

# Wine

## Saved from Holocaust, Czech Torahs Serve New Generations at Micah

BY SHELLEY GROSSMAN

FROM RABBI ZEMEL

BACK FROM ISRAEL,  
MAKING SENSE OF  
IT ALL

DEAR FRIENDS,

I'm back from Israel, thinking about Israel and trying to make sense of it all.

Spend enough time in Israel and the

sense of collective is inescapable. We *are* a people. In America, the primary manifestation of our peoplehood may be our religious faith. But in Israel, what comes through loud, long, and strong about our peoplehood is our diversity—

to begin with, Ashkenazic, Sephardic, Ethiopian. Ashkenazic can mean Eastern and Central European: Romanian, Polish, Russian, Hungarian and German. Ashkenazic also can have an Anglo flavor: British, Australian, South African and, that's right, American and Canadian. We can be Sephardic: Yemeni, Syrian, Iraqi, Persian. Also Sephardic with a French flavor: Moroccan, Algerian and even French. This is but a taste of who we are. And in Israel, we are all in a cacophonous uproar. It is a delight.

Returning to America after a lengthy stay in Israel can be a jolt. Returning to the American Jewish scene can be disconcerting and discouraging, especially when one reads of the doings on the college campuses where the anti-Israel BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement seeks to separate Zionism from Judaism. It is especially discouraging when one sees that, in some cases, it is young Jews who are leading these efforts.

Jewish complexity is just that: complex. I worry that we have not successfully imparted to a younger generation the subtle nuances of the Jewish experience.

TWO SILENT SURVIVORS of the Holocaust make their home in the Temple Micah sanctuary and inconspicuously attend every service. They are two of the temple's four Torah scrolls. After enduring the horrific ordeal of the Holocaust, they withstood a lengthy and arduous journey to end up at Micah where they quietly serve not only their intended purpose of carrying the sacred words, but also symbolize the persistence and endurance of the Jewish people.

Their anonymity ended at the Yom HaShoah service on May 4, when they were prominently displayed and Rabbi Zemel held a special ceremony for them.

Before World War II, they were owned and used by synagogues in what was then called Czechoslovakia. They were among 1,564 Torah scrolls from across Czechoslovakia rescued during World War II by the Jewish Museum of Prague and more than 20 years later sold by the Communist government to the Westminster Synagogue in London. That synagogue established the Memorial Scrolls Trust, which over the decades has made a permanent loan of about 1,000 of the scrolls to synagogues around the world.

"The Czech scrolls—held as a sacred responsibility by the Memorial Scrolls Trust—are a reminder of a community now destroyed, a moving testimony to Jewish resistance, and a remarkable tribute to the Jewish ability to revive and regenerate," the Trust's chair, Evelyn Friedlander, has written.



The story of how two of the scrolls ended up at Micah is part mystery, part saga.

The mystery concerns Micah's first Czech Torah, Scroll No. 1531, which was rescued from the synagogue in Ivancice, in southern Moravia, in 1942 when the town's remaining 150 or so Jews were deported to the Nazi death camps. Legend has it that Jews built the first Ivancice synagogue in 956, but recorded history of the Jewish settlement there begins in 1490. The Jewish community of Ivancice supported an important yeshiva at least through the 19th century although the Jewish population peaked

"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 FOCUS ON MEANING

By JODI ENDA

We start with a niggun, a prayerful, wordless melody.

We move into a d'var Torah, led by one of our three rabbis, followed by a reflective exchange about the teaching. Sometimes the conversation can be personal—involving, for instance, individual struggles with the notion of God. It also can be eye opening, as we grapple with complex philosophies or theologies. It always makes us think. It always helps us learn.



Believe it or not, Temple Micah's monthly board meetings are interesting. And enlightening. Even—dare I say?—fun.

Those are not descriptions usually uttered in connection with either the word "board" or "meeting." But the Temple Micah Board of Directors is no more typical than the congregation it represents.

Your 15 dedicated board members do much more than crunch numbers. In addition to keeping track of the nuts-and-bolts operations of the temple, we spend a lot of time contemplating Micah's role in American Judaism, in our city and in the world at large.

This congregation was founded during the civil rights movement, named during the Vietnam War and rooted in strong principles of equality, inclusion, peace, intellectual inquiry and community. Those core values continue to infuse everything we do.

So while the board certainly has to make sure we can pay the bills, it also engages the clergy on how best to move Micah forward on more substantive, interesting and challenging levels. We talk about how to break down silos within the congregation. We talk about making everything we do more soulful and spiritual. We talk about creating thick relations among our members. We talk about how to determine

which social action and social justice projects we should actively support in Washington, in the United States, in Israel and elsewhere. We talk about what Rabbi Zemel calls the Human Project, a subject that we—like many of you—still struggle to fully grasp.

We even talk about how to talk about the Human Project in a way that will make it more comprehensible to anyone who isn't Rabbi Zemel. (My definition: a way to use our Jewish values, teachings and ethics to help move all of humanity forward. We're not just repairing the world here; we're creating the future.)

Sometimes we spend fully half of our monthly meeting on ethereal, philosophical, difficult-to-fathom topics, such as whether God can be conceptualized or what it means to lead a full and meaningful life.

These exercises accomplish several things, all of which benefit Micah. On an immediate level, these discussions—along with our annual retreats—help board members better appreciate each other, deepen our relationships and make us a more cohesive group. On a deeper level, they help us experience and understand some of the thinking that motivates our rabbis. As a result, we not only work amazingly well together, but we are able to take part in some of the most important decisions that shape the course of this congregation.

We didn't always have that luxury.

When I joined the board six years ago, Larry Cooley was president. He was a wonderful leader and a genius at figuring out how Micah could do the things Micah does best on a shoestring budget. He also figured out that the shoestring was fraying—grants were drying up—and that we needed a long-term solution. He decided we should pay off the mortgage.

