מיכה TEMPLE MICAH

Vine

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FROM RABBI ZEMEL

FINDING OUR OWN PATH TO KNOWING WHAT BEING JEWISH MEANS IN OUR DAILY LIVES

DEAR FRIENDS,

I have been using these columns to try to work out my Jewish theology. The isolation of the pandemic has for reasons that I cannot fully understand pushed me to dig more deeply into my innermost thoughts. But my ruminations never feel fully adequate.

The more I engage in this quest, the more I realize, as I suggested in my last column, that we really do lack the language to say what we believe. Our inherited way of thinking about Judaism, that is, our inherited language, does us little good. Let us begin by abandoning the phrase "good Jew," as in, "Who is a good Jew?" What can it possibly mean that someone is a better Jew than someone else? Is being a Jew akin to being a trombone player or a third baseman, pursuits in which certain skills make one person demonstrably better than another?

We all know what people mean when using terms such as "good Jew." They are referring to traditional and strict measures of observance: keeping kosher, saying daily prayers, forgoing electricity on Shabbat. Do I want these to be my measures? Do I want Judaism to be measured in such a way at all? Ridiculous, say I. We will chart a new path.

Our Jewish heritage is a vast culture encompassing ethics, ethnic behaviors and rules, myriad arts (literature, music, visual), philosophy and theol-

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Nothing – and Everything — Prepared David Skorton for the Challenge of Covid-19

By Fran Dauth

You may recognize David Skorton, president and CEO of the Association of American Medical Colleges, from the Temple Micah YouTube videos on Covid-19 in the past year.

You may also know he was the 13th Secretary of the Smithsonian, is a board-certified cardiologist, a president emeritus of Cornell University, a past president of the University of Iowa and a member of the National Academy of Medicine.

What may surprise you is that nothing in his impressive career fully prepared him for the pandemic.

"Nothing in my experience prepared me completely for the enormous disruptions wrought by Covid-19: not only the terror of the virus and its lethality, but the economic dislocation, the personal fears and the isolation necessitated by social distancing and other measures.

"This resulted for many of us in tremendous anxieties, sorrow at the inability to be with our loved ones – including those critically ill – and, underlying it all, feelings of helplessness," he said in

response to questions from The Vine.

In particular he was asked whether two events that occurred while he was president of Cornell University were in any way helpful in thinking about the pandemic. Those events were the suicides of three students who jumped to their deaths within four weeks, and

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HONORING TEDDY KLAUS

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

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

LET'S HELP, LET'S ACT – THAT'S WHO WE ARE

By Joshua Berman

In the day-to-day rhythms of my home life, I often do the last dog walk of the evening for our small Labradoodle while my wife tries to convince our teenagers to turn off the screens and get some sleep.

Some of you have seen the dog wander in the background during various Zoom Shabbats. I think, like many of us, he loves hearing Debra play guitar so he saunters just a bit closer when services begin.

By the end of the night, his general attitude is: "Leave me alone and let me sleep. I do not need another walk."

He doesn't win that battle.

During Covid, I have taken the evening walk as a time to call my parents in Los Angeles. We catch up on the world news (usually grim), on recently binge-watched TV, family drama, any exercise we've managed to sneak in, of course, Covid and our work. It's become such a perfect end of my day, always gives me a smile, and, I hope, is one of the so-called "Covid silver linings " that don't go away.

In one of these recent talks, my mom passed along a story shared by her senior rabbi, David Wolpe, in Los Angeles. Apologies to Rabbi Wolpe if I don't get the story quite right (knowing my mom, I know she got it spot-on and any error is fully mine).

But the gist went something like this: An older man, feeling the weight of the world on his shoulders, had a conversation with God. In it, he ran through the litany of the problems facing our existence, one after another. He held his head in his hands and bemoaned our ever-warming climate and encroaching seas. He lamented the state of affairs for refugees on the U.S. border, in Myanmar and elsewhere. He raised his voice about the terrible state of affairs regarding racial injustice. He pounded his fists about how Covid has ravaged human life and the inequitable impact on certain populations. He muttered about the ever-growing wealth gap and seemingly unsolvable challenges to our education system. The man pleaded with God, begged in anguish and finally cried out, "Why, oh, why don't you send someone to help us?"

After a moment of silence, God replied, "I did. I sent you."

I've thought about that story every day since I heard it. The message couldn't be clearer: We need to help ourselves and each other to repair the world. Our world.

Sure, as we slowly emerge from Covid, we will begin to dip our toes into some of our missed pleasures. Some of us will go to restaurants. Others may cheer for the Nationals in person. We may choose to travel, shop or even pray in person like we used to do. But as important as each of those missed joys is, equally important are the ways we go about helping those around us.

Indeed, now is the moment for us to be as unselfish as possible. We as a Micah community and as individuals have always reached outward to help others. If there is something that defines us, it's our generosity and care for the broader global community, regardless of religion or geography. But now is a moment for us to try to go even further. Can we each dig just a bit deeper and do just a little bit more in these precarious times? Can we each lean into causes that motivate us to act?

I know the answers to those questions are a resounding "YES!" Some of our community members will rally around the women in need at the Micah House. The Sukkat Shalom team, which heroically created a new world and home for the Rasoolis, already has turned its efforts to finding ways to help on our southern border. Our 6th graders no doubt will work even harder (with their ebullient smiles of course) to collect undergarments for the needy. Many of us will march and march and march again to express our outrage at the cycle of repeating racial injustice, bias towards Asian Americans and violence and discrimination towards women.

