

מִיכָה
TEMPLE
MIÇAH

Vine

TEMPLE
MIÇAH

Where you can bring
your **whole self** and
be your **best self**.



To us, reform is a verb.

Rabbi Joshua Beraha Becomes Temple Micah's Senior Rabbi

A Letter to the Community from RABBI JOSHUA BERAHA

Dear Friends,

This is my first letter to you as Senior Rabbi of Temple Micah. I generally focus my sermons and public writing on big ideas and enduring questions. In fact, one of the things that first attracted me to Micah was its commitment to intellectual inquiry, reflection, and taking Judaism seriously.

But big ideas start with the personal.

Here I think of Martin Buber, whose most famous book, *I and Thou*, poetically shows how transcendence can be found in “the bond of being, a bond with being.” Not coincidentally, Buber’s mother left his family when he was three, and he was subsequently raised by his paternal grandparents. Reading Buber in light of this knowledge offers a deeper understanding of why genuine meeting, relationship, became such a central theme for him.

Installation Weekend

Friday, October 9 • 6:30 p.m.

Join us for Shabbat and the installation ceremony of Rabbi Joshua Beraha

*with special guest Rabbi Larry Hoffman
and Rabbi Emeritus Daniel G. Zemel*



Saturday, October 10 • 4-7 p.m.

Learning, followed by musical celebration + havdalah

Big ideas grow from our day-to-day lives.

So in this first letter, I want to share a glimpse of the day-to-day life of my Jewish upbringing. In doing so, I also want to invite you, through conversations within the Micah community, to share the stories that have made you who *you* are. That is part of what a synagogue is for: connecting with one another through the sharing of our stories.

In the months and years ahead I’ll use the Vine to address some of the heavy questions we in this community—American Jews living through

unprecedented times—are facing. But for now, a snapshot of the person sharing those thoughts.

My earliest Jewish memories are of Shabbat at home, around our dining room table on the East Side of Providence, Rhode Island, where I grew up alongside two younger brothers. Looking back, I’ve come to think of my upbringing as one of being raised in a shtetl—not because we feared pogroms (God forbid!), but because it felt very much like a village where everyone knew each other.



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

Vine

Vol. 63 No. 1

TEMPLE MICAH:

A REFORM JEWISH CONGREGATION
2829 Wisconsin Ave, NW Washington,
D.C. 20007

Voice: 202-342-9175

Email: info@templemicah.org

vine@templemicah.org

Web: templemicah.org

Joshua Beraha

SENIOR RABBI

Mckinley Edelman

EDUCATION DIRECTOR

Samantha Frank

RABBI EDUCATOR

Healy Slakman

ASSOCIATE RABBI

Beth Werlin

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Kelly Whitehead

RABBINIC FELLOW

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Roberta Aronson

PRESIDENT

Emily Tamkin

VICE PRESIDENT

Benjamin M. Moss

TREASURER

Dorian Friedman

SECRETARY

Allie Palmer Baum, Dean
Brenner, Andi Fristedt, Jamie
Gardner, Aurie Hall, Sunny
Kaplan, Debra Kurshan, Lauren
Laitin, Susannah Nadler, Noel
Salinger, Peter Van Praagh

VINE STAFF

Martha Adler

EDITOR

Steven Weisman

EDITORIAL ADVISOR

Sarah Brown

PRODUCING EDITOR

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Looking Forward to the New Year Ahead

By ROBERTA ARONSON



This is one of my favorite times of year. I look forward to the High Holy Days at Temple Micah with great anticipation. We are so fortunate to have a dedicated and talented team of rabbis who will lead us into the new year. In addition to preparing for the High Holy Days, our rabbis are forming a strong team to foster dialogue, deliberation, respect, compassion, and intellectual rigor. At the same time, playfulness and a sense of humor are equally important to the team. In that light, I thought I might share a little background and some fun facts about each of the members of our rabbinic team. I invite you to engage with our rabbis and develop relationships that are at the core of who we are at Temple Micah.

As we all know, **Rabbi Josh Beraha** has been at Temple Micah for 12 years, and became our Senior Rabbi on July 1 of this year. If you want to get to know Rabbi Beraha better, invite him out to a good bakery with fancy coffee. You might also ask him what that

strange box is that he plays as an instrument. Rabbi Beraha and his wife Nani have three wonderful children and will celebrate their middle child becoming bat mitzvah this year. It is great to watch his family grow up at Micah. In his spare time, Rabbi Beraha likes to ride stand up paddle boards with his family in Cape Cod. Rabbi Beraha is also an indoor plant and vinyl record enthusiast. We are all looking forward to learning from and with him in the coming years.

Moving to the musical soul of Temple Micah, let's turn to **Rabbi Healy Slakman**. We all know how Rabbi Slakman deepens our worship experience with music, but you may not know that music is not her only art form. She studied visual art as an undergraduate, with a focus on painting and a particular love for expressive portraiture and the human form.