Mary Beth Schiffman, the next president, put Larry's idea into action, brilliantly wrapping a capital campaign inside a celebration of Micah's first 50 years. Under her guidance and with the gener-

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EDITORS' NOTE: The March/April issue of the *Vine* profiled several Micah teens who participated in the Religious Action Center (RAC)'s recent Social Justice Seminar on Capitol Hill. We regret incorrectly identifying the RAC on first reference.

# Micah Welcomes Matthew Green as Summer Rabbinical Fellow

BY CAROLE SUGARMAN

**MATTHEW GREEN**, a rabbinic candidate at the Hebrew Union College in New York, is scheduled to be Micah's summer fellow from May 29 to July 7. Green follows a long line of students hosted by Micah as part of the Tisch Rabbinical Fellowship Program, a mentoring and training initiative established by the college in 2006. Here's a snapshot of Green, who spoke about his background, interests, and what he hopes to learn at Micah:

**AGE:** 25

**HOMETOWNS:** Ann Arbor and East Lansing, Michigan. "An important detail, as small academic towns are my inborn model for a Jewish community. Small but mighty. Ann Arbor is kind of my shtetl."

**EDUCATION:** University of Michigan, majored in history and political science. Now a third year student at Hebrew Union College.

**CURRENT SCHEDULE:** After morning and early afternoon courses at rabbinical school, Green works at Congregation Beth Elohim in Brooklyn, where he teaches classes and b'nai mitzvah students. He also directs its program called Brooklyn Jews, a community of young Brooklynites looking for a

meaningful connection to Jewish life.

**BIGGEST INFLUENCES ON HIS JEWISH LEARNING:** "Growing up in the Midwest in places where there were not many Jews forced me to think about what being Jewish meant at a very early age. Then I studied history in college. My attraction to Judaism was rooted in my own personal history and my interest in Jews in world history more broadly. Those two things together really influenced me

to make the choice [to go to rabbinical school]. And I really didn't want to go to law school. Everybody said 'don't be a lawyer.' Both my parents are lawyers."

**UPCOMING FELLOWSHIP ROLES:** "The point is to largely shadow Rabbi Zemel and get a sense of how he crafted Micah into an innovative synagogue. I'll be leading some Shabbat services, and working on a High Holiday project. I hope to work with Rabbi Landau

on Next Dor, the 20s, 30s program."

**WHAT HE HOPES TO BRING TO MICAH:** "I think I will bring to the table a set of fresh eyes which is always good to have in a community, even one as well run as Micah. I'm really excited to work with Rabbi Landau and other staff members

to think about making Micah a place that is appealing for young Jews. I'm really interested in millennial Jews and where they fit into our synagogue. I'm

excited to see what young Jewish engagement in a major city might look like."

**OBSERVATIONS ON JEWISH MILLENNIALS:** "I don't think that they're any different from any other generation. But a big part of programming should be a low barrier to entry—free events, or events with food and/or an open bar. That appeals to a younger crowd. What may be unique about this generation is that there is a question about whether or not

they will join synagogues and whether they find relevancy in Jewish life. Membership in our traditional institutions do not serve a millennial sensibility."

**RECENTLY READ**

**BOOKS:** *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson, about how the criminal justice system is stacked against blacks, and *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, a letter from a black father to his son. They're part of a series of books members of Congregation Beth Elohim are reading for a program about the role of Jews in the broader conversation about race in America.

**OUTREACH TO THE LGBT COMMUNITY:** "In addition to school and my job at the temple, and directing Brooklyn Jews, over the past year, I've been working with another community [on a project] that I actually built. It's an LGBT minyan that meets once a month in people's houses and event spaces around Brooklyn. It grew into a large-scale event, with dinner and a service. It's really popular."

**HOBBIES:** "That's hard to answer. I feel like my life is all Judaism, all the time. I do enjoy running in the park, and I enjoy cooking."



## Scrolls FROM PAGE 1 ►

at only about 800 individuals in 1830.

Here's the intriguing part. According to the records of the Memorial Scrolls Trust, Torah No. 1531 was given on permanent loan to Temple Micah in 1966. But in 1966, a "Temple Micah"

didn't exist. The temple was named the Southwest Hebrew Congregation, had only recently found a stable home at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in Southwest DC, and didn't even have its own rabbi. How was it able to procure such a special Torah desired by many

long-established synagogues? Surviving members from the time have only vague memories of the Torah and can't relate any specifics of the story. Nonetheless, 50 years later, it usually sits comfortably in the second ark from the left, bearing

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## 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).

FRIDAY, MAY 6 • 6 PM

### High School Graduation Kabbalat Shabbat Service

Join us to celebrate the accomplishments of Alia Schechter and Rachel Snyderman as they graduate high school. Oneg at 6 pm; Service at 6:30 pm. With Youth Choir performance.

FRIDAY, MAY 13 • 6 PM

**Kabbalat Shabbat Service  
Honoring Cantor Meryl Weiner**  
Temple Micah pays tribute to Cantor Meryl Weiner for her 18 years of service. Oneg at 6 pm; Service at 6:30 pm.

FRIDAYS, MAY 13, JUNE 10, JULY 8 • 6 PM

### Young Family Shabbat

Every second Friday of the month, Rabbi Beraha leads a brief family service (best for ages 0–7) emphasizing music, movement, storytelling and fun. Stay and enjoy Shabbat dinner and arts and crafts. Dinner is \$5.00 per person; free for kids under 2. For details and to RSVP, email [youngfamilyshabbat@templemicah.org](mailto:youngfamilyshabbat@templemicah.org).

FRIDAY, MAY 20 • 7:30 PM

### Spring Community Shabbat Dinner

Following Kabbalat Shabbat services, stay for a festive Shabbat meal. Eat great food, meet new members and catch up with old friends. \$20 for those age 13 and over; children free. RSVP by May 13 to [www.templemicah.org](http://www.templemicah.org).

