of the Temple Micah building and the popular Temple Micah Challah



TEMPLE MICAH'S POST-MODERN CHALLAH

Makes two 1-lb loaves or one 2-lb loaf.

Time to prepare: 5 hours.

Time to bake: 40-60 minutes.

Ingredients

- 1½ cups milk (Robert prefers whole milk)
- 1½ cups cold water
- ¾ cups sugar
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 package yeast
- 4 lightly beaten eggs
- Approx. 6-8 cups flour

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House Next Door FROM PAGE 1 ►

Lazere described some of the issues first. The cost is likely to be in the neighborhood of \$2 million. To convert the house to temple use would require bringing it up to commercial code, an expensive proposition. More likely, the temple would raze the house and build a new structure, although it could be rented as a residence while planning was underway.

Another given is that Micah is growing, and is short of office space, meeting space, and Machon space.

Rabbi Daniel Zemel said while it was important to address the current space needs that might be eased by acquiring the property, it was equally important to think creatively about using space. He noted the Micah congregation

"prizes spirituality, learning and humor," which is reflected in today's programs and the space required to carry them out. "A synagogue is in constant evolution," he said, urging members to think about what the synagogue of the 21st century should be.

Space, he stressed is more than square footage. "As we form the space, the space will form us," Rabbi Zemel predicted.

Before the discussion began, Sean Moran, one of the leaders of a newly appointed board of directors' futures committee, said the group hopes to set up 10 focus groups comprised of 10 to 12 Micah members to discuss what programs Micah wants to offer in the future. "There are lots of things to think about," he said, adding that "there was some urgency."

With that, the questions and comments began. Few questions elicited definitive answers because as Lazere said not much is known yet. The board has hired a zoning lawyer, is working with a real estate agent and is in the process of hiring other consultants.

Chief among the concerns expressed were the cost of the project, the size of the debt that might be incurred, especially since the previous mortgage has been retired.

Tom Green, who chaired the campaign to raise \$1.5 million to retire the mortgage, said he wasn't opposed to the purchase but warned, "we are talking about \$2 million plus. Where is this money coming from?" He suggested there might be other options.

Lazere was asked if there would be

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UPCOMING SPEAKER EVENTS

Temple Micah features two monthly lecture series—on Sundays and Wednesdays. For more details, go to templemicah.org.

SUNDAY SPEAKER SERIES



Feb. 4 at 10:15 am – Daniel Mach on “Church and State Issues in America Today.”

Mach is the director of the ACLU Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief and an adjunct professor of law at the George Washington University Law School. He leads a wide range of religious-liberty litigation, advocacy, and public education efforts nationwide, and often writes, teaches, and speaks publicly on religious freedom issues. Prior to his work at the ACLU, Mach was a partner in the DC office of Jenner & Block, where he specialized in First Amendment law.



Feb. 11 at 10:15 am – Marc Lee Raphael on “Small Town Jews and the Holocaust: Czechoslovakia and Hungary.” Raphael is the Nathan Gumenick

Chair of Judaic Studies at the College of William and Mary. He has written widely on Jews and Judaism in America, including (most recently) “The Synagogue in America: A Short History.”

LUNCH & LEARN

Wednesdays from noon to 2 pm

A monthly program sponsored by the Aging Together Team. Reserve online at templemicah.org. Contact Cecelia Weinheimer via email, lunchandlearn@templemicah.org, or call the temple office, 202-342-9175, for details.



Feb. 14 – Cynthia C. Hogan on “Transacting with the US Government in the Era of Trump: A Silicon Valley Perspective.” Hogan joined Apple as vice president for public policy for the Americas in 2016. Prior to that, she served as executive vice president of Public Policy for the National Football League. During the Obama Administration she served as deputy assistant to the president and counsel to the vice president advising on a domestic and foreign policy.



March 14 – *Washington Post* political columnist Dana Milbank. Micah member Milbank hasn't spelled out his topic, but we're making a wild guess he'll mention the current administration. Milbank joined the *Post* in 2000 after two years at The New Republic and eight years at The Wall Street Journal.

LESSONS FROM LANDAU

BETWEEN HOPELESSNESS AND HOPE

BY RABBI SUSAN LANDAU

Do you remember reading the famous short story, “The Lottery,” in a high school English class? It depicts a town swept up in an air of festivity as it prepares for an annual event, “the lottery,” said to ensure a healthy harvest. There are rumors that nearby villages have stopped holding the lottery, but these people are wedded to their tradition. One elderly man notes he’s been participating in the lottery for 71 years. Readers of this disturbing tale, published in *The New Yorker* in 1948, (spoiler alert!) don’t learn until the end of the story that the “winner” of the lottery will be stoned to death by her neighbors, including children. The reaction to the story was a flood of hate mail to the author, Shirley Jackson, who exposed the extent to which human beings can fall into a complacent mob mentality and harm each other without feeling guilt.