But let's take this moment to stretch and to build on those efforts. When you get to the end of this column, before turning the page, take a moment and begin your internal dialogue about what you are going to do to help. Or partner up with a Micah pal and tackle a project together. Perhaps we can challenge ourselves to find ways to combat climate change, not only on the personal level (shrinking our carbon footprints?) but also with a broader reach by putting sweat equity into organizations and global initiatives. Or maybe volunteer with an organization working to improve educational opportunities in underserved communities, exacerbated even more so by the pandemic.

As you have heard me say before, this Micah community is filled with leaders. We find ways to rally our friends and help others. That's who we are. Let's help. Let's act.

She Studied Business Administration But Her Family's Mix of Traditions Led Her to Rabbinical School

By Fran Dauth

Healy Slakman, the rabbinic intern at Temple Micah this summer, says she was "born to a couple of restless wandering Jews" without a bit of exaggeration. Her early childhood was in San Francisco, her youth in St. Louis, her teenage years in Atlanta.

But there was one anchor. "Amidst the moving and readjusting, a constant in my life was spending each summer in Ramla, Israel," she said. That's where her father's family, Tunisian Jews, live.

Her description of life there is spellbinding.

"We moved through life according to Jewish time. Every day passed in relation to Shabbat—a climactic, intentional, and organized existence. Jewish practice forced us to come together, celebrate, think and commemorate.

"I loved spending Friday nights in my grandparents' apartment, the hot air fragrant with spices and heavy with song. We kept Shabbat — cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents sleeping in every corner of the tiny apartment. I looked forward to going with my grandfather and the other men to the Tunisian synagogue with chickens out-front. I anticipated the moment when I would stand beneath his tallit—arms and blessings wrapped tightly around me."

Slakman, 26, a student at the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, says her family carried the customs and traditions they practiced each summer to all of their different homes in the U.S.

"Melodies, practices, dishes, celebrations and superstitions" learned in Israel "became infused with flavors of my mom's midwestern Ashkenazi upbringing and grounded us," she said of the mixture of Sephardic and Ashkenazi traditions woven into the fabric of her family's life.

The "two realities" of her Ashkenazi and Sephardic heritage "ultimately pushed me to seek out different Jewish experiences and communities, " she said, adding, "I stumbled upon Jewish youth group and eventually summer camp. Singing the same words I knew from summers in Israel, but with different melodies and accents drew me in.

"I learned to play guitar because I wanted to hang out with the cool and magnetic song leaders. Long story, kind of short, this is how I started getting jobs in the Jewish world."

Those jobs began while Slakman was a business major at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Fla., where she was involved in Hillel and took on a number of roles at a local synagogue, including teaching Hebrew school and serving several years as a cantorial soloist. After graduation, she worked at a wealth management firm and a synagogue.

"Both the rabbi and the financial advisor I worked for were strong, ambitious and visionary leaders. But the rabbi also operated and made decisions from a place of deep compassion and consideration for others and the world.

"His behavior and commitments were informed and connected to a profound greater picture and tender human story. He was a skillful teacher and eager learner. The synagogue created a space for people to stick together through grief and celebration, learning, growing, supporting, and building."

That led her, as she puts it, to try putting "both feet on the rabbi path."

Slakman, who lives in Brooklyn Heights, and has worked for three years at Brooklyn Heights Synagogue, also has a strong desire to create art, and even maintains a website of her art although she's reluctant to talk about it because there's no new work on it. What she will talk about is the role of art in Judaism, and particularly in her Judaism.

"I am interested in using art to explore, uncover, study and transmit the many layers of our Jewish story. For example, my rabbinical school thesis involves engaging in visual midrash — relying on symbols, stories and archetypes found in the book of Samuel to render portraits of the women depicted throughout King David's life. Art, like midrash, has the power to connect dots between previously disjointed or overlooked concepts and uncover meaning far beyond the central message, she said.

She says that what she knows of Temple Micah suggests she will find an emphasis on connections here as well. "I understand that Temple Micah is exceptionally successful in connecting being Jewish and doing Jewish to the multifaced layers of people's lives, realities, desires and capacities. . . I can't wait to share stories, songs, questions, realizations and moments of study as well as visions and steps toward a better future." ◆

AN APPRECIATION

On Teddy's Retirement: A Musician and a Mensch

By Bill Page

I have known Teddy Klaus, Micah's Music Director, for as long as he has worked at Temple Micah. I came here in 1981 and Teddy arrived in 1985.

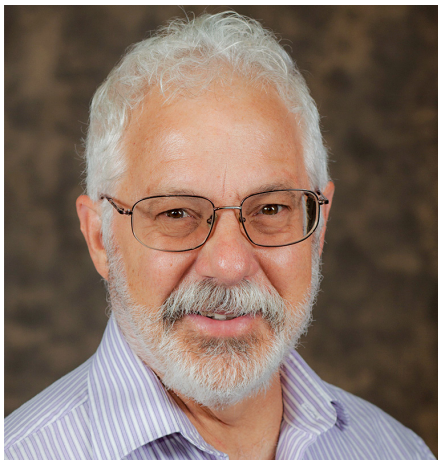
In that time I have known him as an accomplished accompanist, pianist, singer, conductor of singers and instrumentalists, arranger, composer, music educator, b'nai mitzah tutor, etc., etc.