Rabbi Slakman is also an avid cook and has contributed recipes to a recently published

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



President FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►

Jewish cookbook—check out just one of her recipes on page 16 of this issue of the *Vine*!

Rabbi Samantha Frank is starting her second year as our Rabbi Educator. Rabbi Frank has served many roles at Temple Micah—including as a Tisch Fellow in 2017—and she created Temple Micah's Haftarah Project, which you can find on the shelves as you enter the sanctuary. Rabbi Frank has spent time living in France, and she completed the New York marathon in 2024. She is the proud mother of Solomon, one of Micah's adorable babies!

The newest member of our rabbinic team is **Rabbi Kelly Whitehead**, who started on July 1. She was a Tisch Fellow here in 2023. She came to us most recently from the URJ, where she was the Assistant Director of Engagement and Learning. Rabbi Whitehead's grandfather and great-grandfather were professional artists; both created Jewish art that is displayed in synagogues across America. Rabbi Whitehead regularly practices hot yoga and strength training; she loves all things pop culture;

she is an enthusiastic foodie and is always interested in trying new restaurants.

We are fortunate to have such a spirited and devoted clergy team! I do hope you will reach out to them to get to know them better.

I want to turn briefly to a few things that are happening at Temple Micah in the next two months. I hope you are reading the Elul emails to help you get in the right frame of mind for the holidays. I encourage you not only to attend the major upcoming events, but to try some of the other spiritually moving, educational, and musical offerings that are planned.

On the evening of **September 5**, please join us for our Selichot service. Those of you who were able to participate in the Nava Tehila services this past spring will recognize the general format. The lights in the sanctuary are set low, we gather in a circle, and the musicians and their instruments are in the middle. This awe-inspiring service is followed by Havdalah.

On the weekend of **October 9**, we will be celebrating the installation of Rabbi Beraha as our Senior Rabbi. This is a momentous occasion for both Temple Micah (the last installation of a Senior Rabbi was over 40 years ago) and Rabbi Beraha as we mark a new phase of sacred partnership with the congregation. On Friday night, we will have the formal installation with our Rabbi Emeritus Daniel Zemel and Rabbi Larry Hoffman speaking. On Saturday afternoon, we will have a study session, followed by a festive celebration, with activities for kids, music, and delicious food. Stay tuned for more information in our weekly announcements.

I look forward to seeing all of you throughout the holidays.

Shanah Tovah. ♦



Rabbi Beraha FROM PAGE 1 ►

You might run into your friend's father while biking along Blackstone Boulevard (and he might call your parents later to tell them you weren't wearing a helmet) or see your third-grade teacher on an errand to Davis Deli, the local kosher butcher and the only one in town.

Most of the families we knew belonged, like us, to the local Conservative synagogue, and sent their children to the Jewish day school next door. Down the street, just past Brown University's football stadium, was the Jewish Community Center.

At the time, I knew nothing about *why* we celebrated Shabbat the way we did: with friends around the table, special "Shabbat chicken," those delicious boxed brownies that just so happen to be pareve, Hebrew and Zionist songs, and *Birkat HaMazon*, the traditional prayer after the meal. Like the proverbial fish in water, I took for granted that this was what Friday nights were like, that the week naturally moved into such a holy, wholesome evening.

When dinner talk turned to

topics like the Gulf War or Bill and Hillary, the conversation easily found its way back to the latest with Ross and Rachel (from *Friends*), the genius of Jordan and Pippen, grunge fashion, or who in the neighborhood had a Nintendo. That was just the rhythm of things. Lightness felt possible.

I might be overly romanticizing those Shabbat evenings, but even so, I think things really were easier then, in that golden patch during the 1990s: pre-smartphone, pre-social media, pre-algorithm, before every disagreement followed us home.

While shtetl life was religiously Conservative, I summered as a Reform Jew. My father grew up just outside Chicago—in Park Forest, a planned postwar suburb—and had spent many summers at a Reform Jewish camp in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. As an adult, he volunteered there as a doctor, so that's where my brothers and I went to camp. L'dor va dor. From generation to generation.

It was there that I was first introduced to the thrilling blend of prayer and guitar, and to a Judaism that felt less

insular, less concerned with whether I was wearing a head covering, and overall more modern and aesthetically alive.

My father's sister grew up at the same camp but as an adult became *frum*, Orthodox. When I was younger, she once told me that everything she learned there was a lie.

"Like, what'd they lie about?" I asked her.

"They told us that Moses didn't *really* talk to God," she told me.

"So he did?" I questioned.

"He did!" she replied emphatically.