Recently, our rabbinic study group revisited another short story with an even more utopian facade, Ursula K. Le Guin’s “The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas.” This story, published in 1973, depicts a similarly well-organized small town, in which order, societal

stability, and the residents’ very identity rest on a dark secret. I was mesmerized by the tale, as it brought to mind our enduring fascination with this powerful genre of dystopian literature. Americans have been enthralled reading about society’s ills for many years.

The genre’s popularity persists today, especially for young adults. I have enjoyed reading “The Giver” (published in 1993), as well as some of the more contemporary young adult series, such as “The Hunger Games” and “Divergent.” Decade after decade, American readers of all ages seem drawn to Dystopia. We appreciate the shock of seeing societies like our own, stripped of their illusions of prosperity and harmony, and revealed as their true selves: built on a foundation of horrifying inequity and sin.

To paraphrase Ecclesiastes 1:9-10, is there nothing new under the sun? This classic lament from our most reflective book suggests that the essence of who we are as human beings never changes. Assuming that our literature reflects some truth about our world, and our perception of reality, would Ecclesiastes lead us to believe that the world

is continuously coming to an end? If doomsday stories are still being published and successfully consumed, are we to lose hope for our situation ever improving?

I am by no means an expert on this genre, but I have read a smattering of these dystopian tales. And if you’ll allow me to generalize, I’ll share a rabbi’s perspective on this trend.

It seems that the dystopian literature of yesteryear sets out to expose a reality that otherwise remains hidden and buried by all who can afford to ignore it. These stories provide an artistic peeling back of layers so we can more clearly see ourselves and the consequences of our actions. I imagine their authors were hopeful that a big reveal at the end of their pieces would propel readers to reexamine their lives.

I’ve noticed a similar, but slightly different theme in many of today’s dystopian publications. Rather than being complicit victims of society’s ills, the protagonists in today’s stories are more likely to represent forces fighting against the status quo. These books go so much further than exposing modern life. They present us (and especially our young people, the target audience) with inspiring characters who take horrible situations into their own hands and fight against oppressive regimes.

Similar to the older models, these stories also work to expose the evils of the status quo, but they don’t stop there. They give us something else to hold onto— they give us hope. And not only that, they provide us with models for taking action and dismantling corruption, in whatever form we encounter it today.

While Ecclesiastes itself might leave us with a sense



of helplessness, Ecclesiastes Rabbah (the midrashic compilation inspired by the biblical text) offers a distinctly empowering charge to us as Jews: God instructs the first human beings, “Look at my works! See how beautiful they are — how excellent! For your sake I created them all. See to it that you do not spoil and destroy My world; for if you do, there will be no one else to repair it.” (Kohelet Rabbah 7:13) In the midrash God tells us that we have one earth, and we are its steward.

Today’s dystopian literature seems to be telling us that we have one country, and we are its caretakers and its leaders. We have one democracy and one government, and when we recognize their shortcomings we must work to repair them. We are a part of one global community, whose merit depends on the integrity of each and every contingent. Recognition of the problem can only be the first step. The rest is up to us. This is the Jewish way.

So if you can’t get enough dystopian lit these days, that’s okay. You’re not alone! But don’t let your reading list remain completely separate from your Jewish values. Don’t stop after reading the classics; pick up some contemporary titles too. And let them fill you with a little more optimism. Let them fuel you and inspire you to action.

As we stand on the cusp of 2018, recently illuminated with more light from Hanukkah, and invigorated from New Year’s celebrations, let’s not lose hope.



Don’t miss the
Annual Temple
Micah Spring
Auction: Sunday,
March 10!

Tickets are \$36 in
advance or \$40 at the door. For more
details go to templemicah.org.

50-Year Club FROM PAGE 1 ►

Remarkably, 19 of those men and women who were there in the beginning are still members of Temple Micah. The "50-year club" membership was honored at Friday night services on Oct. 27.

"The 50-year members of Micah symbolize a connection to the congregation's past. They are a living reminder of the values and ideals that gave birth to our community. They are a touchstone for all of us. Their presence helps us guide our future," Rabbi Daniel Zemel said recently.

His comments were echoed by Martha Adler, chair of the membership committee of the Micah board of directors, who said: "I consider our long term members to be our spine, our institutional memory, and our link to our origins. They have sustained our community through several generations, and we are so fortunate to have been able to celebrate this landmark occasion by recognizing their devotion and strength."

The Living History project, which can be found on the Micah website, states "there is general agreement that Temple Micah was started in 1963 by a few families in Southwest," although various people have different recollections. Some recall it came from folks who wanted a place to observe the High Holy Days.

Others remember a notice put in a local Southwest newspaper that brought them together, according "Micah's Journey," a history of Temple Micah from 1963 to 2013, written by long-time member Brenda Levenson. Among those who were at that first meeting was Betty Ustun, still a member today and present at the celebration of the 50-year-club.

