



# Vine

## Big Ideas Drive Machon Micah's Evolution

BY DONNA LLOYD-JONES

FROM RABBI ZEMEL

.....  
IN ISRAEL, THINKING  
ABOUT WHY I LOVE  
ISRAEL

DEAR FRIENDS,

As I write these words, I am on my sabbatical, sitting in our Tel Aviv rental apartment on a chilly, rainy Shabbat afternoon. My mind races. I find that I am thinking simultaneously about what for me are a number of disparate yet interconnected thoughts: Israel, sabbatical, Micah.



Why do I love to come to Israel? Is it more than love? I feel strongly in my soul, as I have written and said so many different times, that Israel embodies the Jewish miracle of our era. For nearly 2,000 years we were a homeless, refugee people. There were, to be sure, places and eras of prosperity and flourishing—most notably 12th- to 14th-century Spain, and Western Europe in the 18th, 19th, and even early 20th century. Neither lasted: Inquisition and expulsion ended one; genocide, the other. Throughout all, not only did we endure, but we produced a vibrant, vivid, creative culture. As a people we were insecure, as our sense of humor suggests, but emotionally and intellectually strong; one could argue even without peer. Our legacy is one of human history's greatest stories. Our people's experience in America is, of course, without precedent.

The early Zionists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were nothing less than prophets. They somehow knew that Europe would result in tragedy and it was time to return home. In Israel today, we are an indigenous people returned to our land, and the energy here pulsates throughout the country.

RABBI BERAHA is a man who asks big questions and likes to explore big ideas. In the nearly two years that he has served as Micah's director of congregational learning, he has begun to implement some of those ideas in Machon Micah, the temple's six-year old Institute for Jewish Learning.

Reflecting on his approach to Machon Micah's continuing evolution, Beraha notes that, "In the absence of answers about how to do Jewish education, it seems like the only right thing to do is say: 'Let's try something new.' It's fun to be in a job where we say we're going to try something new and see what happens. It keeps things fresh and interesting."

Driving this process are Beraha's reflections on the big questions about how Jewish learning should occur and the role of the synagogue in its members' lives. Here are four of those big ideas and how they're being translated into action within Machon Micah with the enthusiastic support of Rabbi Zemel and other Micah leaders:

### Seamlessness Between Synagogue, Home and Community

One of Beraha's goals is to create seamlessness between the classroom, the synagogue, the Machon and the home. As he puts it, "I want people to show up at Micah and feel they don't have to leave part of themselves outside the doors.... It's not like Micah has put up walls and the Jewish learning is just inside. It should feel like it's part of our community, not something set apart." This is

similar to Beraha's experience growing up in a Conservative family in Providence, Rhode Island, where what was happening in the synagogue was also happening in the community and at home.

At Micah, for example, Beraha has redesigned Boker Tov on Sunday mornings where families come for a half hour before classes start and learn together. In addition to hearing important announcements, they laugh at goofy jokes and sing songs, secular as well as religious, which underscores the connection between synagogue and community. As Beraha puts it, "The way people dress, hold themselves... the feeling on Sunday mornings is that it's a community space, like a coffee shop or a local grocer. This is much more casual than a traditional synagogue gathering, grounded in our lives as both Washingtonians and Micah members."

A popular Beraha mantra is that Jewish education should be formative, rather than informative. It's not just learning about the Jewish holidays, but about helping people connect emotionally with the idea that Judaism is alive and essential.

### Empowered Learning

One way to engage people in seeing Judaism as essential is by empowering them to take control of their own learning. So for the first time this year, 7th graders don't meet in classes but instead participate in individual learning projects based on their interests. Advisor Liya Rechtman meets with each student

"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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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

# A WISER WAY TO USE DONATIONS

By JODI ENDA

In a few months, we will ask you to stop giving money to the Music Fund.

Ditto the Library Fund.

And Hineni and the Prayerbook Fund and a whole bunch of other projects and activities that are central to what we do at Micah.



It's not that we don't want or need your money. Perish the thought!

But we are changing the way we collect it by creating larger pots of money that will enable us to use your donations in a wiser way.

For years now, Micah members have been donating money large and small to a plethora of funds that underwrite many of the important works that we do. People give money to send students to camp and to Israel, pay for speakers, replace tattered prayer books, help members who are ill, hire musicians, participate in social action projects, plant greenery and more. And that's great.

But.

Everyone has been writing checks to support his or her favorite project. The result is that some funds receive more money than we could possibly spend on what the donors intended, and some don't contain enough money to pay for things we really need.

So after many months of study and number-crunching, the board has voted to create a new structure of umbrella funds that will pay for many of the same things the smaller funds financed. Most of the smaller funds eventually will disappear, their functions subsumed by the umbrella funds.

The three new umbrella funds—Worship, Learning and Social Action—encompass the values around which just about everything at Micah revolves. So while many of the old funds vanish, the things they traditionally paid for will not. The new funds will foot the bill.