SATURDAY, JUNE 11 • 7 PM

### Festival of Dangerous Ideas on Shavuot

Our festival of Shavuot, which commemorates the receiving of Torah at Mt. Sinai, will focus on modern-day 'dangerous' and radical ideas to improve America, the Jewish world, and our own community.

SUNDAY, JULY 3 • Morning

### Temple Micah Honors Independence Day

We'll meet at the entrance to the Arlington National Cemetery Metro stop between 9:45 and 10 a.m. and walk to the Cemetery for a short service to honor our country and those who have given their lives in defense of freedom.

## INTERESTING SPEAKERS!

Temple Micah features two monthly lecture series—on Sunday morning and Wednesday noon. The Sunday discussions are on summer break, but please join us for one of our Wednesday Lunch & Learn sessions. For more details, go online to [www.templemicah.org](http://www.templemicah.org).

## 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.

### May 11 – Dr. Gail Povar on “Ethical Issues in Organ Donation”



When organ donation first became possible, few patients could benefit because there were so many medical complications. Today, organ transplantation is widely practiced, and as the medical environment has changed, the ethical challenges have as well. Old problems, such as what to do about the gap between demand and supply, continue to plague us. But new questions have also emerged. For example, is it permissible to keep a body “alive” in order to preserve organs, when the advance directive states “do not resuscitate”? We will discuss these issues, and include the important perspective of Jewish medical ethics.

### June 8 – Rabbi Daniel Zemel on “What Should a 21st Century Synagogue Be?”



Synagogues are simultaneously called *bet tefillah*, *bet midrash* and *bet Knesset*—or houses of prayer, learning and gathering. Rabbi Zemel wonders what these terms might mean today. Prayer, learning and social gathering are all means of discovery. We discover ourselves in prayer. We discover ourselves, our past, and the ideas of others in learning and we discover others in the world around us in social gathering. Come for lunch and join the conversation about new ways of conceiving of the synagogue as a place of discovery.

## Temple Micah Annual Membership Meeting

Sunday, June 5, 2016  
10 am–12 noon  
In the Social Hall

Watch your mail for details, coming soon. Agenda includes remarks from the rabbis and the president, the treasurer's report, and election of new board members.

## LESSONS FROM LANDAU

## ON MILLENNIALS AND NOSTALGIA

BY RABBI SUSAN LANDAU

Nostalgia seems to have hit my generation particularly hard. Facebook is full of “Throwback Thursday” and “Flashback Friday” posts, and the announcement of a *Friends* reunion, a remake of *Full House*, more Muppets movies, and even *Girl Meets World*, is met with as much hype as anything new on TV.

In March, when Next Dor (our program that connects Jewish adults in their 20s and 30s to each other, to Judaism, and to Temple Micah) spent a cozy Shabbat evening with Jewish singer/songwriter Michelle Citrin, we sat on the floor singing for hours. Michelle took requests for the many oldies in our songbook, and asked each of us to share the reasoning behind our requests. “Where does this song take you?” she asked, over and over again. “This is the song I used to sing on the phone with my high school

boyfriend!” “The minivan, driving with my parents, 1997.” “This takes me right back to summer camp, 2005.” Everyone was eager to share. Nostalgia, folks, is alive and well among the millennial generation.

I was just reading a blog post about nostalgia, that wistful feeling that tugs at our sentimentality as we think of the past—often, an idealized version of the past that fills us with yearning. Why, the writer asks, “is the most thoroughly modern, technologically savvy generation so backwards-looking? Why does nostalgia appeal to us so much? And, is it possible to innovate whilst constantly thinking about your next throwback?” These questions bring the conversation to Jewish life.

If nostalgia is such a characteristic pastime of millennials, it should be able to teach us something about how to engage this genera-

tion in Jewish life. But we need to apply it carefully. It would be an easy mistake simply to revive synagogue programs from the '90s and expect today's 20/30-something Jews to find them as endearing and adorable as they do *Fuller House*. While it seems a given that today's millennial Jews will feel warm and fuzzy while watching a *Saved By the Bell* tribute on late-night TV, there is no sense of nostalgia for the Jewish world of their parents' generation. As young adulthood stretches into the fourth decade of life, the arcs of our lives no longer fit the mold that has rooted the Jewish community since the 1950s. The synagogue has changed too much since then, and largely for the better. It is harder to make Jewish life relevant now, when we cannot count on automatic buy-in from the community. But our efforts can yield something richer as we build communities of choice. And I think nostalgia can help us figure out how.

Nostalgia is such a powerful emotion because it connects us to our lives on the two most essential levels. We can feel nostalgic for a moment in time, riding in the minivan, and immediately remember what it was like to see the world through the eyes of a child, as it zooms by the car window. Nostalgia connects us to ourselves. And nostalgia also reinforces the reality that we are all interconnected. We bond over common experiences, whether they are growing up watching *Growing Pains* or singing together under the stars at camp. There are few memories more enduring.

Tim Wildschut, Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Southampton,



studies nostalgia. From his assessments, we can learn how to use the power of nostalgia not as a prescription for living in the past, but as a guide for engaging millennials in Jewish life moving forward. Wildschut notes that “...nostalgia can have many positive effects: it increases a sense of social connectedness, it boosts self-esteem, it imbues life with meaning, it fosters a sense of continuity across time. These are all important psychological functions.” Is social connectedness, a life of meaning, and a sense of continuity across time, not what Judaism is all about?

We need to create communities that compel young Jews to feel connected to this sense of continuity across time. Eventually, our programs, organizations, and communities of choice will earn a sense of ownership from millennials. Nostalgia teaches us that, in the Jewish world, we cannot light the spark of ownership with yesteryear's Jewish offerings. Just as nostalgia makes us feel fiercely fond—and protective—of our formative memories, we can cultivate similar feelings for Jewish living.