Sid Booth, the congregation's fourth president, remembers going to a Yom Kippur service in 1963 and joining the congregation in 1964. He also remembers that one of the draws was a "number of unattached young women." He met his wife, Elka, at one of those early services. She, too, is a member of the 50-year-club.

Sid, who began his career as a broadcast journalist and later worked at a government relations firm, also edited the Vine, co-chaired the fundraising



Members of the 50-year-club at December service honoring them. Back Row (from left): Gene Granof, Claire Rubin, Edward Wendel, Michelle Sender, Nancy Lang, Sid Booth. Front Row: Helene Granof, Burton Greenstein, Elka Booth, Betty Ustun, Bobbie Wendel. 50-year members not present for photo: Bayla White, Arthur Freeman, Judith Rosen, Mary Mahle, Nancy Elisburg, Don Elisburg, Shelley Grossman, Bev Sherwat, and Harlan Sherwat. Photo by David Adler

committee for building the temple addition, and remains active today.

Of the 19 members of Temple Micah who have belonged to the congregation for 50 years or more, four have served as board president. In addition to Sid, they are Bayla White, Nancy Elisburg and Bobbie Wendel. Nearly all of those who belonged for more than 50 years have either been on the board or occupied other leadership roles. Michelle Sender, for example, was vice president when Sid was president.

Shelley Grossman, a long-time journalist in Washington at Voice of America and the National Journal, was the editor or co-editor of the Vine five times and a member of the board of directors twice.

Shelley, who was one of the driving forces behind The Living History Project, recently recalled how when she joined what was then Southwest Hebrew Congregation in 1967 it soon became the center not only of her religious life but her social and to some extent intellectual community.

"It has remained both for 50 years. We've both changed over the years. Micah is now a mature, admired, institution, still growing and despite its size, still a community -- or maybe a community of communities," she said.

"Although I wasn't seriously looking, I met two men who would become my husbands, one as a not-so-young-any-more single, and the other as a far-too-young widow. Micah celebrated with me and mourned with me. Indeed, when my

first husband died, Micah enveloped me in the loving care only a family can give.

"Micah remains an integral part of my life. I worship here (and read from the Torah periodically), study with Torah Study Group, Hebrew Poetry Group, Downtown Discussion Group. I cook for Micah Cooks and ski with the Micah Ski Club. I guess I am committed to Temple Micah and don't see any reason to change."

Helene Granof, who is credited with the recent naming of long-time members as the 50-year-club, is a current member of the board of directors. She pointed out that in 2018 those who joined in 1968 also will be members of the 50-year-club.

Michelle Sender moved to Washington from Los Angeles in 1965 to work for what was then the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. She lived in Southwest so she could walk to work. And the Southwest Hebrew Congregation, which shared space with a church, was nearby.

She, like the others, recalls the early membership as people mostly in their 20s and 30s. "There was one couple," she said, who "were in their 50s, and they were the older people."

Membership, she says, has been rewarding over the years in a number of ways. One of those ways is the payoff in friendships. "People say to me they are lonely. Not me. It is nice to have another home to go to," she said. Her advice to new members is to "get involved." ♦

Challah and Caramel FROM PAGE 3 ►**Step 1**

Combine the first 6 ingredients in a large bowl until well blended. Add flour, 1 cup at a time. Keep adding flour until the dough no longer sticks to your fingers. Knead for 5 minutes on a floured surface. Form dough into a ball and place in a large bowl. Cover with Saran Wrap and let rise about 2 hours, until doubled in size.

Step 2

For one large loaf, punch dough down and knead again, 5 minutes, on a lightly floured surface. Cut dough into quarters. Roll out 3 pieces into rope shapes. Braid the three ropes and tuck in the ends. Take the 4th quarter and cut into thirds. Roll out each piece into a smaller rope. Braid the 3 ropes and tuck in the ends. Place the smaller braid on top of the larger one. Place the loaf on parchment paper on a large baking sheet and cover with flour-coated Saran Wrap.

Step 3

Let rise for 2 hours, until doubled in size. Bake at 350 for 40 to 60 minutes (internal temperature of the bread will be 190F when cooked through).

Step 4

Let cool on a wire rack.

SALTED CARAMELS

Time to prepare: 15 minutes.

Time to cook: 45 minutes.

You will need a candy thermometer and a 9 x 9 dish, preferably made of silicone for ease of turning out the hardened caramel. If using metal or ceramic, line the dish with foil or parchment paper that has been coated with cooking spray. You should also have cellophane candy wrappers on hand (available online).

Ingredients

- ¾ cup heavy cream
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract or paste from two beans
- ¾ teaspoon sea salt, divided
- ½ cup light corn syrup
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons of cubed, room temperature salted butter

Step 1

Heat cream in a small saucepan until it boils. Remove from heat and add vanilla extract and ½ teaspoon sea salt. Cover and set aside.