A few examples: If you like to give to the Adult Education-Kallek Fund, the Fox-Mehlman Scholarship Fund or the Library Fund, we will ask you to donate instead to the Learning Fund. If you prefer giving

to the Green Team, Hineni or the old Social Action Fund, please give to the new, larger Social Action Fund. If you want to donate money for music, young family services or religious objects, you should contribute to the Worship Fund.

This streamlined system will help us pay for the things most important to our congregation. It will give the board new flexibility to use the money under each umbrella in the smartest way possible.

But it does more than that: These umbrellas capture the essence of Micah far better than the old, piecemeal structure did. At our core, we are about worship, learning and moving the world and our community forward. Now we will be able to collect and use our money with those ideals in mind.

In addition to the three umbrella funds, you may donate to the Innovation Fund, which the board created late last year to jumpstart the kind of exciting new ideas—often experimental—that make Micah a leader among American synagogues. And you may contribute to the Endowment Fund, which we hope to enlarge as a way to secure our future.

We will maintain a small number of special funds: the Rabbi Daniel Goldman Zemel Fund for Israel, launched a few years ago to support Reform Judaism and progressive Zionism and to honor Rabbi Zemel's three decades at Micah; discretionary funds for our three rabbis; and funds that have restricted uses, primarily for the operation and upkeep of our building, as well as for Next Dor (for young adults). Micah House, which is so central to this congregation, will continue to collect donations in a separate fund.

Some funds set to disappear support activities that are critical and that have ongoing expenses. Hineni, which helps congregants in need, falls into that category. The board wants to make sure the leaders of such endeavors know at the start of each fiscal year exactly how much money they have to work with. They will not have to rely on donations earmarked for them, rather they will receive budgets based on past expenditures and upcoming needs, and can

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ►

# Three Micah Teens Lobby for Social Justice

BY JEFFREY P. COHN

THREE TEMPLE MICAH students made Micah history last month when they were the first temple members to participate in the annual Reform Judaism program that introduces synagogue youth to the politics of lobbying Congress as well as state and local governments on behalf of social justice issues.

The L'Taken ("to repair") Social Justice Seminar has been sponsored since its beginning in 1985 by the Religious Action Committee (RAC), the social and political action arm of the Reform Jewish movement. Participants attend seminars, discussion groups and workshops to learn about key public policy issues and priorities, as well as the Jewish values that inform the Reform movement's advocacy. On the program's

last day, the young activists fan out to talk to their representatives and senators as well as to relevant local Washington, D.C. officials, says Shira Zemel, RAC assistant program director. (Shira is the eldest daughter of Rabbi Danny and Louise Zemel.)

From a handful of students in the early days, the L'Taken program now draws 2,000 high school-age students annually from more than 200 North American Reform synagogues and other Jewish community organizations, Zemel explained. Some 350 teens and 50 adult leaders typically attend smaller weekend sessions, she added. On the agenda at each gathering are issues related to economic inequality, criminal justice, reproductive rights, gun violence, LGBT civil rights,

immigration, climate change and more.

The three Micah students who participated in the February 19–22 program were tenth graders Hero Magnus, Sarah Carleton and Isaac Rosenblum-Sellers. They were accompanied by Rabbis Beraha and Landau, who joined in some of the workshops and discussion groups, and by Noah Westreich, Micah's director of youth engagement.

"We are giving our youth a chance to lobby on Capitol Hill on issues they care about," says Westreich, who himself participated in L'Taken programs as a high school student from Ner Tamid, his hometown synagogue in Montclair, New Jersey, and remained involved through the RAC's college internship program. "The kids learn they can have an impact on legislation," he adds. "For many, that will be a formative experience." ●



The temple's lobbying team—Noah Westreich, director of youth engagement, with Sarah Carleton, Isaac Rosenblum-Sellers, Hero Magnus and Rabbi Susan Landau—spend the day on Capitol Hill.

## the annual TEMPLE MICAH spring auction

Saturday, April 9, 2016  
6:00-9:30pm

To make this event a success, we need you!  
Enjoy the social event of the season and help  
raise much-needed funds for Temple Micah!  
Tickets are \$36 in advance or \$40 at the door.

For more information,  
visit [www.templemicah.org](http://www.templemicah.org).

Complimentary childcare available.



Micah teens Isaac Rosenblum-Sellers (left) and Sarah Carleton (right) join Shira Zemel of the Religious Action Center.



## COMING ATTRACTIONS

Here's a sampling of coming Micah activities. For a detailed schedule of all upcoming events and services, check out [www.templemicah.org](http://www.templemicah.org).

TUESDAYS, MARCH 8, 15, 22, and 29  
7:30–8:45 PM

### **Beyond I and Thou: Select Writings of Martin Buber with Rabbi Beraha**

This course—grounded in Buber's *I and Thou*—also looks at some of the author's lesser known writings. RSVP to the temple office.

SATURDAY, MARCH 12 • 4–6 PM

### **All-Community Havdalah Services**

With Machon Micah; all are welcome.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23 • 6–7:30 PM

### **Purimspiel!**

Join us for an evening of story and celebration as we read the Megillah and perform this year's hilarious take on the Purim story. We'll shake our groggers (and boxes of macaroni and cheese), eat hamantaschen, and have a great time. Members of all ages are encouraged to dress in costume.