Millennials, bring me your ideas and your passions. Be a part of Next Dor, and Temple Micah, for that matter. Together, we can uncover a Judaism that is relevant, and worthy of our protection as well as our warm and fuzzy feelings. If we can find new ways to channel nostalgic feelings of longing and belonging into Jewish living, we will create bonds that will outlive our generation.

Kabbalat Shabbat Service  
honoring

Cantor  
Meryl Weiner

for 18 Years of Service to our Community  
Friday evening, May 13, 2016

6:00 pm Oneg  
6:30 pm Kabbalat Shabbat Service



Temple Micah will be honoring Cantor Meryl Weiner for 18 years of service. Meryl has consistently brought beautiful and uplifting music to our worship, and has guided students of all ages in their journeys to become b'nai mitzvah and engage in life-long Jewish learning.

Please join us at this special service to celebrate her.

מִיכָה  
TEMPLE  
MICAH

## FOUR-YEAR-OLD SAVES FAMILY—A HOLOCAUST MEMORY

Eva Jacob, a long-standing Micah member, escaped Nazi Germany with her family on November 10, 1938, Kristallnacht (Crystal Night, also called the Night of Broken Glass), the disastrous pogrom against Jews in Germany and Austria, which signaled a dramatic increase in anti-Jewish persecution by the Nazis.

Jacob was four years old.

"Actually, by a kind of miracle, without really knowing what I was doing, I managed to save my whole family, present and future," she writes of that experience in a memoir that she and her family read at their Passover seders.

Many Micah members remember Jacob, an artist, through the charcoal drawings she made to document the construction of the temple's building on Wisconsin Ave., as well as portraits she painted of many members. Jacob and her husband, Fred, have become long-distance temple members. Several years ago, they moved to Milwaukee to be close to their daughter, a musician, and grandkids. Their son, Walter, also a Micah member, remains in the area. Unfortunately, Fred has descended into dementia and Jacob recently was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer.

When she was two years old, in 1936, increasingly anti-Jewish laws convinced her family to leave their home in Mannheim, Germany. Her father's brother and business partner did emigrate to the US to set up the family printing business in the New World. But unlike his brother, her father had retained his Czech citizenship, his family's country of origin. At that time, America had a much tighter quota for immigrants from Eastern Europe than from Germany, so he was denied entrance to the US and the family had to stay in Germany.

Life got worse for German Jews during the next two years that culminated in Kristallnacht. Restrictions were tightened and Jews, particularly men, were routinely arrested and deported. When the riots started on November 10, Jacob, her mother, grandmother and baby brother found shelter at the Jewish Hospital for the Deaf and Blind. Her father and grand-

father avoided arrest during the day "by mingling with people attending funerals in the Catholic cemetery. I don't know where they went that night," Jacob writes.

In the morning, Jacob's mother "bravely took the baby carriage, stuffed blankets in it to make it look as though she were just taking the baby out for a stroll, and walked across the Rhine bridge to our house," Jacob continues. "She went back into her wrecked house, windows and furniture smashed and every visible thing of value gone," and went straight to a smashed desk, unlocked a drawer and took out traveler checks the family would need if it got out of Germany, "and coolly made her way back to the hospital."

Meanwhile, the family had still not received its new passports—with a prominent "J" on the cover—required by a new law announced the previous month. The situation was dire, but luck was on the side of the family. The non-Jewish driver from the family printing business "who wanted to help us, managed to retrieve our passports from the post office and then took us to the train station."

The family got on a train to Switzerland, where her other grandparents lived, not knowing what would happen when they got to the border. But again, luck smiled on them when they disembarked.

Jacob concludes her narrative: "At the critical moment—the border official had all our papers—I spotted my grandfather on the other side of the barrier between Germany and Switzerland, so I did the most natural thing in the world: I ran straight across and into my dear grandfather's arms. We will never know whether the man holding our papers understood what was happening or was just a sentimental German watching a little blond girl who loved her grandfather. He asked my frightened parents, 'Is that your little girl?'"

"When they said yes, the man said, 'Well, you'd better go and look after her!' He stamped our papers without looking at them, handed them back to my father and said, 'Have a nice vacation!' And that's how we got out of Germany."

### Scrolls FROM PAGE 3 ►

a brass plate with its number and other information.

A lot more is remembered about Torah No. 360, which was rescued—also in 1942—from Kolin in central Bohemia. Kolin was a major Jewish center in Czechoslovakia with records showing Jews living there in the 14th century. It also had a prominent yeshiva and remained a stronghold of the Czecho-Jewish

movement until World War II. At least six Torah scrolls were rescued from Kolin and now reside in synagogues in Arizona, California, England and Israel, in addition to the Micah scroll in DC.

Micah's role in the story began in 1983, when Micah members Jerry and Vivian Liebenau decided to visit their son Jonathan who was living in London. Jerry had been president of Micah from 1979–81 and Vivian (who died

in 2013) was slated to become president later in 1983. They had been told that additional Czech Torahs were available from the Memorial Scrolls Trust. As Liebenau recalls, their first challenge was finding Westminster Synagogue, which—like many European synagogues—was located anonymously in a large apartment building.

"When we arrived, we were ushered into a reception area where we were

asked to fill out forms in which Vivian clearly established that she was an official of Temple Micah," Liebenau said. They then stood in a long line. "Eventually, we were taken to a warehouse that contained only empty shelves. They told us all of the Torahs had already been distributed." Frustrated, the Liebenaus completed their vacation and returned home empty handed.

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# MICAH TELEPHONE BUDDIES MOVES FORWARD

BY JEANNE MALLET ON BEHALF OF THE AGING TOGETHER COMMITTEE

EVERYONE NEEDS a buddy to talk with from time to time, especially people living alone, perhaps far away from family. So the Aging Together and Hineni committees are partnering in a program they call "Micah Telephone Buddies" to connect Micah members who would like to make and receive friendly regular phone calls. Hineni volunteers already were calling Micah members during recuperation

from illness or an operation. But those contacts generally were temporary. Micah Telephone Buddies call each other regularly for as long as both want to continue.