Step 2

In a large sauce pan (4 quart) heat syrup and sugar, stirring gently to make sure the sugar melts smoothly. Once melted, only stir as necessary to prevent hot spots. Cook to 310F on a candy thermometer.

Step 3

Turn off heat and stir warm cream mixture into the melted sugar until smooth. Heat again to 260F. Remove from heat, stir in butter until melted and smooth. Pour caramel into silicone dish or a baking dish lined with parchment paper or foil coated with cooking spray. Cool for 10 minutes, then sprinkle with remaining ¼ tsp sea salt. Let cool completely.

Step 4

Turn hardened caramel sheets on to a cutting board and cut in to 1" x 1" squares. Wrap each square in 4.25" x 4.25" cellophane candy wrappers. Robert notes that the wrapping part can seem like it takes forever.



Do you have a favorite recipe that you would like to share? We would love to hear from you (vine@templemicah.org)! ♦

House Next Door FROM PAGE 3 ►

a vote on the purchase. He answered the bylaws require it. When a bid was submitted last year for the property, it contained a contingency provision that the purchase would be subject to a vote of the congregation.

Among the questions raised were ones about providing space for a full-time day-care center that could provide revenue.

Would there be more parking? Zemel said parking had to be addressed regardless. He suggested one immediate solution might involve valet parking in arrangement with nearby facilities.

Sid Booth and others asked about an empty lot farther south on Wisconsin

Avenue where the DC government once planned and then rejected building a homeless shelter. The short answer was that property wouldn't be any cheaper.

Other questions: Could something be constructed over the existing parking lot? What about renting space in nearby apartment or commercial buildings?

Could staff members work remotely? Could instruction be done via computer? Rachel Gross, Temple Micah's executive director, countered that in her 20 years of working for synagogues she had learned that there was no substitute for seeing colleagues face to face.

One question that prompted a quick reply from Rabbi Zemel concerned the

possibility of closing membership. "I'll fight that to the very end," he said, "we are a congregation, not a club."

Music Director Teddy Klaus provoked an impromptu round of applause when he began his comments by saying "I have worked here for more than half my life." He went on to say that "we have been given a gift" of the opportunity once again to buy the property next door.

Martha Adler, a member of the board of directors, said, "I think we should as a congregation be very conservative as stewards for our grandchildren.

"This is a great congregation. I want the greatest flexibility for the Temple Micah of the future." ♦

TZEDAKAH

BUILDING IMPROVEMENT FUND

IN HONOR OF
The birth of Adara Epstein, by
Elizabeth and Ethan Epstein

IN MEMORY OF
Mike Achter, by Susie Blumenthal
Jean Wentworth, by Judith Capen and
Robert Weinstein, Leslye S. Fenton
and Jonathan D. Moreno

ENDOWMENT FUND

IN MEMORY OF
Bertha Levenson, Richard Levenson, and
Jeanne Mallett, by Brenda Levenson
Lillian C. Pose, by Marilyn Paul
Jean Wentworth, by Harriet and Randy Tritell

GENERAL FUND

David Asher

IN HONOR OF
David Asher's birthday, by Richard
and Frances Asher
The wonderful hospitality of Helene and
Gene Granof during this past Thanksgiving
holiday, by Walter and Beverlee Schiff
Teddy Klaus and Cantor Meryl Weiner
and the beautiful sounds of the High
Holy Day services, by Isabel Reiff

IN MEMORY OF
Miriam Goldeen, by David and Livia Bardin
Ann Karp, by Herbert and Sharon Schwartz
Jeanne Mallett, by Jeff Passel, Gayle Wald
Phyllis Rockower, by Ann and Jeffrey
Abend, the Aron Family Foundation
Maurice Weiner, by Blanche Ziv
Joseph Weiss, by Martha Weiss

INNOVATION FUND

Debra Knopman

IN HONOR OF
The 50-year club and its first class of
inductees, by Beverly and Harlan Sherwat
David Asher's healthy, happy birthday,
by Bobbie and Ed Wendel

IN MEMORY OF
June Lu, by Peg Blechman and Paul Shapiro
Jeanne Mallett, by Arlene Brown and Gene Bialek
Hortense and Edward Platoff, by Sheila Platoff
Phyllis Rockower, by Francine and Stuart Schwartz
Israel Socolar, by Milton Socolar
Harry Wellins, by Beverly and Harlan Sherwat
Jean Wentworth, by Jeff Passel

LEARNING FUND

IN HONOR OF
Rabbi Landau and Ronit Zemel,
by the Gerstenblith family

IN MEMORY OF
Max Bender and Alice Hirschmann,
by Carole and John Hirschmann
Neil Millman, by Lois Rosen and
Mark Snyderman and family
Phyllis, Rhea, Simon, and Fannie Rockower,
by Stephen Rockower and Ann Sablosky