His Temple Micah biography notes he not only composes liturgical music, but has had several of his compositions published by Transcontinental Music Publications. Additionally, he has served as president of the Guild of Temple Musicians, and has sat on the boards of the American Conference of Cantors, the Joint Commission of Synagogue Music of the URJ, and Transcontinental Music Publications.

Basically, Teddy has done so many things, for so many years, and so well, that it is hard to imagine what life at Temple Micah will be without him.

As required for Temple Micah staff, Teddy has a great sense of humor and is especially known for his puns and Dad jokes. He even shares college reminiscences such as the one about his college conducting instructor, sung to the tune of "Oh, I wish I were an Oscar Mayer wiener." (You can ask Teddy for details).

Not that everything has been smooth sailing for Teddy. I remember that when he fell on a bike ride and broke his wrist, he was concerned



about being able to discharge his musical duties. Thus, instead of the usual straight-line forearm cast, Teddy asked that his cast be applied with his wrist bent so that he could still play the guitar. True grit.

My friend Ralph Emerson has said words to the effect that when people cannot enumerate your virtues, but instead stand there in silent admiration, that is when you have really impressed them.. We have a Jewish word for that situation — Teddy is a real mensch. We Jews purposely don't have an exact translation for mensch, because there is none.

Many, many times, I have come to Temple Micah choir rehearsals and services just to be around Teddy. His musicality and his infectious enthusiasm have made all of us who have worked with him rise again and again to the occasion — perhaps even sometimes to rise beyond the occasion — when he and the Spirit move us.

You can tell that I am grasping for words, and therefore, it is time for me to stop writing. Teddy, I and those who have been in your presence these past decades, have been ineffably blessed by you and your work. We pray that as God has blessed your work with us to this time, he will also bless you as you leave us for new ventures. ◆

Bill Page is a long-time member of the Temple Micah choir. More recently, he has played the bass clarinet in the Temple Micah orchestra.

JUNE 11 SERVICE TO HONOR MUSIC DIRECTOR TEDDY KLAUS

In late December, Temple Micah Music Director Teddy Klaus for the past 36 years said he "could not have asked for a more meaningful career," in announcing that he will retire June 30.

"I am humbled to say that the years at Micah have been way beyond a job," he said in an online message to the congregation.

The next day, Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel responded with his own online message to the congregation. As he and Klaus worked together, Rabbi Zemel said, "I came to understand that our Judaism needs to be rooted in our American experience. Teddy has been able to translate this idea into music. This has been a profound and valuable collaboration for which I am deeply grateful."

Since then, the Micah staff has been collecting photos, stories and memories of Klaus from congregants to use in a tribute that will be part of the Friday evening service on June 11.

While the June 11 send-off will be virtual, an in-person, live celebration is also planned for a post-pandemic time.

The Feast

THE AIR-FRIED BRUSSELS SPROUTS (à la TEDDY) EDITION

By Alexandra Wisotsky

"Temple Micah gave me the best years of my life. I remember like yesterday, in 1985, I knew that two of the loves of my life—music and Judaism—could exist together."

This is how Music Director Teddy Klaus started our conversation when I called to speak to him about his time at Micah and to obtain one of his recipes. I have had the privilege of knowing Teddy in both contexts.

First, as one of those who loved the music at every Micah service—the pick-up band, the adult or youth choirs, Shabbat Shira, the High Holy Day services.

And second, while my kids were in the youth choir, Teddy would treat all the families to his homemade challah at the dinner following the service. I admit that I was kind of hoping that challah was the recipe he was going to share.

When Teddy joined Temple Micah as the music director, the synagogue was still sharing space with a church in Southwest. Organs were prevalent in both churches and synagogues at the time, but this being a modern church, it had a piano.

"I would have played the organ if they had had one, but I would not have been happy about it," Teddy said.

What is different in music now than back then? I asked. "I came in at the end of an era when much was to be listened to—it was not participatory. If anything, now we are about participatory music; we have the power of people singing together out loud," he responded.

When Teddy first started at Temple Micah, a professional quartet of singers provided beautiful music performed for an audience of listeners. Now, while the choir will occasionally perform a piece of music for listening enjoyment, it is more "to model for the rest of the congregation what singing together can be like; at their best the choir will raise community voices and enhance the beauty of the service," he told me.

During our conversation I mentioned that the music at Micah was one of the things that drew my husband and me into the temple, and even today my husband, Richard Townend, comments on the beauty of the music after a service.

Teddy's response was to say "music has the ability to reach deep inside of people. Words can as well, but the music enters a person's psyche in a different way."

So what is Teddy's favorite thing that he has done during his 35 years at Temple Micah? "Temple Micah had a president years ago who always said 'what we are doing at Temple Micah is building Jews.' So above all, the lasting legacy and deepest thing I believe I have done is inspire people to explore Judaism, and their own faith.

"I'm proud to have used music to have done that. I believe that one of my strengths has been the ability to enable prayer and bring out the bests in all of our worshippers, whether by singing, playing an instrument or chanting. Bar mitzvah tutoring, youth choir, pick up bands, Shabbat Shira are all part of a bigger picture. That is what I am most proud of."