So far, the program has matched five buddy pairs. Two people signed up just to make calls and are matched with buddies in a

position only to receive calls.

The three other buddy pairs are exchanging calls and say they are enthusiastic about the program. "I've made a new good friend I might not have otherwise known," said buddy Arlene Brown.

The program has at least one inter-generational

friendship. Long-time Micah member Sid Booth says the match between him and younger member John Sherry "has been a joy." In addition to their conversations, Booth and wife Elka met Sherry and wife Marisha and their children at a recent Young Family Shabbat service. Sherry says, "I enjoy communicating with Sid. Our conversations have a lot of value

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## President's Column FROM PAGE 2 ►

ous contributions of our members, we raised enough money to burn the mortgage early this year.

For nearly three years, I have been the beneficiary of my predecessors' superb leadership. While the board still has to think about money—how to raise it and how best to budget it—the constant pressure has eased. Paying off the mortgage saves us \$100,000 a year in interest, almost exactly what we previously received in grants for staffing and programs. Our new Innovation Fund should give us money for exciting fresh endeavors, the kinds of experimentation that make Micah a trailblazer among congregations. And, eventually, our Endowment Fund will give us added financial security well into the future.

To be sure, we still need your annual pledges and donations to pay expenses

large and small. But we can breathe a bit easier now, and that enables the board to be fully immersed in the real business of Temple Micah. Meaning. Not money.

As my term on the board and as president draws to a close in June, I realize I will miss this chapter of my time at Temple Micah. It has been enriching, educational and, yes, meaningful. It has helped me grow as a person and as a Jew. It has been a lot of work, sure, but also a lot of fun.

I am grateful to the congregation for its support, to my predecessors for their advice, to so many board members and other volunteers for their enormous contributions and to the staff members who do so much for the temple every day. I treasure the time I have spent working with Cantor Meryl Weiner, Music Director Teddy Klaus and Executive Director Rachel

Gross. I am proud to have helped hire Rabbis Josh Beraha and Susan Landau, two outstanding additions to an already extraordinary team.

There are no words that adequately thank Rabbi Zemel for his leadership, partnership and friendship. During more than three decades here, he has made and continues to make Micah what it is: a place full of intellectual stimulation; of personal and communal searching and growth; of thought and prayer and boldness. It is a place for creativity and mistakes, for celebrations, for grieving, for learning, for Jewish journeys, for individual and collective exploration.

It is a place to forge thick relations and advance the Human Project.

We start with a niggun, a prayerful, wordless melody.

What it means is up to us.

## Scrolls FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►

Months passed and then out of the blue, Nancy Elisburg—temple president at the time—got a call that a Torah was waiting to be picked up at Dulles Airport. "I got the call not because I was president but because I lived not far from Dulles," Elisburg reckons.

She drove to the Dulles cargo area and confronted customs officials. As she continues the story: "They asked

me what was in the box. I said, 'A Torah scroll.' They said: 'What's a Torah?' I said, 'A religious object used in Jewish services.' Blank stares. Then I said, 'It's the Bible.' More blank stares. Finally, one of the agents said, 'Is it something that is used at a Bar Mitzvah? I went to a Bar Mitzvah, once.' I said, 'Yes.' They said, 'OK,' and helped me put it in my car."

Elisburg took the box to the temple, where it was

opened. "It was covered with [plastic packing] peanuts."

A look at the websites of several synagogues that have a Czech scroll describe a formal ceremony to receive the scrolls. One temple has pictures of a solemn parade of men in dark suits with the scroll carried under a chupah into the synagogue. Micah's scroll received a much more informal welcome.

But that was not the end of the story. The Torah that

arrived at Dulles Airport was in very bad condition and had to be sent to a sofer (a Torah scribe) to be fixed and made ritually usable. "It was a short time after I arrived," Rabbi Zemel recalled. "To make it kosher took a lot of work."

Eventually, the Torah came back in good shape. Now it sits in the farthest left ark and, for more than 30 years in this, its second life, it continues to carry its sacred ancient task.



## TZEDAKAH

### AUCTION FUND

IN MEMORY OF  
Lotte Povar, by Shellie Bressler

### ENDOWMENT FUND

IN HONOR OF  
Paul Greenberg and Rick Billingsley,  
on the occasion of their marriage,  
by Mark and Cecilia Weinheimer

IN MEMORY OF  
Lotte Povar, by Dan and  
Laurie Brumberg

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Vivian Liebenau, by Harold and  
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IN MEMORY OF  
Lilyan Barchoff, by Jared  
Blum and Kate Kiggins  
Hilda Berner, by Livia and  
David Bardin, Marilyn Paul  
Irene Chait, by Marilyn Paul  
Ruth Goldberg, by Nancy Raskin  
Gilbert Harwood, by Shellie  
and Andy Bressler, Kate  
Kiggins and Jared Blum  
Irving Karp and Abe Schwartz,  
by Herb and Sharon Schwartz

Glen Kiggins, by Kate  
Kiggins and Jared Blum  
Lotte Povar, by David and Lucy  
Asher, Lora Ferguson, Robyn Garnett  
Natalie Westreich, by the  
Westreich family

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IN MEMORY OF  
Julian Meer, by Janice Meer  
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IN HONOR OF  
Judy and Jack Hadley, Jeff Passel,  
and Louise and Danny Zemel,  
by Melinda and Doug Soffer  
Rabbi Herb Schwartz and  
Harriett Stonehill, by the  
Tuesday Wise Aging Group

IN MEMORY OF  
Carley Broder, by Betsy Broder  
and David Wentworth  
Gilbert Harwood, by David  
and Martha Adler  
Kate Mayblum, by Harriett Stonehill  
Lotte Povar, by David  
and Barbara Diskin