MICAH HOUSE

Kate Kiggins and Jared Blum
Sheila Platoff
Riv-Ellen Prell
Kathy and Stan Soloway

IN HONOR OF
Amy and Josh Berman, by Barbara and Jack Berman
Temple Micah and their continued effort
in doing good for the community, by
Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple

IN MEMORY OF
Phyllis Rockower, by Elka and Sidney Booth, Jeff
Passel, Gail Povar and Larry Bachorik, Beverly
and Harlan Sherwat, and the Umansky family
Jean Wentworth, by Paulette and Stan Shulman

MUSIC AND WORSHIP FUND

IN HONOR OF
David Asher's special birthday, by Barbara
and David Diskin, Lora Ferguson, Mark
Gruenberg, Barbara and Skip Halpern,
Beverly and Harlan Sherwat, Bayla White
Teddy Klaus and the Temple Micah
volunteer choir, by David Asher

IN MEMORY OF
Jeanne Mallett, by Lora Ferguson
Jane Morningstar, by Sara
Morningstar and Philip Katz
Toby Passel, by Jeff Passel
Sylvia Pessa Waldner, by Norman Blumenfeld
Jean Wentworth, by Shellie and Andy
Bressler, Jannet and Alan Carpien, Lora
Ferguson, Bobbie and Ed Wendel

RABBI BERAHA'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

IN HONOR OF
Rabbi Beraha officiating at their marriage,
by Amanda Nover and Alex Barbag
Sue Alpern-Fisch, by Riki and Michael Sheehan

IN MEMORY OF
Maurice Weiner, by George Weiner

RABBI LANDAU'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Hannah and Michael Matthews

IN HONOR OF
Rabbi Landau and a year of simchas,
by Ben and Catherine Rubenstein

IN MEMORY OF
Renee Reiff, by Isabel Reiff

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Jim and Debbie Roumell

IN HONOR OF
Susie Blumenthal's birthday, by Sandra Kaufman

IN MEMORY OF
Geraldine Feldman, by Howard Feldman
Leon Goldberg and Gruine Robinson,
by Susie Blumenthal
Aaron Katz, by Philip Katz
Hannah Lipman, by Susie Blumenthal
Jeanne Mallett, by Mark Gruenberg
Phyllis Rockower, by Gwen and Marc Pearl
Jean Wentworth, by Susie Blumenthal, Rabbi
Lynne Landsberg and Dennis Ward

SOCIAL JUSTICE FUND

IN HONOR OF
David Asher's birthday, by Gail
Povar and Larry Bachorik
The conversion of Michael M. Matthews,
by Shirley and Larry Novak
Scott Nover and Rebecca Fisher being welcomed
at High Holiday Services, by Teri and Neal Nover
Dr. Andrea P. Thau, Immediate Past
President of the American Optometric
Association, by Kim and Jon Hymes

IN MEMORY OF
Evelyn Fingerman, by Marlyn Socolar
Benjamin Lazar, by Learita Scott
Sophie Paper, by Marlyn and Milton Socolar
Phyllis Rockower, by Susan Goda,
Mark and Myra Kovey, Clem and Ed
Rastatter, Doug and Judy Warshof
Jean Wentworth, by Elka and Sid Booth, Susan
Goda, Peter and Roberta Gluck, Richard and
Susan Lahne, Stephen Rockower and Ann
Sablosky, Cecelia and Mark Weinheimer

SUKKAT SHALOM

Sheila Platoff

THE RABBI DANIEL GOLDMAN ZEMEL FUND FOR ISRAEL

IN HONOR OF
Marc Levy's birthday, by Melissa and Sotheary Levy
Ben Multz on his birthday, by Peg
Blechman and Paul Shapiro

IN MEMORY OF
Ruth Jonas Bardin, by David Jonas Bardin
Donald and Lillian Lehmann, by Richard Lehmann
Phyllis Rockower, by Stephen Rockower

This list reflects donations received October 25–December 19, 2017. Every effort has been made to ensure its accuracy, but if there are any errors or omissions please accept our apologies. For corrections or clarifications, please contact Rhiannon Walsh in the temple office. Thank you.

B'NAI MITZVAH



SHOSHANA RUTH FERGUSON

JAN. 6 / 19 TEVET

PARENTS: Laura and Ron Ferguson

TORAH PORTION: Shemot

INDEPENDENT PROJECT: Shoshana is studying food insecurity, working on a video, collecting donations and volunteering at two local agencies. Her work so far has included bagging chickens at Arlington Food Assistance Center, cooking at DC Central Kitchen and interviewing their volunteer manager.



NAVA PARKER MACH

FEB. 17 / 2 ADAR

PARENTS: Kim Parker and Dan Mach

TORAH PORTION: T'rumah

INDEPENDENT PROJECT: Nava is focusing on how people use art to cope with adversity. She is studying I Never Saw Another Butterfly, a collection of works of art and poetry by children who lived in the concentration camp at Terezin. She is creating baskets of art supplies to donate to the Homeless Children's Playtime Project, which supports children at emergency shelters and transitional housing sites throughout Washington, DC.