SUNDAY, APRIL 3 • 3–5:30 PM

### **Kol Isha at the DCJCC**

Kol Isha (A Woman's Voice) goes to the DC Jewish Community Center for Theater J's performance of "Falling Out of Time," based on Israeli author David Grossman's novel. Contact Meryl Weiner ([hazzan@templemicah.org](mailto:hazzan@templemicah.org)) for details.

MONDAY, APRIL 4 • 9 AM

### **Temple Micah Blood Drive**

Please contact the temple office for more information or to register.

SATURDAY, APRIL 9 • 6–9:30 PM

### **Annual Spring Auction**

The Micah social event of the year! Help raise needed funds for the temple by bidding on great items. New this year: Complimentary child care and a pizza party for the kids. See page 3 for details.

FRIDAY, APRIL 15 • 7:30 PM

### **Meet Micah Friends Dinner**

After Kabbalat Shabbat services, old friends and potential new ones meet in the lobby and head to a local restaurant. No reservation needed.

FRIDAY, APRIL 29 • 10:15 AM

### **Passover Morning Service**

With Yizkor reading

## INTERESTING SPEAKERS!

Temple Micah features two monthly lecture series—on Sunday morning and Wednesday noon. For more details, go online to [www.templemicah.org](http://www.templemicah.org).

### SUNDAY SPEAKER SERIES

*Sundays from 10:15 to 11:45 am*



**April 3 – Aaron Klaus**, son of Micah music director Teddy Klaus and Debby Kanter, will play the trumpet and lead a discussion of "Evolving Identities: A Morning of Jewish Art Music for Trumpet." Focusing on the works of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Jewish composers including Ernest Bloch, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, and Paul Ben-Haim, he will explore what it means to express one's Jewishness through

contemporary music. Klaus is a graduate student in trumpet performance at Towson University. His discussion and recital are drawn from current research on his forthcoming master's thesis, "The 'Exotic' Shofar: Jewish Racial Identity in Ernest Bloch's *Proclamation for Trumpet and Orchestra*."

**May 1 – Michael Walzer**, political philosopher, author, and professor emeritus at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, discusses "Secular Revolutions and Religious Counterrevolutions: the Israeli Case." (See page 7 for details.)

### LUNCH & LEARN

*Wednesdays from noon to 2 pm*

A monthly program sponsored by the Aging Together Team. Reserve online at [www.templemicah.org](http://www.templemicah.org). Contact Livia Bardin, [lunchandlearn@templemicah.org](mailto:lunchandlearn@templemicah.org), or call the temple office, 202-342-9175, for details.



**March 9 – Julia Sweig** on "Cuba and the U.S. After the Thaw." She will discuss changes to U.S.-Cuba relations in the new era of détente and the ongoing domestic transformation of Cuba, including the economic reforms that are reshaping the island. Micah member Julia Sweig, an award-winning author and leading authority on the transformation of Cuba, Brazil, Latin America, and American foreign policy, is Senior Research Fellow at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. She is currently writing a biography of Lady Bird Johnson.



**April 13 – Rich Harwood** on "Americans as Builders: Restoring Our Belief and Can-Do Spirit." The nation is going through an era of mistrust, fragmentation and self-absorption in which people have lost faith in their leaders and institutions. Micah member Rich Harwood will talk about what it will take to restore Americans' sense of belief and can-do spirit—and thus get things done together. Harwood is founder and president of the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, an independent nonprofit that teaches, coaches and inspires people and organizations to work together to solve problems.

## LESSONS FROM LANDAU

# AFTER TEACHING ON THE AFTERLIFE

BY RABBI SUSAN LANDAU

"I never knew Judaism had anything to say about the afterlife!"

I heard this reaction many times when I explained that I planned to teach a class on the afterlife to adults in our Machon. Although it is not often a topic of conversation in Jewish circles, Judaism has plenty to say about what happens after we die. I am happy to guide us in those fascinating, and sometimes challenging, conversations. The snow has not been kind to our scheduled class sessions, so I hope this piece can serve as some supplemental reading material on the topic!

Like with many issues in our tradition that have developed over the centuries, Jewish teachings on the afterlife are varied and sometimes even contradictory. However, it seems a nearly universally accepted belief that some aspect of ourselves (often called the "soul") lives on after we die. Veering away slightly from the mainstream beliefs,

one can find teachings about bodily resurrection at the End of Days, and reincarnation. Some people find these beliefs difficult to swallow; others find great comfort in learning that Judaism believes death is not necessarily final.

One of the most refreshing ways to study Jewish texts on the afterlife is to read accounts of Olam Habbah, the rabbinic name for the idealized World to Come. We can take lessons from the hereafter and apply them to the here and now.