There was an appeal to her certainty, and years later I would flirt with that world. But today I see that my aunt hasn't escaped modernity; she's simply chosen a different response to it. Orthodoxy is not some untouched "Ur-Judaism," preserved from a world before modernity. It, too, took shape in response to modern life—and the

Rabbi Beraha FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►

certainty that once appealed to me has become far less compelling.

Looking back, I realize that I was exposed to several different Jewish worlds before I had the language to understand how different they were: the Conservative Judaism of home and synagogue, the Reform Judaism of camp, and the Orthodox world personified by my aunt. These were not abstract categories to me. They were people I loved, places where I felt at home, and ways of making Jewish life real. I didn't yet know what to do with the differences between them, but I could feel them. Perhaps that is where my interest in Jewish disagreement began.

I'm drawn to the conversations our differences make possible. My life has been enriched by encountering Jews and Jewish communities whose practices and convictions differ from my own. I'm drawn to the grand and minute Jewish arguments passed down through the millennia, the larger intellectual disagreements of the ages, and ultimately to the feeling that Judaism is still being worked out in *real time*. This is what I love about

Reform Judaism: it gives me a home without closing the conversation. As we know very well at Temple Micah, Reform is not only a name, it's a verb. And perhaps that is one of the best descriptions of Judaism itself—a tradition that survives by continuing to change.

"Judaisms. Plural." Rabbi Zemel always says, quoting his teacher, Jacob Neusner. Pharisees and Sadducees. Karaites and their rabbinic opponents. Maimonides and those who denounced his books. Kabbalists, rationalists, Hasidim and the Mitnagdim, Zionists and those who thought it was all a dream. The Jewish world we've inherited was molded, like wet clay, through disagreements for the sake of heaven, with constant reshaping.

Jewish continuity, in other words, is not synonymous with sameness. Judaism has survived by carrying its arguments forward *without allowing disagreement to end the relationship*. I'm grateful for this inheritance and hope that our current internal disagreements don't prove this pattern wrong.

Ultimately, and at our best, a Judaism that grows not *despite* but *because* of difference and disagreement can help us see more clearly who we are, and what is uniquely ours to contribute to the Jewish conversation. Of course, disagreements can also become divisions, and divisions can pull a community apart. I hope we can keep disagreeing without losing sight of the fact that we belong to one another.

I look forward to all the good, hard, and challenging work ahead. I know that serving as Senior Rabbi of Temple Micah will enrich me, especially because this is a community that understands Judaism not as a finished inheritance, but as something we continue to shape, and hand forward. I hope to bring my questions to that work, and I hope you'll bring yours.

In gratitude,



Rabbi Joshua Beraha



ANNUAL UNDERWEAR DRIVE

Since 2000, Temple Micah has provided undergarments to our neighbors experiencing homelessness, in partnership with Friendship Place.

Our drive supplies Friendship Place's clientele with new undergarments for an entire year!

**Underwear Brings Dignity.
Help us make this year's Underwear Drive a success!**

WISHLIST



MEN

Boxer Briefs

Sizes: M, L

Unisex T-Shirts

Sizes: M, L

WOMEN

Mid-Rise

Size: M

High Briefs

Size: L

Boy Shorts

Size: Any



Bags will be distributed at Rosh Hashanah morning services. Please fill your bag with NEW items from the list, and bring your filled bag to Yom Kippur services on Monday, September 21.

MANY THANKS FOR YOUR DONATIONS!

Questions? Email underwear@templemicah.org



Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives



From Jewish Camp to the Bimah: Rabbi Whitehead's Journey to Temple Micah

By JODI ENDA

Kelly Whitehead might not be a rabbi were it not for Donald Trump. Then again, she might not be a rabbi at Temple Micah were it not for my daughter and me. Not that I'm equating us.

Yet here she is, Micah's newest rabbi, delivering poignant sermons that incorporate her deep understanding of Jewish history and teachings, her inherent humor and humanity, and the occasional assist from her researcher, "Rabbi Google." She comes equipped with years of social justice work and advocacy and an eagerness to meet with individual congregants in the hope that she can help make their lives more meaningful and their Judaism more relevant.

As we talk in a DC coffee shop, Rabbi Whitehead expresses her profound joy at her new job as Micah's rabbinic fellow, her respect for the other rabbis and the staff, her appreciation for the temple's practices of questioning and innovating—and her new office chair, which arrived this very August day.

"I can show you a picture!" she says exuberantly. "Oh yeah, and Adam Zemel and I found a desk on the street in Georgetown!" (Yes, her close friend is the son of Micah's rabbi emeritus.)

"I just feel so grateful to be in this job," Rabbi Whitehead says. "Even if the days are really long, it's undeniably fulfilling." She says she feels as if she's in a "pinch-myself kind of situation—to be in what really felt like a dream job, a social-justice motivated, intellectually curious, musically profound, dynamic congregation that values innovation and doesn't care about wealth as a reflection of the classist world outside."