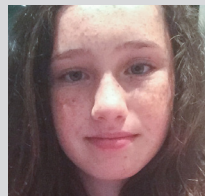
CHARLOTTE OSHTRY

JAN. 13 / 26 TEVET

PARENTS: Daniel Oshtry and Sheila Krumholz

TORAH PORTION: Vaera

INDEPENDENT PROJECT: As part of her commitment to Tikkun Olam, Charlotte will participate in the MLK Weekend of Service with the Rock Creek Conservancy and serve as a Stream Team Leader for a group of students participating in two neighborhood environmental cleanup projects in the spring.



PETRA MUNTER

FEB. 24 / 9 ADAR

PARENTS: Suzanne Goldenberg and Tony Munter

TORAH PORTION: Tetzaveh

INDEPENDENT PROJECT: Petra will be working to prevent gun violence, and will be fundraising and organizing the effort at Machon Micah to collect items for children attending the Wendt Center's summer camp for loss and healing. In addition, Petra hopes to honor the memory of Sarah Melmed, a cousin, who was killed in the Holocaust before she reached the age of Bat Mitzvah herself.



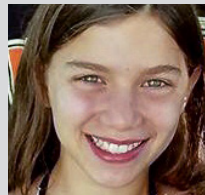
ELEANOR MANDELL

FEB. 10 / 25 SH'VAT

PARENTS: Carolyn and Joshua Mandell

TORAH PORTION: Mishpatim

INDEPENDENT PROJECT: In keeping with her Torah portion, Ellie plans to partner with a nonprofit group to provide welcome baskets for new immigrants and refugees arriving in the Metropolitan DC area.



ELIZABETH COMFORT-COHEN

MARCH 3 / 16 ADAR

PARENTS: Lisa B. Cohen and Susan Comfort

TORAH PORTION: Ki Tisa

INDEPENDENT PROJECT: Ella is organizing a potluck meal at temple for our Sukkat Shalom family, recently arrived immigrants from Afghanistan.

CONDOLENCES

The Temple Micah community extends its deepest condolences to:

THE TEMPLE MICAH COMMUNITY, on the passing of member Jeanne Mallett

SUSANNAH FOX, on the passing of her father, George Fox

STEPHANIE GERSTENBLITH, on the passing of her father, Donald Weisman

SUNNY KAPLAN, on the passing of her father, Howard Kaplan

STEPHEN ROCKOWER, on the passing of his sister, Phyllis Rockower

ROBERTA GLUCK, on the passing of her brother, Stanley Grossman

BEVERLY FRYE, on the passing of her father, longtime Temple Micah member Mace Broide

May their memories be for a blessing.

MAZAL TOV!

Barbara and David Diskin, on the birth of their granddaughter, Ella Louise

Rachel Levin and Michael Buckler, on the birth of their daughter, Maya Rose

Margaret and Jeff Grotte, on the birth of their grandson, George Sylvan Grotte

Susie and Harvey Blumenthal, on the birth of their grandson, Jacob Henry Tobin

Peter Lovenheim, on the birth of his granddaughter, Talia June Adaki

Yosef Webb Long Ago Mastered the Juggling Part

BY FRAN DAUTH

AS COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR at Temple Micah, Yosef Webb is responsible for the temple's website, the weekly e-mail blasts, and the service sheets for Friday evening and Saturday morning services.

In his words, "if it is on a schedule, Yosef has laid a hand on it somewhere." This means he has to keep track of nearly every event, meeting, service, on-going campaign, or announcement of any kind.

If that sounds like he has a lot to juggle, he does. And while he has been at Temple Micah less than a year, he's been an excellent juggler for quite awhile.

Consider that this is a guy who served four years in the U.S. Navy, got a bachelor's

degree in anthropology, came to D.C. to study at the Wesley Theological Seminary, where he obtained a master's degree in divinity, but eventually converted to Judaism.

That's right, midway through his divinity studies, he decided against becoming a Methodist minister and began the process of converting to Judaism.

Juggling all the while.

Yosef got his master's degree in divinity in 2014, completed five units of clinical pastoral education (four units at Saint Elizabeth Hospital in Southeast D.C.) in 2016, worked as an evening on-call chaplain at Suburban Hospital in Montgomery County, and also began

teaching at the University of Maryland, College Park, where he has been since the fall of 2015.

Yes, he knows how to juggle a thing or two, including Temple Micah's crowded schedule.

By now, you're probably saying, whoa, wait a minute,

explain this.

Yosef grew up in Sacramento, Calif., although he spent the last three years of high school in Pueblo, Colo. After high school, he spent four years in the U.S. Navy aboard the U.S.S. John F. Kennedy, an aircraft carrier.