I could have talked to Teddy all day about music and his time at Micah, but onto the recipe. Teddy and his wife Debby Kanter are the proud new owners of an air fryer. They shared the recipe they are most enjoying making in their new kitchen toy—balsamic glazed Brussels sprouts. This recipe comes from their favorite local pizza place—Stella Barra Pizzeria and Wine Bar in Bethesda. There they can get a similar dish, which they recreated at home. Debby admitted it is the only way she will eat Brussels sprouts, so for those of you who are not sprouts fans, perhaps this is a good way to give them another try. ◆

CRISPY AIR-FRYER ROASTED BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH BALSAMIC

Prep time: 10 minutes. Cook time: 15 minutes.
Special equipment: An air fryer.

Ingredients

- 1 lb. Brussels sprouts, ends removed and cut into bite-size pieces
- 2 tablespoons olive oil or more as needed
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- Kosher salt to taste
- Black pepper to taste

Steps:

1. In bowl, evenly drizzle Brussels sprouts with oil and balsamic vinegar. Make sure to coat all the Brussels sprouts.
2. Sprinkle salt and pepper on the Brussels sprouts and then stir to combine until all the marinade is absorbed. No marinade should be left in the bowl.
3. Add Brussels sprouts to the air fryer basket. Air fry at 360°F for about 15-20 minutes. Shake and gently stir half way through, about 8 minutes into cooking.
4. Continue to air fry the Brussels sprouts for the remainder of the time or until they are golden brown and thoroughly cooked.

ESTATE PLANNING IS ONE WAY TO ENSURE CONTINUITY AT MICAH

Judy Hurvitz's explanation of why she decided to participate in Temple Micah's Planned Giving program begins with her memory of Rabbi Zemel's now adult daughter in a stroller years ago when the congregation still shared space in a Southwest DC church.

"I had never heard of Temple Micah when a friend insisted that I go with her to a Friday night service that would be held in St. Augustine's Episcopal Church."

That first night, 43 years ago, Hurvitz now recalls, "I quickly felt that this congregation was a good fit for me. So I signed up and never left.

"I distinctly remember seeing Shira Zemel coming to services in a stroller, and now I see the next generation attending services on Zoom. So the desire to help ensure the future of Micah through Planned Giving comes naturally to me, and it has never been stronger than in this past year when Micah put its heart and soul into creating a virtual space to guide us and support us in this time of upheaval, confusion and uncertainty."

Hurvitz attended Micah's Planned Giving Workshop last fall, which she credits with helping her better understand the process of including Temple Micah in her estate planning. "I hope others are thinking about supporting Micah's future needs, and viewing the webinar on the temple website is a good place to begin," she said.

For more information on the Planned Giving program, view the webinar at www.youtube.com/user/TempleMicah, or email PlannedGiving@templemicah.org.

Skorton FROM PAGE 1 ▶

the financial crisis of 2008-2009 that led to a huge drop in the university's endowment.

"The Great Recession, beginning in 2008, suicides of Cornell students during my term as president of the university, and many experiences in decades of medical practice all prepared me in three ways: First, understanding the limits of our control over external events and people; second, the realization that only through collective action and, therefore, compassion and understanding of each other, would we get through the storm; and third, more clear understanding of the enormous inequities in our society – in this case, health inequities – that produced the imperative to look inward at my own biases and the imperative to speak out," Skorton said.

Skorton noted his career "has been a series of blessings and wonderful opportunities, for which I take very little credit. At each juncture, I've been hugely fortunate to learn from mentors of a broad variety of types and to have the chance to serve. Judaism has been a constant guide in ethical and spiritual dimensions."

As a teenager and young adult, he said, he yearned for a musical career. He remains an avid amateur musician who plays the flute and the saxophone.

"Through the arts and humanities – again, inflected at every turn by Judaism – I've learned much about myself and the world around all of us," Skorton said.

Why, he was asked, did he move back and forth from medicine to academia to administration?

"Great question!" he responded. "The path is not quite as erratic as it may appear. The constants were academia: All of the opportunities I've had have been in academic institutions, the most fascinating of which was the Smithsonian Institution, where I learned so much and gained enormous respect for the talented and dedicated researchers, curators, museum professionals, educators and all the other professionals who comprise that wonderful institution."

(As the Smithsonian Secretary Skorton oversaw 19 museums, 21 libraries, the National Zoo numerous research centers and several education units and centers.)

He said he had his first opportunity in administration in the mid-1980s when he led a division of general internal medicine. "I found medical training to be a terrific basis for leadership because of having to frequently make decisions under conditions of uncertainty and to listen before speaking or acting," he said.

Asked about the greatest challenges and achievements he had experienced, the suicides of the Cornell students were by far the hardest, Skorton said, but added:

"The inequities throughout our society – in education, housing, food access, health care access, treatment by the criminal justice system and so many other circumstances – are always on my mind. Some of these societal inequities – longstanding – have been brought into bold relief by the pandemic."

He said that many dangers persist as the nation appears to be on the edge of overcoming the worst of the pandemic. Skorton cited "vaccine hesitancy, denial of the ongoing nature of the pandemic, and therefore moving too fast to ignore guidance of the CDC and other authorities, and failure to focus on inequities. We absolutely can soundly defeat this virus if we pay attention to these issues."

Asked about those who remain fearful of how to proceed even if they are fully vaccinated, Skorton countered, "Don't we all have that concern and uncertainty? Let's stay in touch and let's learn from the CDC and other authorities and each other."

He noted Temple Micah is blessed with the expertise of epidemiologist Manya Magnus and physician Richard Katz, who appeared with him on the Micah videos, adding, "and who can say 'no' to Rabbi Zemel?" ◆

Seventh Graders Bake Together on Zoom

By Felicia Kolodner

One of the ways this year's b'nai mitzvah families found to stay connected was to bake. Together. In early March, several 7th grade Machon students and their moms got together virtually to bake hamentashen.