For most of her 32 years, Rabbi Whitehead neither expected to be a rabbi nor, once she entered rabbinical school, a pulpit rabbi.

"I wasn't one of the people who had my bat mitzvah as my dress rehearsal for being a rabbi. I didn't always see



myself down that path because probably I didn't see people like me in that role," says Rabbi Whitehead, whose mother is the Jewish daughter of a Holocaust survivor and whose late father was West Indian.

Rabbi Whitehead's maternal grandfather, artist Donald Katz, decreed that a young Kelly and her brother, Ethan, should grow up in a synagogue. After a bit of shul shopping, their mother, Emily Whitehead, found "*the place*" in Brooklyn. The next day, Emily phoned her dad, who revealed that years earlier he had carved the plaques on the temple's massive wooden doors, their 10-foot panels containing golden symbols of the twelve tribes of Jacob.

"I am someone who believes

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►

Rabbi Whitehead FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►

we often find ourselves exactly where we are meant to be and that sometimes, what we call coincidence is just the universe nudging us," Rabbi Whitehead wrote in an email earlier this year, when the temple of her youth was honoring Emily for decades of volunteer work. Both her children and Emily became b'nai mitzvah at Temple Beth Emet (now Beth Shalom v'Emeth Reform Temple).

Kelly further solidified her Jewish identity as a camper and then as a counselor at URJ Camp Harlam, where, at age 18, she helped supervise a bunk that included my daughter, Ilana. When I picked Ilana up in 2012, she told me that her counselor was about to start college at American University and that we *had* to hire her as a babysitter. (Ilana, now 25, is sitting in on our interview.) Rabbi Whitehead picks up the story:

"I remember you connected me to Danny (Zemel), and he wanted to meet me. And I remember going to his office, and I was like, 'What do you wear?' So I put on a blazer and nice pants, which is hilarious" because Rabbi Zemel is partial to hoodies. "I was kind of

nervous because it was an interview to teach in the Machon. And I must have been sitting properly, speaking formally or something. He's like, 'There's no need to be so formal.'"

Needless to say, she got the job. After graduating from AU, she continued to work with young Jews, accepting a position as a youth engagement specialist at Temple Sinai. The year was 2016.

Then came the election of Donald Trump.

"I remember the clergy at Sinai just really holding the grief of folks in those following months," Rabbi Whitehead recalls. When the new administration imposed a Muslim ban, Temple Sinai's rabbis went to the airport to protest, she says. "I remember feeling so motivated by the clergy in a way I wasn't by local politicians. And I learned that it's because of something called their moral voice."

The rabbis, she says, linked their actions and opinions to thousands of years of Jewish traditions and texts, which



Rabbi Whitehead's grandfather, Donald Katz, carved the plaques on the doors at B'ShERT: Beth Shalom v'Emeth Reform Temple



A young Kelly Whitehead with her mother Emily, brother Ethan, and father George at B'ShERT

enabled them "to make sense of that very chaotic time in the world."

The future Rabbi Whitehead was uplifted by Sinai's rabbis and by the outward actions of the Reform movement, which voted at the URJ's 2017 Biennial conference to pursue racial justice and an end to systemic racism within Judaism and in the larger American community. She also felt empowered by a URJ JewV'Nation Fellowship, a

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►

Rabbi Whitehead FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►

leadership development program centered on affinity groups. Meeting other Jews of Color helped her to realize she was not alone.

At the same time, she struggled with contradictions within the walls of Temple Sinai, where some members questioned whether she was Jewish or even confused her for a custodian. She thought about the two mixed-race children she had been babysitting, whose family attended Sinai. "And I was like, they cannot have this. That is not fair to them," she says. "I felt inspired."

With a push from one of Sinai's rabbis, she applied to Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and started her year in Israel shortly before the pandemic closed down in-person gatherings. She returned to Micah as a Tisch Fellow in the summer of 2023, the same year she got a master's degree in nonprofit management and another in Hebrew literature from HUC-JIR.

Her summer at Micah—and the mentorship of Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel—made Rabbi Whitehead reconsider her

reluctance to serve as a congregational rabbi. But that would take some time.

Following her ordination in 2024, she and her then-partner, also a rabbi, moved to North Carolina. Rabbi Whitehead worked for two years as an assistant director for the URJ, where she taught people "on the margins of Judaism," some because they were new to the teachings, some because they lived in areas with no synagogues. She designed and led adult learning initiatives on themes that included antisemitism, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and peoplehood.

Now, the self-described perfectionist is embracing the culture at Micah, a place that she says is allowing her to stretch her muscles, intellectually and spiritually.