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and Harlan Sherwat  
Lotte Povar, by Steve Rockower  
and Ann Sablosky, Jim Roumell  
and Debbie Billet-Roumell  
Samuel Iker, by Jean Iker

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IN MEMORY OF  
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Bloom, by Elizabeth Odoroff

### LIBRARY FUND

IN MEMORY OF  
Sari Glasser Erlanger, by  
Wendy Erlanger

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Geico Match for Helene Boroch  
Todd Goren  
Julie Granof  
Melamed Foundation  
Lisa and David Pansegrouw  
Vanguard Match for Iris Barnett

IN HONOR OF  
Suzanne Griffith and Ed Lazere's  
service, by Rita and Gary Carleton

IN MEMORY OF  
Michael Judson, by Stacey Braverman,  
Arlyn Riskind, Ann Sablosky, the  
Sherry family, Beverly Yett  
Lotte Povar, by Harry  
and Jessica Silver  
Regine Ransohoff, by Jim Roumell  
and Debbie Billet-Roumell  
Humayin Shinwaru, by  
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Julien Mezey, by Marilyn Paul  
Sanford Lazar, by Learita Scott  
Lillie Page, by William Frank Page  
Fred Sugarman, by Carole Sugarman

### RABBI LANDAU'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

IN HONOR OF  
Rabbi Landau's leading shiva for  
Hilda Berner, by Diana Seasonwein  
Rabbi Landau's winter  
classes, by Rich Lehmann

### RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

IN MEMORY OF  
Hilda Berner, by Sid and Elka Booth  
Judy Cohen, by Shellie  
and Andy Bressler  
Gilbert Harwood, by Sid and  
Elka Booth, Susie Blumenthal  
Milton Mortman, by Rhoda,  
Jerome, and Howard Mortman  
Lotte Povar, by Helen Rea  
and Robert Sugar  
Pearl Obrand, by Lorri Manasse  
and Russ Misheloff  
Dorothy Ward, by Dennis  
Ward and Lynne Landsberg

### SOCIAL ACTION FUND

IN HONOR OF  
Gail Povar and Larry, Justin and  
Alexandra Bachorik, by Jonathan  
Moreno and Leslye Fenton  
Shira Zemel and Noah  
Westreich taking Machon  
Micah students to the L'Taken  
Seminar, by Lynne Landsberg

IN MEMORY OF  
Gilbert Harwood, by Sara  
Morningstar and Phil Katz  
Louise Mach, by Dan Mach  
and Kimberly Parker  
Lotte Povar, by Jonathan Moreno  
and Leslye Fenton, Cecelia  
and Mark Weinheimer  
Regine Ransohoff, by Josh  
and Annie Fixler

### THE RABBI DANIEL GOLDMAN ZEMEL FUND FOR ISRAEL

IN MEMORY OF  
Virginia Aines and Stephanie Aines  
Hadley, by Judy and Jack Hadley

## Thank You, Ellen Sommer, Judaica Shop Maven

Anyone who over the past decade has purchased or admired an item from the beautiful Judaica craft collection displayed in Temple Micah's lobby has Ellen Sommer to thank. Sommer retired on May 1 as Judaica Shop tzar.

"Ellen has performed a great service to the community for many years," says Jodi Enda, temple president. "She has put great thought and effort into maintaining a beautiful, well-stocked shop, showcasing pieces from international and Temple Micah artists." Sommer inherited the job from fellow member Jennifer Gruber, whose hard work set a high standard. Like her predecessor, Sommer has handled all aspects of the business: selecting, buying, displaying and selling the merchandise. All proceeds from the Judaica collection support the temple.

Sommer has fond memories of retailing from her earliest years. She grew up learning the trade in her grandfather's large clothing store in northern New Jersey, and retail may be "in her blood," she jokes. Even so, there was a lot to learn about the niche market of Judaica merchandise. At Rabbi Zemel's suggestion, she began purchasing increasingly from Israeli artists. Virtually all items not made by members are designed and produced by Israeli craft makers and imported through wholesalers or directly. "This has made it more meaningful for me," says Sommer, who has cherished her role as a "way to support the temple, and to support Israel at the same time."

Sommer has been a ubiquitous presence on Sunday mornings, at the annual Hanukkah fair and at other holidays. She



acknowledges that the shop is a team effort and extends special thanks to Marcia Silcox and Wendy Erlanger who have assisted her for many years.

Her favorite duties have been helping Micah's younger customers select their favorite tallit for their own bar or bat mitzvah, or choose gifts for a parent or sibling.

She'll miss the creativity of the job and the chance to interact with a wide range of congregants, she says, but she looks forward to remaining active in the Micah community—and, now, sleeping in on an occasional Sunday morning.



# B'NAI MITZVAH



## MIA KRISTENSEN

**MAY 7 / 29 NISAN**

**PARENTS:** Sunny Kaplan and Peter Kristensen  
**TORAH PORTION:** Kedoshim

**INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROJECT:** Mia is putting together a Jewish vegetarian cookbook and plans to create an online resource with the recipes, the reasons for eating a plant-based diet, and why it is especially meaningful in the Jewish tradition.



## BENJAMIN FLEURENCE

**MAY 14 / 6 IYYAR**

**PARENTS:** Olivier and Rachael Fleurence  
**TORAH PORTION:** Emor

**INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROJECT:** Benji volunteered at PEP, a local parenting organization. He participated in the "Can Do Kids Fair" in March to teach young children aged 4-10 bike repair activities such as changing punctured tires. In addition, Benji is researching the influence of Judaism on a number of Jewish show-biz personalities.



## SADIE WYATT

**MAY 21 / 13 IYYAR**

**PARENTS:** Jennifer Steinhauer and Ed Wyatt  
**TORAH PORTION:** Behar

**INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROJECT:** Sadie participated in a Holocaust-themed book club and the philanthropy project for her independent study with other 7th graders.