An example from the Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 22a:

*Rabbi Baruqa of Huza often went to the marketplace at Lapet. One day, the prophet Elijah appeared to him there, and Rabbi Baruqa asked him, "Is there anyone among all these people who will have a share in the World to Come?" Elijah answered, "There is none."*

*Later, two men came to the marketplace, and Elijah*

*said to Rabbi Baruqa, "Those two will have a share in the World to Come!" Rabbi Baruqa asked the newcomers, "What is your occupation?" They replied, "We are merry-makers, jesters, and clowns. When we see someone who is sad, we cheer him up. When we see two people who are quarreling, we try to make peace between them."*

From this text, we learn about certain simple behaviors that can merit someone a place in the World to Come. The story seems to hint at an even deeper message: If we live our lives such that we will earn a place in the next world (by cheering up our friends, and making peace between them, for instance), then we will be doubly blessed by living rightly in this world first.

There are few topics that carry such powerful implications for our personal spiritual wellbeing. Keeping that in mind, I made sure to leave room in our discussions for our



own beliefs and questions. It is valuable not only to take in the variety of possibilities present in our texts, but to begin deciphering our own ideas.

Personally, learning about the afterlife has reminded me to apply some of my attitudes about living to dying: I am comfortable standing in awe before the mysteries of life, and admitting to things I cannot understand or explain. How humbling, therefore, to view death in a similar way. I do not know enough to explain what will happen after I die, but I marvel at the many possibilities, and take comfort in knowing that something will.

For further reading on this topic, I recommend *The Death of Death*, by Neil Gillman, and *What Happens After I Die?* by Rifat Sonsino and Daniel B. Syme.

## PASSOVER 2016: Micah's Popular Community Seder Set for April 23

By Shelley Grossman

The traditional seder begins with the leader announcing, "Let all who are hungry come and eat." Thus, Kol Isha (A Woman's Voice), sponsor of the Temple Micah community seder, invites the whole Micah community to partake of the Micah seder on Saturday, April 23 at 6 pm—as long as seats remain among the 150 available. So, make a reservation by April 15 to assure a seat at this generally sold-out event.

The community seder, a long-standing Micah tradition, is highly participatory. Members of the congregation read, sing—even dance—as well as eat a special catered Pesach meal and enjoy the company of old friends and new. Cantor Meryl Weiner and Rabbi Landau lead the celebration, this year using a newly revised version of Kol Isha's own Haggadah, which includes readings about Jewish

women in addition to the traditional Exodus narrative and the familiar prayers and songs. Children not only are welcome but are featured when the time comes to recite the four questions. But the seder is for everyone regardless of age, gender, marital status or any other demographic category.

Reservations can be made on the temple website, [www.templemicah.org](http://www.templemicah.org). A donation of \$20 for adults and \$10 for students (children younger than 5 are free) helps the seder pay for itself. Additional tax-deductible donations enable others to attend. Those not able to make a donation, of course, are welcome. Be in touch with Cantor Weiner ([hazzan@templemicah.org](mailto:hazzan@templemicah.org)) to make arrangements. Payments may be made online or by check to the temple office. Email [kolisha@templemicah.org](mailto:kolisha@templemicah.org) with any questions.

# Homeward DC: Micah's Tzedek Committee Taking the Lead on New Plan for Homeless Families

BY DORIAN FRIEDMAN

*"Share your bread with the hungry, and take the poor into your home; when you see the naked, clothe him and do not ignore your own kin." —Isaiah 58:7*

AS RABBI LANDAU recently shared with the congregation, Temple Micah has an immediate opportunity to follow Isaiah's instructions and take care of our homeless neighbors, right in our own backyard.

The District of Columbia has announced plans to end homelessness for the estimated 7,000 residents who are without a place to sleep on any given night across our city. Homeward DC, Mayor Muriel Bowser's new initiative, will focus especially on the needs of more than 1,200 families with children who lack housing. The plan's centerpiece: Shutting down DC General, the former hospital and now the District's largest family shelter, "home" to 400 kids and their families in what many critics call deplorable conditions. In its place, Mayor Bowser and the City Council are advancing a plan to open short-term family housing in nearly every ward of the city. They promise the



facilities will be small, safe and dignified – with key services and supports to help families get back on their feet. The plan for Ward 3 (where the temple is located): A new, modern building for 38 families at 2619 Wisconsin Avenue NW, to be constructed on the grassy plot of vacant land two blocks south of Temple Micah.

Spearheading the response from our congregation is Micah's Tzedek Committee. The group has been working with the Good Faith Communities Coalition, an alliance of faith communities in Washington serving the needs of homeless and impoverished residents. At a recent meeting, the Tzedek Committee voted to recommend that Temple Micah sign on in support of the Ward 3 shelter. The temple board, in turn, debated the proposal at its March 3 meeting, and voted to endorse Mayor Bowser's plan to close DC General and to open smaller shelters throughout the city in general and in Ward 3 specifically.

Some early reaction from the greater community has been supportive, but the Ward 3 plan is not without controversy. At recent public meetings, some neighbors expressed worries about housing 38

families in a residential neighborhood they say is currently zoned for single-family homes, while others complained about the lack of transparency in the site selection process.

Would you like to join the discussion and share your views? You'll have several opportunities in the coming weeks. On Saturday, March 5, consider attending a community forum hosted by Councilmember Mary Cheh to ask questions and learn more about the proposed housing facility. That meeting is at 1 pm at the Stoddert/Glover Park Recreation Center on Calvert Street, NW. Micah members can also submit testimony at a March 17 hearing of the DC City Council. Finally, individuals may call or email Councilmember Cheh's office with feedback regarding the shelter plan and location.