Her early sermons provide vivid glimpses into her intellectual heft, her desire to challenge dogma and tradition, and her ability and willingness to provoke and make us question our assumptions about ourselves and the world around us. Here's one example from a sermon to mark Shabbat Nachamu, the Shabbat of

Comfort, which follows Tisha B'Av, the saddest day on the Jewish calendar:

When fear becomes our primary way of seeing, our own pain can crowd out everything else. We become experts at recognizing betrayal and slower to recognize solidarity. It's easier to think of every moment we stood alone and overlook the moments when others stood beside us. Our expectations begin to shrink and we become more cautious about extending trust, even when partnership might be possible.

Trauma shapes our memories, our present, and..... our imagination. It becomes harder to picture a future that is not organized around survival. Harder to imagine relationships rooted in mutual care rather than mutual suspicion.

On a more personal level, Rabbi Whitehead is meeting one-on-one with Micah members and asking them why they are Micah members—and more.

"I think we're in a time where religion, Judaism, is incredibly optional, if anything, challenging. And we're located in a place where there's

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►

Rabbi Whitehead FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►

choice," she says. "People are actively choosing Micah. And so I'm learning why they're choosing Micah and also why they're choosing Judaism at this time."

Rabbi Whitehead remains connected to Camp Harlam, where she met not only my daughter and Adam Zemel, but her girlfriend, Hannah Lafargue.

She wants to use what she's learned, in rabbinical school and in life, to help congregants deal with their challenges and their passions. She wants to engage people on the issues of the day, including Israel-Palestine and antisemitism. She wants to become involved with social justice on such topics as immigration and trans rights.

Mostly, she says, she wants to immerse herself in Micah, to exchange ideas with her colleagues and congregants, to advance the spirit of experimentation, and to extend the joy of the Jewish journey that drew her to the temple in the first place.

"It's really nice," she says, "to be in a community where people care." ♦



THE ELUL PROJECT 5786

A VISION FOR HOPE AND CHANGE IN A FRACTURED WORLD

CLICK OR SCAN TO LEARN MORE:



Becoming (and Being) American

By PETER FRISTEDT

The national agony over mistreatment and disparagement of immigrants hits home at Temple Micah. Our community has stood by refugees and immigrants as essential to Jewish history, teachings, and character. Temple Micah members, descended from immigrants and in some cases immigrants themselves, have helped resettle immigrants and worked to influence public policy and the national debate. With this issue, we are continuing our series of articles by members who share their immigration stories. If you have a story to share, reach out to vine@templemicah.org.

During this year of national milestones, I marked two of my own: I turned 50 and celebrated the 20th anniversary of becoming a US citizen. I was born in Sweden and immigrated to the US when I was a child, but it took me a long time to become an American. My dad's career took us back to Europe for several years, and even after graduating from high school and college here in the US I did not feel especially "American." For a long time my sense of who I was was rooted in Europe—but when I

spent time in Europe, people responded to me as an American. So in some sense, that is exactly what I had become, and I decided that this was the place I wanted to live, work, and settle. As it happens, I made this decision during a time when ambivalence about America was running especially high among many Americans: the Bush administration's Global War on Terror. Making that decision necessitated seeing beyond the actions of the current government to the underlying reality of this place.

So on a cold New York morning in January 2006, in a Brooklyn courthouse filled with people from around the world who were there for the same reason, I forswore allegiance to foreign princes and potentates and swore to defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic. I would later join the federal government as a program officer at the National Endowment for the Humanities and take the oath of office, again swearing to



support and defend the Constitution. I am bound to America by these two oaths, and after all this time and all of these biographical twists and turns I have some thoughts on what being American means to me.

I believe being an American means a lot of things—it means inheriting a particular (incredibly complicated) history and a particular (glorious) culture. That history includes both Indian Removal and Selma, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the WPA, slavery and the 19th Amendment. That culture brings under one roof Miles Davis, Jerry Springer, William Faulkner, John Ford, Helen Frankenthaler, Mickey Mouse, Merle Haggard, Frank Gehry, and Lamar Jackson.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►

Becoming American FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►

You can feel any number of ways about this history and this culture, but they are part of the American reality, and as an American you have to grapple with them on some level. When you become an American, they become *your* culture and *your* history. Turning away, especially from the history, does not make it go away; it will continue to speak through you whether you want it to or not.

To be an American is to have a particular relationship to the idea of freedom. Our political system is based on the idea of uncoerced—and to some extent unconstrained—participation in economic, religious, and political life. And our culture celebrates the idea of freedom as core to who we are as Americans. Whether or not you think this ideal has ever been realized, you cannot escape the centrality of the concept in both how Americans think of themselves and in how the state organizes itself in concrete and practical terms. What that freedom amounts to can mean a lot of different things, and much of American history and politics revolves around negotiations on what it ultimately means to be free.

But the vast majority of us (not all of us!) are committed to freedom in some shape or form.