To kick off the Zoom gathering, Leesa Klepper, a Micah board member and one of the 7th-grade parents, led the kids in a game of "Two Truths and a Lie... Pandemic Style." In other words, what description of their lockdown experience didn't actually happen.

Holden Kolodner, 13, a seasoned baker, began his hamentashen career when he was a mere 3 years old. Holden shared his favorite recipe and offered tips to the group on how to get the dough perfect and on how to pinch the hamentashen corners to keep the filling from spilling out.

The hamentashen filling was the source of a lot of talk of family lore, including the Kleppers' discussion of their family poppy seed recipe.

While the first batch baked, the kids who already had their b'nai mitzvah shared tips and words of encouragement to those who were yet to experience this milestone.

The moms had their own opportunity to discuss the same when the taste testing started. Everyone was having such a good time, that a second Zoom meeting was set up.

Baker Daniel Kaye, 12, said the bake-off "was fun to get everyone together and see so many Micah friends." Deborah Raviv, "This is the most fun I have had in a really long time!" ◆

Top row: Leesa Klepper and her daughter Emma Mancuso, Felicia Kolodner and her son Holden Kolodner, Deborah Raviv and her son Daniel
Bottom row: Joanna London and her daughter Lauren London, Dara Goldberg and her son Daniel Kaye, Yolanda Savage-Narva and her son Miles Narva

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Rabbi's Message FROM PAGE 1 ▶

ogy. A Jewish book can be about anything from cooking to ancient ritual laws of purity. The attempt to contain this sprawling heritage as a religion is a 200-year-old project inherited from the European Enlightenment. My teacher Jacob Neusner taught me to not use the term "Judaism" at all but, rather, "Judaisms" because at any given time there are many forms of Judaism being embraced. When we think of Jewish life, we have to think in broad categories and contradictory approaches. There is simply no other way.

When we measure Judaism by a list of observances we are giving short shrift to its breadth and depth. In writing these words, I want to pay special attention to what we call halacha, which is most often translated as "law." Halacha comprises the majority of rabbinic literature. It is a legal literature of discourse and debate, story and speculation. It is not a legal code. To be sure, there are Jewish legal codes, but they constitute only a small fraction of the literature that is designated as halachic.

In my own interpretation of Judaism, I disagree strongly with those who call halachic literature binding or obligatory. In this framework, halacha can result in a kind of how-to-be-Jewish manual. Following the manual results in the "proper" kind of Jew. I strenuously reject this halacha-as-manual approach to my Jewish life.

The great anthropologist Clifford Geertz regarded anthropology as a "rhetorical style" of writing. To him, anthropology was more than the social scientist going into the field to observe. It was the written form that came out of the field observations. Anthropology, to Geertz, was a style of writing, a literary form.

What Geertz says about anthropology, I say about rabbinic texts. They are a literary form. Rabbinic writing is a literary genre that recounts in its own unique style the impressions, customs, thoughts, arguments and ideas of an ancient

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TZEDAKAH

YEAR-END APPEAL

Jane and Charles Kerschner
Ronna and Stan Foster
Jennifer Kaplan and Tom Trendl

BUILDING FUND

IN MEMORY OF
Elaine Brown, Dennis Davis, and Dorothy Kirby, by Judith Capen and Robert Weinstein
Suzanne Geshekter, by Eric Geshekter

ENDOWMENT FUND

IN HONOR OF
Wishing Don Elisburg a speedy recovery, by Beverly and Harlan Sherwat

IN MEMORY OF
Frank Anderson, husband of Ruth Simon, by Carol and Arthur Freeman
Irene Chait, Rose C. Heller, Julian Stehlik Paul Mezey, Nettie Rogers, Officer Brian Sicknick, by Marilyn Paul
Rose Herschkovitz, by Brenda Levenson
Samuel Henry Weiner, by Lora and Frank Ferguson

GENERAL FUND

Victor Springer

IN HONOR OF
Leo Rosand becoming bar mitzvah, by Hans Wertheimer

IN MEMORY OF
Frank Anderson, by Claire B. Rubin
Malcolm Bernhardt, by National Archives Volunteer Association
Rose Closter, Sidney Closter, Gerald Liebenau, and Vivian Liebenau, by Betsi and Harold Closter
Marielani Coloretti, by Nani Coloretti
Gilbert Cranberg, by Marcia Wolff
Reubin From, by Ginger and Al From
Alfred Goldeen, by David and Livia Bardin
Rae Goldsmith, by Alice Weinstein
Barbara Klausner, by Cal Klausner
Dorothy Kirby, by Ted Bornstein, Scott and Lynn Garner, Helene and Gene Granof, Gale Kabat
Edythe F. Levine, by Philip and Barbara Levine
Robert Salzberg, by Ellen and Stan Brand
George Scott, by Judy and Jack Hadley
Semih Ustun, by Lora Ferguson, Robin Stein
Jonie Voich, by Cindy Koch
Miriam Weberman, by David and Johanna Forman
Samuel Henry Weiner, by Nancy Raskin
Natalie Westreich, by Jonathan Westreich

INNOVATION FUND

Nicky Goren
Jane and Charles Kerschner
Amy Schussheim

IN HONOR OF
Rabbi Samantha Frank and Avi Edelman, by Ed and Bobbie Wendel
Leo Rosand becoming bar mitzvah, by Hans Wertheimer