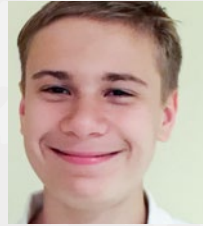


## ANDREW (DREW) WARNER

**MAY 28 / 20 IYYAR**

**PARENTS:** Gail and Seth Warner  
**TORAH PORTION:** Bechukotai

**INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROJECT:** Drew is reading about Israel and its history in preparation for a family trip the Warners are planning this summer.



## MARSHALL COOPERMAN

**JUNE 4 / 27 IYYAR**

**PARENTS:** Alan Cooperman and Martina Vandenberg  
**TORAH PORTION:** Bamidbar

**INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROJECT:** Marshall is reading books on Jewish history, including works by Amos Elon, Hannah Arendt and Benny Morris.



## ALEXANDER (ALEXI) LÁSZLÓ WEINBERG

**JUNE 11 / 5 SIVAN**

**PARENTS:** Jeremy Weinberg and Sophia Coudenhove-Kalergi  
**TORAH PORTION:** Nasso

**INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROJECT:** After considering various projects involving cooking for his study project, Alexi decided instead to explore Israeli-Palestinian relations.



## LUKE COMFORT-COHEN

**JUNE 18 / 12 SIVAN**

**PARENTS:** Lisa B. Cohen  
Susan Comfort

**TORAH PORTION:** Beha'alotekha  
**INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROJECT:** Luke is creating a film about the experience of studying for a bar or bat mitzvah at Temple Micah.

## MAZAL TOV!

Dan and Mimi Steinberg, on their marriage

## CONDOLENCES

The Temple Micah community extends its deepest condolences to:

THE FAMILY OF SANDY COHEN, who served as Temple Micah's interim administrator in 2009

GAIL POVAR, on the passing of her mother, Lotte B. Povar

STAN SOLOWAY, on the death of his father, Arnold Soloway

PAULA WOLFSON STEVENSON, on the loss of her mother, Irene Ruth Wolfson

STEVEN WEISMAN, on the death of his uncle, Conrad Platt

DAVID AND CAROLE WILSON, on the loss of their daughter-in-law, Samantha Kamionka Wilson

May their memories be for a blessing.

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Jessie Regunberg and Garrett King

### Telephone buddies FROM PAGE 7 ►

for me as a younger adult as I am able to learn a lot from his wisdom." They both hope Micah Telephone Buddies flourishes and attracts more people. Sherry adds, "Taking the time to have a conversation with another person really helps put the world into better perspective than just relying on social media feeds."

The Micah Telephone Buddies program is eager to add new members and facilitate new friendships. If you are interested in knowing more, please email [phonebuddies@templemicah.org](mailto:phonebuddies@templemicah.org) or phone the office at (202) 342-9175. You may also sign up on the paper form in the Micah lobby.

## More Wise Aging Groups in the Works

By Harriette Kinberg

Last fall's Wise Aging program was so successful the Aging Together gang is doing it again. Wise Aging is a project of the Wise Aging Committee, which in turn is part of Temple Micah's Aging Together Team.

In addition to continuing the three cohorts that met over the winter, the organizers are working out arrangements to establish perhaps two new 8-12 person groups that generally will meet once every week or two, for two hours, over a 4-6 month period. Registration will be on a first come-first served basis. A questionnaire has been posted on the Wise Aging page of the temple's website where those interested can indicate their day/time preference. A Wise Aging flyer was also mailed to all temple members last month.

There is no charge, but all participants must buy the book, *Wise Aging: Living with Joy, Resilience and Spirit*, which costs \$16.95. To establish and maintain rapport within the groups and develop a safe, nourishing community, participants are asked to commit to regular attendance.

The initial Wise Aging series involved 32 Micah

members and four non-members who met in 12-person cohorts for nine sessions at the temple. Several Micah members served as cohort facilitators after completing training led by the Institute for Jewish Spirituality. Using the Wise Aging book and other materials, participants were guided in reflective work that enabled them to come to new understandings about their lives, selves and values.

An online evaluation of the program yielded such glowing reviews as:

"I think I am able to accept my own aging a little better and see it in a more positive light."

"I learned of my own resistance, acceptance, and even anticipation of the end of life."

"The discussions allowed me to look 'behind the veil' and consider next steps with people I learned to trust."

"Our tradition offers much wisdom; the course empowers us to share some of our own."

To learn more, visit the Wise Aging page of the temple's website, email [wiseaging@templemicah.org](mailto:wiseaging@templemicah.org), or leave a message at the temple office for a facilitator to call you.

### Rabbi's Message FROM PAGE 1 ►

rience. To be Jewish, as I have said many times, is to be a participant in a sprawling (and sometimes brawling) peoplehood. Mordecai Kaplan called us a civilization—a useful term. As a civilization, we embody all the trappings of a broad and varied culture, including language, literature, art, music and much more. Kaplan called them, collectively, "folkways." My children's Israeli high school teacher used the example of cookbooks. "What religion has a cookbook?" he would ask. We have many varieties of Jewish cuisine and countless Jewish cookbooks. Religions don't have cuisines. Civilizations and cultures do.

Zionism is simply the word we adopted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to refer to Jewish peoplehood and its connection to its homeland.

Supporters of the BDS movement do not understand this. To them, Israel is an illegitimate country that should not exist.

This is not only an anti-Israel and anti-Zionist position, it is the newest brand of anti-Semitism. As my colleague, Rabbi John Rosove of Los Angeles, has written, "It denies the right of the Jewish people to define itself."

I am proud to call myself a Zionist and I rejoice in Israel's many achievements. Having said this, I also admit there is much in Israel to criticize today.