To be American for the past 80 years or so has meant to reckon with America's status as the world's richest and most powerful nation. That brute fact comes with certain responsibilities, among which is not subjecting yourself to the delusion that "America first" is a new imperative that our leaders have somehow ignored until now, or to the related delusion that America is some sort of victim whose victimhood needs to be avenged or redressed. Being an American in this era is to recognize that the future course of the world—in environmental, political, cultural, technological, and economic terms—will be deeply affected by what America does now. Not on what only America does, of course: when America tries to act as the world's sole savior it runs into just as much trouble as when it embraces a hard national egoism. But its great power demands that we Americans realize that its actions shape the world, and demands of us a responsibility to look 20, 50, 100 years into the future and think about how those actions will reverberate

across the world through its future history.

As Amerigo Bonasera says at the start of *The Godfather*, "I believe in America." I believe in our institutions, in our civil society, in our artists and scholars, and in our people. I believe in our Constitution, and I believe we'll be okay in the end. But to be okay, to be good and even great, I believe, unlike Bonasera, that we have to turn away from the ideal of the gangster (another deeply American figure), and instead turn toward the ideal of the migrant—the person who brings to a new place the hope and the conviction that that place will offer a haven and yield opportunities beyond what was possible in the one she came from. The migrant seeks openness, support, and the friendship of community, while the gangster seeks power and sees friends as means to more power.

The America I love is the America of migrants, not of gangsters—even though I do love a good gangster movie. ♦

What an Educated Jew Should Know

By RABBI SAMANTHA FRANK

What should an educated Jew know? This question is at the forefront of our minds as we revise the Machon curriculum each year. For some Jews, the answer to the question, “What should an educated Jew know?” is clear, because *halacha* (Jewish law) governs the major decisions of their life: what activities are forbidden on Shabbat, how to keep a Kosher home, how to read a page of Talmud.

But for many Reform Jews, the answer is more complicated. Living Jewishly is a choice, not a piece of identity taken for granted. Most of us do not strictly follow the laws of keeping Kosher or Shabbat. We too often think of Judaism as a list of things that we don’t do, as opposed to seeing the value in that which we do. Yet our Jewish convictions and the behaviors that stem from them are exactly what we seek to teach at Machon Micah.

Edmund Fleg, a French-Jewish writer (1874-1963), wrote:

“I am a Jew because in every place where suffering weeps, the Jew weeps. I am a Jew because at every time when despair cries out, the Jew hopes.”

How do we translate this feeling, this sense of being Jewish and of the spiritual and actual responsibilities imbued therein, to knowledge and action? This is a Judaism of the head, intellect, the heart, feeling, and the hands—action.

In the Machon, we believe that an educated Jew should know the stories that have shaped us through the millennia, and should feel comfortable practicing the rituals that accompany them. This means that our students know that we shake a grogger to blot out Haman’s name. That our families know that Shabbat Shirah and the musical celebration of the Israelites coming out of the sea is part of the Passover story that we tell at our seder tables. That our students know that we light Hanukkah candles to celebrate our people’s triumph of light over darkness—our freedom from oppression.

Knowing the stories and the rituals is so important that we build a spiral curriculum, meaning that each year our preschoolers through fourth graders are learning the same



stories, but each year with added depth and complexity. Our youngest learners explore Abraham and Sarah as the great-grandparents of the Jewish people, while our older students explore Abraham and Sarah as the first people to welcome the stranger. They ask what it means to welcome a new student into class at school. And our middle schoolers start to think about the framework of covenant: Abraham and Sarah were the first Jews. How does their commitment and relationship to the Eternal shape our own Jewish choices? In other words, students learn Jewish stories in ways that relate to their lives.

Finding relevance in our Jewish stories is important,

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►

Rabbi Frank FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►

but it is not all we teach. Jewish identity asks something of us. Being Jewish means that we have responsibilities in how we relate to the world. The *mitzvot* are not only about how we eat or pray; they are the moral foundation of our ethical obligations. In our classrooms (and in the social hall, and in the kitchen, and in the sanctuary), we give our students the building blocks and the space to learn Jewish stories and then to make connections on their own.

One question that the liberal

Jew asks is: why do I need Jewish language to express the thing that is the right thing to do? In other words, do I need to be Jewish to stand up and say that ICE's wanton violence against immigrants is wrong? The answer is, of course, no. But we help our students make the connection between the story of the Jews' enslavement in Egypt and modern day ICE policies against immigrants. We help them understand that we can — and must—use our Jewish moral imperative to say and do the right thing. It is our responsibility as Jews to clothe

the naked, deal justly with the stranger, and care for the modern day widow and orphan. We provide opportunities to act on these convictions through the Underwear Drive and at other touchpoints throughout the year.