IN MEMORY OF
Gloria Waldman Appel, by David Wentworth and Betsy Broder
Isaac Green, by Barbara Green
Kate Mayblum, by Harriett Stonehill
Semih Ustun, by David and Barbara Diskin

LEARNING FUND

IN HONOR OF
Orli Ruth Goldstein, by Hannah Gould
With gratitude for Holden's becoming bar mitzvah, by Felicia and Holden Kolodner
Rabbi Marc Lee Raphael, by Beverly and Harlan Sherwat

IN MEMORY OF
Frank Anderson, Harvey Salkovitz, by Hannah Gould
Max Bender, by Carole and John Hirschmann
Jack Chernak, by Beverly and Harlan Sherwat
Barnett and Joyce Coplan, by Michael Coplan
Annabelle Gilberg, Leonard Schwall, Fred Robert Seasonwein, Nathaniel Seasonwein, Simon Siegel Seasonwein, by Diana and Robert Seasonwein
Ruth Goldberg, Ed Posner, by Nancy Raskin
Morris Povar, by Gail Povar and Larry Bachorik
Sidney Trager, Meryl Weiner's father, by Marilyn Hausfield
Samuel Henry Weiner, by Sidney and Elka Booth

MICAH HOUSE FUND

Michelle Sender

IN MEMORY OF
Frank Anderson, by Ed and Bobbie Wendel
Gerald and Vivian Liebenau, by Janet Liebenau
John W. Sewell, by Maryann Sewell
Etta Sugarman Weisman, by Steven Weisman

MUSIC AND WORSHIP FUND

IN HONOR OF
Teddy Klaus, by Roberta and Morton Goren, Susan Morgenstein, Michelle Sender
Richard Lahne, Marcia Silcox, Geri Nielsen, by Roberta and Morton Goren

IN MEMORY OF
Frank Anderson, David Melendy, by Roberta and Morton Goren
Susan Blumenfeld, by Norman Blumenfeld
Chip Broder, by Betsy Broder and David Wentworth
Simon Josen, by Rita and Gary Carleton
Lillie Page, by William Page
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IN MEMORY OF
Robert Friedman, by Michelle Sender
Ruti bat Zvi v'Rachel, by David and Livia Bardin

This list reflects donations received Feb. 6–Apr. 19, 2021. Every effort has been made to ensure its accuracy, but if there are any errors or omissions please accept our apologies. For corrections or clarifications, please contact Rhiannon Walsh in the temple office. Thank you.

THE LIFE OF TEMPLE MICAH

A PLACE WHERE ALL OF US CAN BE WHO WE ARE, NO QUESTIONS ASKED

By Rabbi Stephanie Crawley

Dear Micah Family,

As many of you know, it is a long-standing Temple Micah tradition for our b'nai mitzvah students to pose a question to be answered by a rabbi on the day of their bar or bat mitzvah.

One question I was asked has particular relevance as we think about the future of the Jewish community, and the type of place we believe Temple Micah is. The student, Jordan Dorsey, asked me: "How do we make sure that Judaism has a place for everyone?"

Here is an adaptation of my answer to Jordan. I share these words as a window into my own story, and in my hope that Micah can be a model for inclusivity and openness across the Jewish community.

Dear Jordan,

Two experiences — particularly frequent in my youth — have happened to me more times than I can count.

The first. Someone says to me: "You look really Jewish!" I ask, "What does that mean?" They reply, "Oh you know, brown curly hair, brown eyes, short..."

I think they mean it as a compliment, but let me tell you what my experience was. If you look at my family photos, you'll see that I don't physically resemble my Jewish family members. They are tall. They have deep, dark, almost black hair, and bright green eyes. We don't look much alike.

The genetic traits that manifest most in me are that of my Irish-Scottish family. I look like my Grandma Cleo, and not my Bubbe Martha. As a child, hearing that I "looked Jewish" did not make me feel included as part of the Jewish people. In fact, it had the opposite effect on me. It made me feel like an intruder: If they see the photos; if they find out, they'll think I don't really belong here.

A second common experience in Jewish spaces. "Crawley? That's not a Jewish last name." A question that emerged from curiosity, but read to me like this: "Your last name indicates to me that you might not really belong here."

But the thing is the name that I carry from my father's family *is* a Jewish name. It is because it is my name, and I am Jewish.

In my youth these were painful experiences. These were moments when, as the daughter of interfaith parents, my beloved community communicated to me that I belonged a little less than the others. That I was somehow less Jewish than those who carried names like Berkowitz and Goldberg.

But I still looked "really Jewish." I have brown curly hair and dark eyes. I can walk into any Jewish space, and no one will bat an eye. But I know this is not always true for people of color who walk through the doors of a synagogue. They are often asked much more pointed questions than the "that's not a Jewish name" sorts of questions I was asked. They are asked questions like: "Are you Jewish?" "Did you convert?" Or worse, "are you here with the catering staff?"

I pray, Jordan, that you are never asked these questions. Because Jordan, you — all of you, all your identities — make you Jewish, and all of your identities belong at Temple Micah.

There should be no part of you that you have to leave at the door.

You asked me: "How do we make sure that Judaism has a place for everyone?"

The first way is by getting rid of those questions, and getting rid of assumptions that there is a singular way to sound, look, or to be Jewish. DNA might connect some of us, but not all of us.