In addition, Micah members are invited to attend the next meeting of the Good Faith Communities Coalition at Temple Micah on Sunday, March 20, at noon in the upstairs library. Questions on these or other ways to participate? Contact Susan Landfield at [susanlandfield@yahoo.com](mailto:susanlandfield@yahoo.com). ●

## President's Column FROM PAGE 2 ►

request increases when necessary.

The shift to the new approach will start July 1, with the new fiscal year. At that point, the umbrella funds will open and those they are replacing will no longer accept contributions. Any donations made to the old funds will be placed in the appropriate umbrella fund.

So what happens to the money that currently sits in our confusing array of funds? The board understands that our

members contributed that money for specific purposes. So for the first year of the new system, the money already in those funds will stay there and continue to be used as it has in the past. Any money that remains in those funds on July 1, 2017, will be rolled over to the relevant umbrella funds.

We realize this represents a big, complicated shift from the way Micah has done things before. To further explain, the board will send a letter to every congregant before the changes occur.

I want to thank board members Alison Harwood, Joel Korn and Jeff Davis, along with Executive Director Rachel Gross, for spearheading this plan. The entire board thought long and hard about it, and we hope you agree that it will help put Micah on surer financial footing while keeping our fundamental tenets, our principles, front and center.

Worship. Learning. Social Action.

By combining and eliminating our small funds, I believe this plan gives us the wherewithal to think—and act—big.



## SAVE THE DATE

# Professor Michael Walzer in May

For half a century, Michael Walzer has been a leading voice in the national conversation about politics and ethics. He remains, in Rabbi Zemel's words, "one of the greatest political philosophers in the world today." Walzer joins us at Temple Micah on Sunday, May 1, to discuss "Secular Revolutions and Religious Counterrevolutions: the Israeli Case," based on his newest book.

Walzer is professor emeritus of Social Science at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study. As a scholar, author, editor and lecturer, he has addressed a wide variety of topics in political theory and moral philosophy: political obliga-

tion, just and unjust war, nationalism and ethnicity, economic justice and the welfare state.

His books (among them *Just and Unjust Wars*, *Spheres of Justice*, *In God's Shadow: Politics in the Hebrew Bible*, and his newest, *The Paradox of Liberation: Secular Revolutions and Religious Counterrevolutions*) and essays have played a part in the revival of practical, issue-focused ethics and in the development of a pluralist approach to political and moral life. For more than three decades Walzer served as co-editor of *Dissent* magazine.

His articles and interviews frequently appear in the world's



foremost newspapers and journals. He is currently working on the third volume of *The Jewish Political Tradition*, a comprehensive collaborative project focused on the history of Jewish political thought.

Walzer will speak in the sanctuary at 10:15 am on May 1.

### Big ideas FROM PAGE 1 ▶

to guide the development of a learning project. As an example, four 7th graders have created a book club and are currently reading Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel *Maus* about the Holocaust in Poland.

Beraha is also exploring how empowered learning can be extended to teens and adults in the Micah community. Micah is offering a number of new adult education courses, such as Rabbi Landau's "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the Jewish Afterlife (But Were Afraid to Ask)" and Beraha's "Beyond I and Thou: Select Writings of Martin Buber." But he hopes to challenge the community to learn more and consider

what it means to be a learned Jew: "I'm interested in how our community can take Jewish learning and living into their own hands and feel responsible for their own Jewish Lives. If the synagogue feels that Jewish learning is on each person's shoulders... how do we create the space where people feel empowered to create their own opportunities?"

### Thick Relations

Like Rabbi Zemel, Beraha is also interested in building both a greater sense of community within Temple Micah and an emotional commitment to that community. This past year, he instituted Sunday morning brunches at people's homes. He asked people to share their Jewish story or ritual objects at these events. Similarly, he

encourages people to share their Shabbat dinners with others—to make Micah's once-a-year Shabbat Shalom Around Town into a more frequent, informal activity.

As a society, "we're moving away from the kind of community that I'm talking about. I think people still crave this kind of deep connection that enables them to go beyond the self to have transcendence," says Beraha. To achieve that kind of community, "A synagogue should ask something from you emotionally in a way that other institutions don't. We're saying, 'come and invest your emotions.'"

### Making Hebrew Part of What We Do

Finally, Beraha is thinking about the role of Hebrew in the liberal American Jewish

community. He wants to know how to make Hebrew a real part of what we do at Temple Micah. Currently, instead of weekly Hebrew school, Machon Micah students receive one-on-one Skype tutoring. Adults also can participate in the Skype program. Over the summer, however, Beraha and his staff want to do some thinking about how Hebrew can become more than just part of Bar/Bat Mitzvah training at Micah. The goal is to help people see Hebrew as a live language, and how it fits in context in Israel and into our own lives here. The goal is not to build fluency, but to help people feel a stronger connection to the language.