An educated Jew should know that we come from somewhere: that the stories in the Torah are our ancestors' attempt at making sense of the mysterious beautiful cruelty of being alive in this world. At Machon, we look back at our Jewish stories to build a Jewish future of joy, wholeness, and justice. ♦

A note on Tzedakah: Due to technical difficulties, this issue of the Vine does not include a list of recent donations. The next issue of the Vine will feature donations made between June 1 - November 15.

MAZAL TOV

NANCY AND DON ELISBURG, on the engagement of their granddaughter, Elana Berger to Josh Winick

SASHA GOTTLIEB, on the birth of her child, Caleb Amare Gottlieb

SERENA AND CONNOR PFEIFFER, on the birth of their child, Sadie Pfeiffer

ALLISON SCHNEIDER AND REY FUENTES, on the birth of their child, Sawyer Schneider-Fuentes

MADELINE AND CHRISTOPHER SCHOMBURG, on the birth of their child, Gili Adara

ALICE TALMUD, on the birth of her grandchild, Hazel Alma Talmud

CONDOLENCES

THE TEMPLE MICAH COMMUNITY
extends its deepest condolences to

THE TEMPLE MICAH COMMUNITY, on the death of member Else Moskowitz

DEBORAH BOUFFORD, on the death of her uncle, Leonard Berger

LIZ POLINER, on the death of her mother, Marian Katz

MARY BETH SCHIFFMAN, on the death of her mother, Maxine R. Schiffman

MICHAEL SEWELL, on the death of his mother, Maryann Sewell

AJ SIEGEL, on the death of his father, Larry Siegel

ALEXANDRA ZAPRUDER, on the death of her mother, Marjorie Zapruder

May their memories be a blessing.

A New Addition to the Jewish Cookbook Shelf: Introducing *Tlaim*

By RABBI HEALY SLAKMAN

On a cold, dark December night in Brooklyn in 2022, I found myself running all over town, from grocery store to grocery store, restaurant to restaurant, searching for an ingredient I never could have predicted I would urgently need: nopales—fresh cactus paddles. I had a pot of nopales chicken soup to make, and friends coming over to taste and be warmed by a stranger's family recipe.

That winter, and periodically over the years that followed, I found myself testing recipes and participating in the creation of a grassroots community cookbook that celebrates the ethnic and racial diversity of the Jewish people. This year, I am excited to share that the [*Tlaim Patchwork Cookbook*](#), gathered and edited by Alana Chandler, is finally finished and available. *Tlaim* takes its name from the Hebrew word for “patchwork,” reflecting the more than 80 recipes and stories woven together from Jewish communities around the world. Through dishes rooted in family memory, migration, holiday practice, and everyday life, each recipe serves not only as a set of instructions, but as a doorway into the lived experiences, histories, and traditions of its contributor.

I have a passion for cookbooks, and I see Jewish cookbooks as living cultural artifacts—a genre of Jewish literature in their own right. When studied, they tell the ever-evolving story of Jewish identity: where we have lived, what we have carried with us, how we have adapted, and how we have nurtured and sustained one generation to the next. They reveal how Jewish communities have been shaped by surrounding cultures while also preserving particular traditions, tastes, and practices—and what those choices say about what we value. And recipes have a remarkable ability to make visible histories and identities that dominant narratives too often obscure.

The *Tlaim* does just this: uplifts recipes, stories, and traditions of Jews from all kinds of backgrounds whose lived experiences have always been—and continue to be—an integral part of the Jewish story. There is no single “Jews of Color” identity contained within these pages. Each recipe reflects radically different backgrounds, histories, cultures, and relationships to Jewishness. So many of the contributors hold multiple identities at once—Jewish and something else, and often many



something else. And the recipes are all the more delicious, celebratory, and deep as ingredients, traditions, and practices from different parts of a person's identity come together in a single dish.

In this sense, the recipes tell not only the stories of historically underrepresented Jewish identities, but a much larger Jewish story. Jewish life has never been culturally singular. We have always crossed borders, adapted traditions, shifted practices, and absorbed new flavors. Our communities, stories, and identities are richer for it.

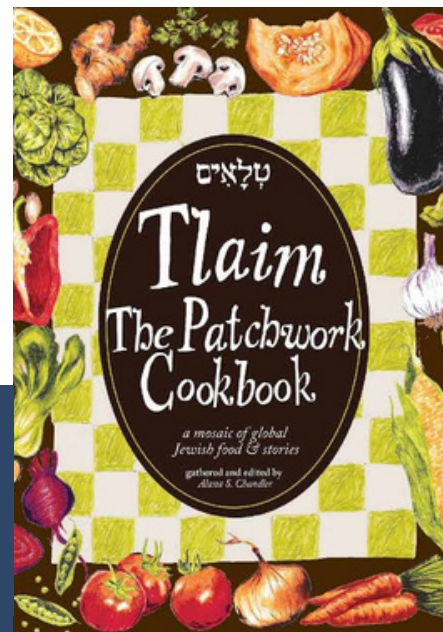
I hope you'll acquire a copy of the cookbook and make it part of your own kitchen—stain its pages with ingredients, scribble your adaptations in the margins, and add another layer to the living story these recipes carry. You can purchase it online or download a free

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►

Rabbi Slakman FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►

virtual copy and begin cooking from there! Find recipes I contributed, including the nopales chicken soup, Sambusak bel Jeben, Yusheng with Lox, Japanese charoset, and many more.