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Rabbi's Message FROM PAGE 1 ►

America, for the first time in Jewish history, has created a social norm where there is no stigma for non-Jews to marry Jews. We are, in fact, "in"!

So if our identity is not primarily ethnic in the classic sense, what is it? Are we, in America, now primarily defined as a religious group? If so, what is the essence of our religious identity? What are the principles? What faith do we share?

I here offer some initial thoughts on what I will term the "faith principles" of contemporary American Jews, even as I realize that for the vast majority of us they may be unarticulated. The question we might each ask ourselves is if they resonate with us:

1. There is a shared belief that each human life is of infinite value and, therefore, sacred. This is the bedrock of our moral vision.

2. There is a shared belief that the gift of life carries with it certain responsibilities. Life is not without purpose. Being human entails a kind of implicit "project," a human project. We are asked to reflect on what our lives are about and we are

challenged to contribute to the world around us.

3. There is a shared belief that this human project is not without joy. Life has serious demands but life is also to be celebrated. We seek to do this through the personal life cycle and the annual holiday cycle of Jewish life, both of which seek to combine celebration with a kind of contemplation and a broadening of vision. Sheer celebration, however, is not to be overlooked. Laughter and joy are essential to our humanity.

4. There is a shared belief that the richness of life is to be explored in as vigorous a way as possible and that one generation has an obligation to teach and equip the next for this purpose.

Were I to use Jewish language to describe the above "faith principles," I would say:

1. God is the guarantor that all human life is priceless.

2. Mitzvah is the language of Jewish purpose and obligation.

3. Simcha is the understanding that we reveal in the gift of life.

4. Torah study, in its many facets, is crucial and vital, and we yearn to teach this to our children diligently.

I do not in any way believe that Jews are the only ones who share these beliefs. I do believe, however, that the vast culture that is our Jewish inheritance teaches these values exceptionally well in story, law, ritual, and song.

Our history formed these beliefs and enshrined them into our Jewish DNA. Our generation's challenge is how to embody and teach them in our complex American lives. How do we compete for time and attention in order to do this? How do we use these ideas to inspire and compel?

These are the questions that I ask myself daily. Micah is the place where I search for answers.

Ask yourself these questions:
What are the commonalities that make Jews Jewish in America today?
What makes you or your family members Jewish?

Do these principles resonate with you?
What principles do you hold dear?
How do you live them in your lives?
How do you model them for others?
 Come to Micah and share your answers.

Shalom,
 Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel

BERAHA'S BLACKBOARD

THE PEOPLE'S HANUKKAH PARTY

BY RABBI JOSH BERAHA

"Not The White House Hanukkah Party," that's what we should call it, my friend and one of the rabbis at Temple Sinai said with a twinkle in her eye. The rest of us, a room full of Jewish professionals, chuckled over our coffee. It was mid-November and Hanukkah was merely weeks away. But it wasn't really a joke, at least not the party part.

A chain of emails got started between some local clergy. "Let's change it to positive language," someone suggested. Instead of standing *against* something, wouldn't it be better to uphold values we feel have been diminished this past year? We wanted to offer a time and a place for different communities to come together, celebrate, and rededicate ourselves. We'd need a posture of hope. "The People's Hanukkah Party" was born, and no one looked back.

Five major D.C. synagogues—Temple Micah, Temple Sinai, Washington Hebrew Congregation, Adas Israel, and

Sixth & I Historic Synagogue unanimously decided to host the party as a fundraiser for HIAS, an organization that rescues, protects, and advocates for refugees. We invited individuals to deliver monologues, or better, "Hanu-logues" addressing the question of how and why Hanukkah should matter to the life of an American Jew today. And what's a Hanukkah party without food and music?

Like most December evenings, the 14th was cold and dark. But an hour into the party, more than 100 people had walked through the doors of Casolare Restaurant at the Kimpton Glover Park Hotel. Inside there was celebration, light. People of all ages mingled over drinks, latkes, babkha, rugelach, and banana cream filled donut holes prepared by the executive pastry chef of Casolare.

DJ *Nes Gadol*—Hebrew for "Great Miracle," as in the first two letters on the driedel—played festive music on turn-

tables. "Tonight, we celebrate light," he said, and introduced the evening's speakers. Mark Hetfield, president and CEO of HIAS, was brief but spirited. He thanked The People for their support of HIAS and re-affirmed his organization's commitment to working from Jewish values to work with refugees. Matt Nosanchuck, former associate director of Public Engagement in the Obama White House, and liaison to the American Jewish community, spoke next. He spoke passionately about religious freedom.

Next up was Sarah Hurwitz, former speechwriter for Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama. She spoke about what it felt like at her first White House Hanukkah Party, to be in a room full of Jews who for generations prior had worked to combat anti-Semitism and achieve positions of power. To hold that thought while singing Hanukkah songs about miracles with the first black president—incredible, she said.