These are only some of Beraha's big ideas for Machon Micah. Stay tuned for further developments. ●

# TZEDAKAH

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and David Diskin  
Jane Kerschner and Francis Schwartz,  
by the Wise Aging Tuesday Group -  
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Bardin, Roberta Gluck, Sid and Elka  
Booth, Harold Sharlin, Geri Nielsen,  
Chaz Kerschner, Mary Schwartz,  
Rhoda Hyde, and Deborah Kraut  
Michelle Sender's special birthday,  
by Sheila Platoff and Robert Effros  
Ben Wax's bar mitzvah,  
by Sheila Platoff

IN MEMORY OF  
William Paul, by Sheila  
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Elizabeth Weinberg, by Sheila Platoff

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IN HONOR OF  
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Amy Berman for being such a  
great mom, by Gail Zwiebel  
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and Roger Friedman  
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Cantor Meryl Weiner and  
Teddy Klaus, and everyone  
who participated in the Purim  
Spiel and B'Nai Mitzvah  
classes, by Alan Carpien

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Bart Gerstenblith, Celia Shapiro and  
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Rabbi Zemel's 2015 Israel trip, by  
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**Rabbi's Message FROM PAGE 1 ►**

I was raised by Zionists. The seminal figure of my childhood was my grandfather, Rabbi Solomon Goldman, *the* Zionist of the family and one of the greatest Zionist leaders of American Jewry. His influence on me was enormous though he died when I was a mere six months old. I come to Israel to connect to my family roots and to observe up close how this great Zionist project is unfolding amid turmoil, confusion, animosity, rivalry, dedication, love, effort and generosity. Here in Israel, everything human is on full view, sometimes in overdrive. Even as I deeply worry how it will all turn out, I am in awe of the effort. And as I said on Rosh Hashanah 5775/2014, Israel is the place that I love that does not (yet) love me in return. I live with altered words of this country's anthem always echoing within, "od lo avda tikvatee..." (I have not yet lost my hope...)

What then do Louise and I do while we are here? We walk and talk and read. I try to speak with every Israeli I meet, which is not difficult because we are a talkative people. I feel that everyone here is my cousin; the surge of feeling of personal connection is exhilarating.

About whom do I want to tell you? Here are a few examples.

- The airport lost-and-found clerk who took care of me when my bag disappeared: This is Shaya, who told me not to worry, the bag would turn up. Shaya is part airport personnel, part social worker. As I was filling out the lost-baggage form, he received a phone call from the person who had taken my bag in error.

The person who had mistakenly taken my bag? He turned out to be the blind, elderly gentleman traveling alone who had occupied the seat in front of me on the airplane. As he gave me my bag, he told me he realized it was not his by the sound

of the rolling wheels.

- The young waiter in an Italian restaurant who served us dinner Thursday night: He took kindly to our every whim. He had a Hebrew menu for me and an English one for Louise, which allowed each of us to strengthen our Hebrew while still mangling the Italian. He went to wrap up our leftovers and then sheepishly told us someone in the kitchen had mistakenly thrown them away. The kitchen was cooking us new "leftovers" to take home.

- Or our florist (Shabbat flowers), the checkout clerk in the supermarket (using my cousin's club card), the young woman who sold me a sweet roll (first day they were using a new bakery supplier), and the coffee counter clerk who taught me the Hebrew word for a "to-go coffee-carrying-cardboard-thing for multiple cups," (*mi-na-say-ah*).

I am here, you see, to get a feel for the country in every way possible. And to read.

I want to read everything. While I am on sabbatical, I try to read books that help me think about Temple Micah and the work that I am trying to do as a rabbi. At a recent board meeting, we discussed at great length what I mean when I say the purpose of Temple Micah is to help us engage in the Human Project. By this I mean, that I firmly believe that the purpose of a synagogue is to influence us in some way to be better as individuals, to move us to act collectively to contribute to the larger whole and to celebrate the beauty of being alive. While I am away from the day-to-day at Micah, I want to spend some time considering how we might collectively see and embrace the notion that moving humanity forward is what we are all about.

I believe that synagogues should be places where people encounter and experience Judaism's great gifts: a commitment to human dignity and worth,

a belief in one God that encompasses all creation and the understanding that every human being is a reflection of God's holiness. These are the underpinnings of the Human Project as conceived in Jewish writings. I want Temple Micah to be a place where we experience this in a culture of acceptance, warmth and love. I want Temple Micah to be a place where we can reach for and touch the most noble part of the self that is within each one of us. I want Temple Micah to be a place of personal growth, social connection and engagement with the world at large.

In the category of Micah engaging with the world, I truly hope you will come to Micah at 10:15 am, Sunday, May 1, to hear one of the greatest political philosophers in the world today. Michael Walzer, professor emeritus at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, has authored many seminal books, including *Exodus and Revolution*, *In God's Shadow: Politics and the Hebrew Bible* and, most recently, *The Paradox of Liberation: Secular Revolutions and Religious Counterrevolutions*. Many of you will know him as the author of this inspiring paragraph in our prayer book:

*"Standing on the parted shores, we still believe what we were taught before ever we stood at Sinai's foot; that wherever we go, it is eternally Egypt; that there is a better place, a promised land; that the winding way to that promise passes through the wilderness. That there is no way to get from here to there except by joining hands, marching together."*

I know that you will not want to miss his talk, "Secular Revolutions and Religious Counterrevolutions: the Israeli Case," based on his newest book. (See page 7 for details.)