What does connect us is our story, our virtues and our values. We are connected by our moments singing together, and celebrating together. Embracing this understanding of peoplehood can help us ensure that everyone has a place in the Jewish community. For all of us to belong, peoplehood must not be about blood. It must not be about how brown your hair is.

Peoplehood must be more expansive. It includes people who don't want children. It includes non-Jewish partners who study and stand and pray and practice alongside their families. It includes everyone you might not picture when you close your eyes and are asked to imagine what a Jew looks like.

At our best at Temple Micah, peoplehood looks like this. It looks like a kippah on top of thick natural hair, or a tallit worn atop a sari. It looks like folks who use walkers and wheelchairs, and people of all genders. It looks like a place where the love between all couples is celebrated with equal fervor. It looks like a place where all our identities can exist freely—no intrusive questions needed.

And—when we fail to reach this vision—it looks like honest and hard conversations about how we can do better and be better.

Your friend,
Rabbi Crawley

We want your opinion!

Go to page 12 for the link and QR code to take the survey and share your thoughts about The Vine newsletter. Your input is truly appreciated.

B'NAI MITZVAH

Photo Unavailable

BRYN SOVEN
MAY 1 / 19 IYYAR

PARENTS: Joshua Soven and Renata Hesse

TORAH PORTION: Emor

LAUREN KAYLA LONDON
MAY 15 / 4 SIVAN

PARENTS: David and Joanna London

TORAH PORTION: Bamidbar

MILES NARVA
MAY 29 / 18 SIVAN

PARENTS: Andrew Narva and Yolanda Savage-Narva

TORAH PORTION: Beha'alotcha

MAZAL TOV

Alice, Jacob, Lila, and Alfred Freedman, on the birth of their son and brother, Joshua Freedman

Doug Mishkin and Wendy Jennis, on the birth of their grandson, Micah Perry Hoffman

CONDOLENCES

The Temple Micah community extends its deepest condolences to:

Scott Barash, on the passing of his father, Barry M. Barash

Lisa Davis, on the passing of her father, Dennis Davis

Pamela Flattau, on the passing of her husband, Edward S. Flattau

Jocelyn Guyer, on the passing of her stepfather, George Scott

James Hamos, on the passing of his mother, Agnes Hamos

Jillian Levine-Sisson, on the passing of her grandmother, Jane R. Abrams

Stephanie Mintz, on the passing of her father, Herbert Howard Mintz

Jack Schwarz, on the passing of his wife, longtime Temple Micah member Joan Schwarz

Harriett Stonehill, on the passing of her sister-in-law, Mechal Sobel

The Temple Micah Community, on the passing of member Dorothy Kirby

Alexandra Wisotsky, on the passing of her mother, Myrna G. Wisotsky

May their memories be for a blessing.

Rabbi's Message FROM PAGE 7 ▶

group of rabbis. Halacha is a Jewish art form. It is not a manual by which we are meant to measure or even guide our Jewish lives today. In my Jewish conception, to live a so-called halachic life is to choose to move the art form into a lived practice. This is a totally legitimate and honorable Jewish choice to make. It is not the only Jewish choice to make. Its language of "observance" need not be our own.

I am never sure what it means to live a fully Jewish life. We each are hopefully both challenged and inspired to find that path for ourselves. Torah gives us a narrative through which we can find heroes, stories and ethical norms. The calendar gives us holy days and a guiding light through which we can seek the sacred. Together, the Torah and the calendar give us ways to reflect on who we are. We form social communities around them that help and support us as we pursue the sacred and the ethical. In these communities, we come to celebrate the joys of life and to hold each other tight through life's inevitable blows.

I recently had an encounter with a young woman who was contemplating a Jewish career path. She told me that she was not observant, traditional or religious. I asked her how she could see herself as a prayer leader if she didn't consider herself to be a religious person. I tried to show her that she needed to see her religious life through her own framework rather than one determined by others. I encouraged her not to cede Jewish language to those whose Judaism is different than her own.

Judaism challenges us to be Jewish artists forming our own pictures of life through the words, rituals and commitments that we select from the Jewish archive that belongs to each of us. The question is not whether we are "good Jews" or "better Jews." The question is about the picture we draw with our lives and how we reflect the Jewish shadings, colors and forms.

Shalom,
Daniel G. Zemel

THE PANDEMIC HAS HELPED JUDAISM PUSH SYNAGOGUE WALLS OUTWARD

By Rabbi Josh Beraha

Jaroslav Pelikan, the late scholar of religious history, wrote that we have a choice to be "conscious participants" in tradition or to be its "unconscious victims." The pandemic has demonstrated that American Jews are without a doubt the former.

To look at what synagogues across the country have done in the past year is to see the verve and vivacity of American Judaism. Not only have we seen successful efforts at maintaining our communities, but in many cases they are stronger. More people are tuning in for worship and learning, and a newfound love and appreciation for Jewish belonging seems to have awoken in people during these turbulent times.

More than one year into this mess, that love has yet to abate. But will it? As the worst of the current health emergency seems to be behind us, will this enthusiasm for Jewish life continue?

Above all, 2020 was a year of uncertainty. Only rarely in recent history have our communities lived through a time where so much was unknown. The circumstances forced us to contend with our mortality, with how we care for others, and with the consequences of living in an interconnected, globalized world. We wondered how to create engaging online worship experiences, and how to keep our communities safe but connected; how to care for those in isolation, and how to mark the death of loved ones properly.