But more amazing than that moment, Hurwitz remarked, is the present moment. Jews are no longer trying to crowd into the halls of power. We've arrived. And with our power, we speak not for ourselves but for others who still struggle for equality. This is a miracle Hurwitz urged us to recognize.

When the "Hanu-logues" were over, the rabbis led the blessings over the Hanukkah candles. The many menorahs shined bright and added to the optimistic energy that Hetfield, Nosanchuk, and Hurwitz had created.

The People continued in their merriment until all the candles burned low. After all, it was The People's Hanukkah Party.

Save the date for the next one—Hanukkah 2018.

Webb FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►

After the Navy, he spent time in Florida where he cut down trees in a swamp and worked in a restaurant. Then it was back to California where he worked at an auto parts store, before he began his studies at a community college, earning two associates degrees.

At California State University at Sacramento, Webb majored in anthropology with a focus on archaeology. While there he worked in the Anthropology Lab digitizing records and cataloging human remains for repatriation to Native American tribes. He got his bachelor's degree in 2010.

The next year he moved to D.C. to begin his studies at Wesley Theological, and eventually decide to

convert to Judaism.

Asked how his family reacted to that decision, he said it was his mother, a Catholic, who first took him to a synagogue when he was a kid because she wanted him to know about Hanukkah. She also taught him and his brother about Islam, Buddhism and Chinese New Year, he said.

It was at a church in Sacramento that he had what became a memorable conversation with a man who was in a group that debated (and then voted) on various sayings said to have been uttered by Jesus. The idea was to determine whether there was a basis for determining Jesus had actually said the words ascribed to him. At some point in the conversation, the man said to Yosef: "What would you think if Jesus were not divine?"

That question stuck with him as he began his divinity studies.

"My theology was based on something Jesus said, which was love God and love your neighbor. . . (but) if at the end of the day there is no God and I have spent my life loving my neighbor, that's okay."

As he continued his studies, reading original texts, he began to see how the Shema was what he had determined was the core of his theology.

Eventually, to put it in a less-than-academic way, Yosef realized how "totally Jewish" the teachings of Jesus were.

But he kept up theological studies at Wesley, got his master's degree and began studying for work as an interfaith chaplain. And he began teaching at the University of Maryland, College Park.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE ►

Webb FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►

Yosef, 40, is still at UMD, where he is an adjunct instructor, running intergroup dialogue courses that bring together students of different backgrounds to discuss issues of justice, identity, and privilege. Yosef defines the course, required of undergraduates at UMD, as a “culture competency course.” He also does training at UMD, helping people to “owning our own biases.” A reflection of his effort to lay bare biases may be seen in his preference to say “they” instead of “he” or “she”.

His wife, Dr. Beth Douthirt-Cohen, is the Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Frederick Community College in Maryland. The couple lives in Columbia, Md.

Yosef came to Temple Micah in March as a part-time employee to help with the annual auction and was then hired full-time as communication director in July.

Despite the obvious differences, there are many similarities between running a church and a synagogue, Yosef says. Asked what surprised him

about Micah, Yosef said the membership growth, which he called startling. “There have been enough new members just since I’ve been here to fill the sanctuary,” he noted.

He has his own views on why this is happening—it is not simply a reaction to the last presidential election, but is driven by the current era of instant communication.

So much is coming at us all the time, Yosef said, that people need a place where they can feel everything is going to be all right. ♦

‘It Takes a Village’ Is More Than a Cliché: For Sukkat Shalom It’s Real

What does it take to make a successful and happy adaptation to life in a new country with an unfamiliar language, a demanding and complex bureaucracy, and new customs? In the case of Temple Micah’s family from Afghanistan, it takes energy, a willingness to say “yes,” and...a village.

Temple Micah’s Sukkat Shalom 90-plus-member team of volunteers has been working with our family since mid-October on acculturating to life in Maryland. The mother, Maleka, has been taking daily English classes at Montgomery College; she texts with our volunteers like a typical young American. The father, Amin, has been attending regular classes around the corner from their apartment, and is thrilled with the improvement in his English skills.

The 5-year-old has been thriving in a warm and welcoming pre-K program at the elementary school near their home. The three-year-old has survived stitches after a fall, and is learn-

ing English from Micah members who visit regularly to offer basic English lessons to her and her dad. The “baby,” who turns two in February, smiles broadly and greets new friends with a loud “hello”. And this lovely family has begun to connect with a wider circle of friends, both within Temple Micah and among the Afghan community in the greater D.C. area.

It hasn’t been all work for our family. In addition to shopping trips and visits to local government agency offices, the family has gone to volunteers’ homes for holidays (think trick or treat for the first time), have trekked to the zoo, to the monuments downtown, to see holiday lights displays, and to local bowling alleys.

The Sukkat Shalom team is exploring more activities in the new year, and looks forward to welcoming Micah members to get to know our “our lovely new friends.”

—Martha Adler and Dorian Friedman



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