Shalom from Israel,  
Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel

**Tzedakah FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►**

Rachel Gross and Rhiannon Walsh, by Norman Blumenfeld

IN MEMORY OF  
Tuna Barkey, by Henri Barkey  
Departed family members, by Milton and Marlyn Socolar  
Isaac Green, by Barbara Green  
Bobbie Landsberg, by Lynn Landsberg and Dennis Ward

Robert S. Morgenstein, by Susan W. Morgenstein, Leah Gallant Tahbaz, and Leslie N. Morgenstein  
Regine Ransohoff, by Jodi Enda and Terence Samuel, Learita Scott and Bob Friedman, Marjorie Sherman  
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Etta Sugarman Weisman, by Steve Weisman

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Michael Feuer

IN HONOR OF  
Rabbi Zemel and Louise's leadership of the 2015 Micah Mission to Israel, by Valerie Barton

IN MEMORY OF  
Gloria W. Appel, by Betsy Broder and David Wentworth  
Erwin Lehmann, by Rich Lehmann  
Regine Ransohoff, by Roberta Aronson and Paul Goldberg

**EDITORS' NOTE:** In the January/February 2016 issue of the *Vine*, the name of Ruth Jonas Bardin—mother of member David Bardin—was misspelled. We sincerely regret the error.

## B'NAI MITZVAH



**ABIGAIL HALL**  
**MARCH 19 / 9 ADAR II**  
**PARENTS:** Barbara Manning and Tracy Hall  
**TORAH PORTION:** Vayikra  
**INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROJECT:** Abigail's independent study project this year is focused on reading Jewish-themed fiction, including novels with both religious and historical themes.



**ELKA LONGSTRETH**  
**MARCH 26 / 16 ADAR II**  
**PARENTS:** Ben Longstreth and Molly Rauch  
**TORAH PORTION:** Tzav  
**INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROJECT:** Elka is reading Jewish novels to increase her understanding of both the Holocaust and the history of Jews in America.



**ANNA KATZIVE**  
**APRIL 2 / 23 ADAR II**  
**PARENTS:** Kimberly Curtis and Matthew Katzive  
**TORAH PORTION:** Sh'mini  
**INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROJECT:** Anna is currently participating in a small book group with fellow Micah 7th graders discussing the Holocaust and its role in American Jewish culture and identity.



**SARAH ELAINE MUOIO**  
**APRIL 9 / 1 NISAN**  
**PARENTS:** Karen Mandel, Reid Muoio, and Alberto Cerda  
**TORAH PORTION:** Tazria  
**INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROJECT:** Sarah is volunteering in the after-care program at Bridges Public Charter School, helping students with their homework and engaging with them in other activities such as coloring and playing outside. Bridges PCS, a DC public charter school for pre-K through grade 2, is an inclusive learning community that builds bridges of understanding, awareness and support by connecting children and families with a variety of different needs, cultures and backgrounds.



**JARED COHEN**  
**APRIL 16 / 8 NISAN**  
**PARENTS:** Andrew Cohen and Nicky Goren  
**TORAH PORTION:** Metzora  
**INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROJECT:** Jared is volunteering one day a week, working with first graders after school at Janney Elementary, and is participating in the Micah 7th grade philanthropy class.



**BEATRICE (BOUGIE) SEWELL**  
**APRIL 30 / 22 NISAN**  
**PARENTS:** Erica Perl and Michael Sewell  
**TORAH PORTION:** Acharei Mot  
**INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROJECT:** Bougie and three other students from this year's B'nai Mitzvah class formed a Jewish book group focusing on the subject of the Holocaust in literature. The book group is also creating a video to document their work and will be taking related field trips. In addition, Bougie has completed volunteer training at Rock Creek Park Horse Center, where she takes riding lessons, and is devoting time to caring for the animals there. And Bougie is active in Micah's 7th grade philanthropy study group and project.

## MAZAL TOV!

Richard Billingsley and Paul Greenberg, on their marriage

Rebecca Claster and Stephen Leroy, on the birth of their daughter, Miriam Rose Leroy

Peter Lovenheim, on the birth of his granddaughter, Maya Jane Adaki, daughter of Valerie Lovenheim Adaki and Oren Adaki

## CONDOLENCES

The Temple Micah community extends its deepest condolences to:

JANE ALEXANDER, on the passing of her mother, Judy Cohen

NANI COLORETTI, on the passing of her mother, Marielani Coloretti

ALISON HARWOOD AND RICHARD HARWOOD, on the passing of their father, Gilbert Harwood

PAUL JUDSON, on the passing of his father, Michael Bartlett Judson

DIANA SEASONWEIN, on the passing of her mother, Hilda Berner

May their memories be for a blessing.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBER!  
 Benjamin Kastan

## MAZAL TOV TO MICAH!

The temple's mortgage has been paid off.  
 Thanks, all, for helping meet this milestone!