We also asked questions of more limited scope, such as: Could Jewish learning be transformed into a vibrant online experience? And if so, how? Prior to last year, the national Jewish conversation at times felt stale, repetitive and slow, but the pandemic gave it a much-needed jump start, and so it is alive again, with new questions, and a newly inspired and ready-to-listen audience.

Some of those key questions to come of this time include: How can we resist the trends that put religion in the same category as entertainment? Will our consumerist mentality encroach on our religious institutions, and how can we guard against such encroachment? Will the established mega-synagogues that have turned their sanctuaries into television studios unintentionally cause the closing of small-town synagogues because the latter's erstwhile members can now stream the former's services online, and sometimes for free?

Though questions abound, it is precisely these new questions, and the conversations they encourage, that should bring us hope for the American Jewish future. For too long, we've been stuck trying to answer the same questions, while making little progress at finding answers: Whether intermarriage should be curbed, what to do about young Jews and their lack of connection to Israel, what can stop the decline in synagogue membership. These communal dilemmas remain as important as ever, but they were formerly addressed as conversations for insiders, and were conducted with scant attention to the experiences of the average American Jew.

Meanwhile, nearly half of all Americans today are part of what Tara Isabella Burton, a writer who has a doctorate in theology from Oxford, calls "remixed culture." When spiritual needs are unmet by inflexible institutions, the "Remixed," she says, "make use of the geographical irrelevancy of the Internet to foster digital, rather than physical, communal spaces." They find like-minded people online and build communities that suit them, she says.

Now that the pandemic has cast us into the wilderness, we should seize upon the opportunity to continue, and even to push for, more radical innovation in Jewish life. Philanthropic foundations have already realized this; recently the Aligned Grant Program solicited proposals for grants of up to $10 million aimed at seizing "this unique moment to reimagine, renew, and reset Jewish communities for the future." Though neighborhood synagogues are usually not the recipients of such funds, one could certainly imagine these moneys going directly to congregations in the future if their rabbis push the boundaries of what a synagogue is. A year ago, synagogues closed their doors. It's time we expand beyond our walls.

In our own congregation, we've already begun the process of turning outward. The Temple Micah Storefront project was founded on exactly the principle that Judaism should not be a guarded secret, only for Jews. Storefront holds that synagogues must address questions that are universal in scope. What does it mean to live with dignity and honor? How can I find rich sources of fulfillment and significance? But most of all, Storefront asserts that synagogues and Jewish life in general must be rooted in the lived experience of the liberal, modern, American Jew.

What the pandemic did — quicker than any single programmatic intervention ever could — was to accelerate the work of turning outward. Yes, it was convenient for people to tune in from home. But this time, with so much public anxiety in the air, the relevance of our ancient past was seized upon by clergy and Jewish professionals, and most importantly, was embraced by our people.

This moment in time is a once-in-a-generation opportunity if — and only if — our community can wisely answer this question: Will we use this disruption in Jewish life to bring about a new synagogue model, whose ease of access and relevance can bring our people roaring into the next decades, fueled by a reenergized, forward-looking theology? Or will we let the opportunity slip through our fingers, and condemn our children to a world with diminished Jewish options, and among those, a liberal Judaism whose relevance will continue to recede?

A year after the shuttering of our synagogues' doors, we can't help but wonder if American Jews will look back with nostalgia upon pre-pandemic Judaism, the way they look at the Judaism of the shtetl. I hope instead they will recognize that the well-worn path to a life of value, long trod by our ancestors and passed down through the generations, needs to be re-charted if it is to be passed on to yet another generation.

Just as in every other calamity that Jews have faced, from the destruction of the Temple to their expulsion from long-inhabited lands, out of the destruction of the coronavirus can come hope. Life is lived moving forward.

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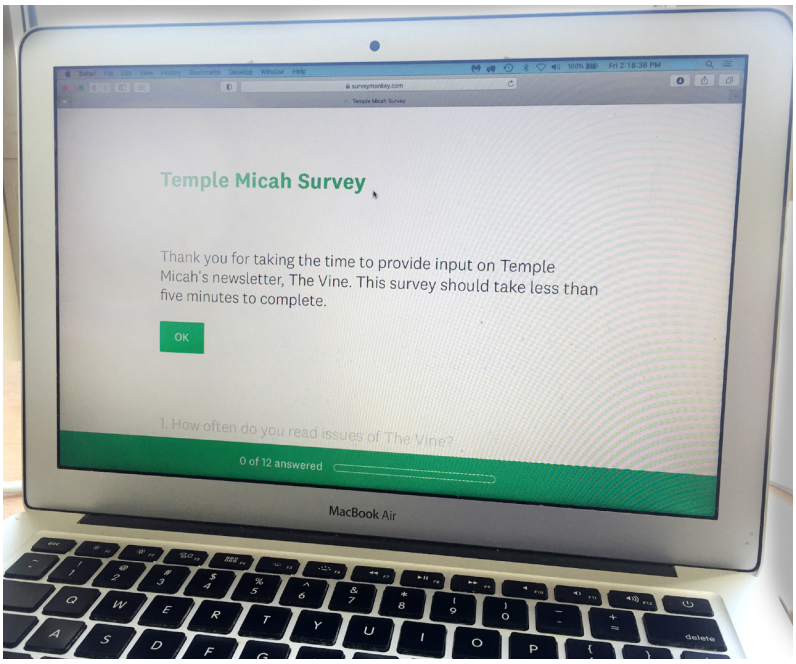

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