I cringe and weep at many of the policies of the Netanyahu government. I am pained beyond measure by the ascendancy of a militant racist Zionism that wraps itself in the garb of Jewish religiosity. I cannot allow myself to be passive. There is no time. "The day is short," says Pirke Avot.

I feel deeply that as Reform Jews we have an unceasing, unrelenting and towering obligation to support those Israelis who devote themselves every day to the creation of the kind of Israel that we can love. Many Israelis are doing God's work to bring to fruition the words enshrined

in Israel's Declaration of Independence, to create a modern Jewish state "based upon freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel."

There is so much in Israel to love:

The award-winning institute Givat Haviva, founded in 1948, promotes dialogue and creating shared society between Jews and Arabs all over Israel.

Shaharit, a self-styled new think tank that advances a compelling vision of the common good and works tirelessly to break down the silos in Israeli society.

The Israel Religious Action Center, a project of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, advocates on a wide variety of issues. Their motto: "We don't take no for an answer."

They all need and deserve our help.

Our Jewish imperative is to support these heroes in their endeavors. Temple Micah's Israel fund exists to do just that. I would love to see our community send \$10,000 to \$20,000 a year to Israeli orga-

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE ►

## BERAHA'S BLACKBOARD

## JEWISH RELIGIOSITY AS A CREATIVE FORCE

BY RABBI JOSH BERAHA

Recently a congregant shared with me that the Torah service—and maybe even our relationship to the Torah itself—feels to her like idolatry. It might sound a little bizarre, but she's not the only one who thinks so. I pointed her to an early essay from the great Jewish thinker Martin Buber who takes up this issue in his essay "Jewish Religiosity." Buber shows how once upon a time our Torah was indeed "viewed as a statue, a sum of prescriptions, formalistically circumscribed by the priest, dialectically spun out by the scholar, and always directed toward the narrow, the rigid, the un-free—thwarting instead of promoting living religiosity." Buber raises an important if not heretical question for us to consider: could our commitment to the Torah choke instead of promote our relationship with God and our continued evolution as a people?

The Torah is one such example in "Jewish Religiosity" that highlights Buber's notion of religion versus religiosity. As Buber explains it, religion is the organizing principle, and religiosity the creative. "Religion wants to force us into a system, stabilized for all time," he wrote, while

"religiosity starts anew with every young person." "Religion means passivity—an acceptance of the handed down command," while "religiosity means activity—the entering into relation with the absolute." Religion is preservation and religiosity is renewal.

The Jewish project, for Buber, is ultimately a balance between these two forces, but religiosity is always necessary to move the project forward, to keep Judaism flexible and alive. Thus, in the example of the Torah we see that what began as an act of creative storytelling morphed into an inflexible, codified text but was later infused with added layers of legend and lore that kept the stories animated.

Consider another example from our history—the ancient Israelites' sacrificial cult, an original means of communing with the Divine.

Buber writes, "Israel's sacrificial cult may have originated in the primitive need for a living communion with God... however, the symbol became a substitute. The sacrificial cult was so elaborated and codified that in every phase of his life, at every moment of his destiny, man had at his disposal a prescribed sacrifice for establishing a communion with God;

but this communion no longer consisted of anything but the sacrifice."

What started with a real, active desire to connect with God slowly became merely a stable, conditioned act devoid of meaning. When Buber writes, "the symbol became a substitute," he's saying that the people were conditioned, sacrifice after sacrifice, until the priests stood only for preservation and power. The true intention behind the act was gone. Later in our story the prophets—Micah as an example—took up the cause of sounding the siren against empty sacrifices. They championed Buber's notion of religiosity, that is, a desire to be active, creative, to renew the original meaning behind the sacrifices.

Thinking about our community in light of Buber I see our congregation as a force for religiosity; we emphasize an active, evolving Judaism along with our inherited organizing principles. As we at Micah often say, "We are unafraid to break the mold... to us, Reform is a verb." What a beautiful community to serve!

But sometimes I wonder: As we repeat over and over, "If it's not broken, break it," is there not a risk in this very



line becoming a mere symbol? What if our desire to create something new becomes our supreme organizing principle above all else? If so, then our commitment to creativity, paradoxically, could become our undoing. Within our inherited framework, how do we stay fresh, creative, full of a thirst to move the Human Project forward?

Soon we will celebrate Shavuot, a holiday that marks z'man matan torateinu, the season of "the giving of Torah." As we approach this festive holiday I ask: How can our desire to break the mold continue to be genuine and unconditioned? How can we not let our drive for creativity become an idol? How can we move beyond routine to freely imagine so that we are, in Buber's words, "shaken to the very core by God's mystery," and therefore compelled to act in a truly new way? How does our story stay current, alive?

Chag Shavuot Sameach. Wishing you a joyous Shavuot.

## Rabbi's Message FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►

nizations that work on behalf of a shared society, religious tolerance and social justice for all Israelis, Jewish and Arab. When we shy away from this struggle, we leave the field open to those whose Zionist vision is radically different from our own. As we know, they, too, are there.

We have much work to do, not least of which is to encourage and support our students to experience Israel through

summer programs and semesters of high school study. We have an obligation to equip them with the knowledge and tools they will need when they reach the university environment. Many of the most outstanding of these offerings in Israel are sponsored by our own Reform Movement. Please contact me for information.

In this regard, we are in the process of putting together our own Temple Micah Birthright Israel trip, to take place in December, for college students and those

up to age 25. Birthright trips are free of charge. This Micah trip will be led by our very own Ronit Zemel. If you or someone you know is interested, please contact the Micah office.

Finally, I am putting together a March 2017 Berlin-Israel trip. This trip will feature three days in Berlin and then a week of exciting, modern Israel. Again, please be in touch for more information.

It is good to be back.  
Shalom,  
Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel





### TEMPLE MICAH'S 2016 SPRING AUCTION

There were balloons,  
pompoms and a lot of  
smiles at the popular  
event, which raised  
more than \$75,000  
for important  
temple programs.



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