## BERAHA'S BLACKBOARD

REMEMBERING EUGENE BOROWITZ:  
TEACHER, SCHOLAR, PROPHET

BY RABBI JOSH BERAHA

On January 22, Dr. Eugene Borowitz—the great theologian of liberal Judaism and teacher of generations of reform rabbis including Danny Zemel, Susan Landau, and me—died at his home in Stamford, Connecticut. He was 91. I remember fondly the first class I took with Dr. Borowitz—Modern Jewish Thought—for not only was his name legend and his work monumental, but the semester I studied with him was his 100th teaching at the College-Institute, to boot.

Just as Dr. Borowitz began the blessing for the study of Torah on our first day of class that 100th semester, which is how he began all of his classes, there was a knock on our door. He ignored the knock, finishing the blessing before ever so slowly turning to the sound. He seemed curious and maybe even a little suspicious. There, at the door, stood his daughter with a piece of cake to celebrate the memorable occasion. The moment he realized what was happening the sides of his lips curled slightly upward and he graciously thanked his daughter for the delivery. Though Dr. Borowitz made it clear that this semester would be no different from any of the others that preceded it throughout his long and illustrious career, it was a terrific moment to capture, for it made it clear that our already beloved teacher, whose very name loomed larger-than-life around the halls of our Reform seminary both for his brilliant work in the field of Jewish thought and his stern, demanding teaching style, had a soft side.

It is not an overstatement

to say that Dr. Borowitz was a prophet. His early work in the field of theology focused simply but ruthlessly on the need for Jews to concern themselves with theological thinking. He accused the leadership of the “purportedly Jewish religious community” of failing to see that theology is indeed related not only to our deepest longings as people but practical questions of how to run a community as well. In 1962 he wrote, “Judaism has throughout its history asserted that to be a member of the Jewish people was to participate in the Covenant with God and that to partake of Jewish ethnicity was simultaneously to serve God’s purpose in history.”

Dr. Borowitz was among an early group of American Jewish thinkers who knew that Judaism had more to give its people—and the world—than what was currently on offer from synagogues whose rabbinical leaders failed to ask questions of ultimate concern.

“What Judaism needs, then” he continued in that same 1962 article, “is not a theology, but theological concern, not theological uniformity but theological informedness.... [T]his would make possible the corrected vision we require—a sharp focus on the *religious* (emphasis added) component of Jewishness.”

More than 50 years later we are still trying to understand how to be *religious* Jews. Often I fear that we consider our lack of adherence to Jewish law or our disconnect from regular Jewish rituals makes us somehow less religious, as if religiosity was something to be measured.

Or we cede religiosity to those on the right of Reform Judaism. Or we see ourselves as *culturally* Jewish and relate only to Jewish peoplehood or Jewish ethics. And of course there are those who claim to be only spiritual and not at all religious.

And herein lies my claim that my teacher was a prophet. He understood *then* what a vibrant, living synagogue *now* needs to thrive: namely, a desire to move past our cultural and ethnic ties to be a people that embraces a power greater than us; a people that stands against the prevailing forces of individualism and consumption; a people that honors and exalts what we might call spiritual thinking, but what Dr. Borowitz simply called God.

In his words then, “the time has come when the synagogue must be saved for the religious Jew. The time has come when we must be prepared to let some Jews opt out so that those who remain in, or who come in, will not be diverted from their duty to God.” Harsh words, but my teacher was not one to shy away from what

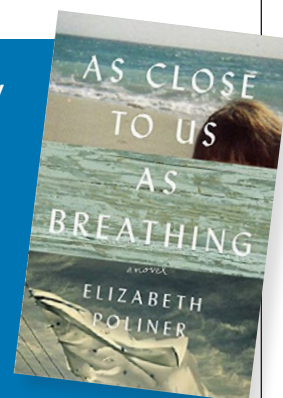


he believed—that as liberal Jews we may have personal autonomy, but that in no way releases us from our covenant with God.

I want our synagogues to embrace diversity, to be houses of prayer for all people. But in our comfortable, mostly secular lives, I want also to find space for deep theological concern. I want to devote time and focused energy to answering the questions that Dr. Borowitz encouraged his students to ask. How can we live our lives in relationship to a higher power? Is there a “Reality that qualitatively transcends” us and what does that Reality require of us? What do we love with all our beings and how does that shape who we are?

Dr. Borowitz will be missed greatly. As Rabbi Larry Hoffman said at his funeral, we know that he will be “observing the wake of God’s presence in the world.” May we have the courage and will to live up to what Dr. Borowitz taught us and fought for his whole life.

Micah member (and High Holy Day flautist) Elizabeth Poliner launches her second novel, *As Close to Us as Breathing*, in a reading at Politics and Prose bookstore on Saturday, March 19, at 6 pm. A multi-generational Jewish family saga about the long-lasting consequences of a tragic event, it has been described as “an unforgettable meditation on grief, guilt, and the boundaries of identity and love.”







Temple Micah wishes  
you health, happiness,  
peace, prosperity,  
and all the joys  
of Passover.

Chag Sameach!



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