May the recipes and stories in this book inspire us to recognize, uplift, and celebrate the ethnic and racial diversity of Jewish people—and to see the Jewish story in all of its dynamic fullness. I hope you will try some and let me know which ones you like! ♦



TUNISIAN CROQUETTES (BANATAGE)

Banatage are deep fried, breaded, stuffed, croquette-esque potato balls that epitomize North African comfort food. While they are usually filled with meat, my version calls for a spiced mushroom mixture. You can also omit the mushroom mixture and experiment with the usual vegetarian substitution of chopped hard boiled eggs!

Growing up, I visited my grandmother every summer. I remember talking about her banatage on the plane ride over, wondering if she would make them— secretly knowing very well that she would. She always did, even though they are traditionally prepared on Passover, because she wanted to treat us and celebrate the special occasion of our visit, even if it meant standing over the stove for hours, in the 100 degree heat of July in Ramle, with no air-conditioning, deep frying.

Yields about 18 banatage

Ingredients:

Potato Exterior:

5 potatoes
2 tablespoons oil
1 teaspoon consommé
1 teaspoon turmeric
Salt and pepper to taste

Mushroom Filling:

1-2 tablespoons olive oil
1 onion, diced
1 tsp vinegar
1 tsp sugar
16 oz mushrooms, finely chopped

1 tsp paprika
1 tablespoon consommé
1 bunch of parsley, finely chopped
Salt and pepper to taste

Frying:

Matzo meal*
3 eggs
Vegetable oil



Procedure:

Preparing ingredients

1. Bring salted water to a boil
2. Boil 5 potatoes with skin on for 30-40 min. Potatoes should be very soft
3. Remove from water. While potatoes are still warm, remove skin. Add oil, consommé, turmeric, salt and pepper to potatoes. Smash into a smooth, uniform mixture
4. Place in the fridge and allow to cool completely. Potato mixture will be easier to manage cold
5. While potatoes are boiling, prepare **mushroom mixture**

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►

Rabbi Slakman FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►

Procedure, continued:

6. Sauté onions in oil, adding sugar and vinegar before they have become translucent
7. Add chopped mushrooms, paprika, consommé, and salt
8. Cook mushrooms on a medium high flame, stirring semi regularly. The mushrooms will release liquid as they cook. Continue cooking mushrooms until the liquid has evaporated completely
9. When the liquid is about 50% evaporated, add chopped parsley
10. Add salt and pepper to taste
11. Place mushroom mixture in fridge and allow to completely cool

Assembly and Frying:

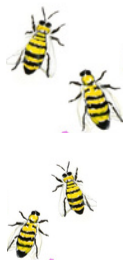
1. On a medium flame, heat vegetable oil in a pot or deep pan
2. To prepare for frying, beat eggs in one small bowl, and fill a second bowl with matzo meal. Remove potato and mushroom mixtures from fridge and position them near the eggs and matzo meal
3. Scoop about a golf-sized ball of potato mixture into palm of hand. Flatten the ball, and scoop some mushroom mixture into the middle. Start creating the banatage by gently closing palm of hand, wrapping potato mixture around mushrooms, and carefully forming into a cylinder-like sphere (see photo for shape). Ensure that mushroom mixture is totally concealed. Because the potato mixture can be sticky and difficult to manage, I suggest lightly coating hands with vegetable oil to prevent sticking
4. One at a time, submerge banatage first in egg and then in matzo meal, ensuring uniform and consistent coverage
5. Place the banatage in oil and fry for 3-4 min on each side, or until the banatage becomes golden brown and crispy. Avoid frying more than 3-4 banatage at a time because overcrowding will impact the fry
6. Remove from oil and place on a paper towel to cool, sprinkling with additional salt immediately
7. Serve hot or at room temperature

**Banatage can be cooked all year long. If it's not Passover, I suggest coating with all purpose flour instead of matzo meal*

Shanah tovah!



Cover and High Holy Day
Artwork by Jessie Regunberg



High Holy Days 5787



Full Schedule at templemicah.org/5787

Registration required for select services. ✎



Services at Temple Micah

Selichot & Havdalah | Saturday, September 5 @ 8 p.m.

Rosh Hashanah Morning: Young Children's Service ✎

Saturday, September 12 @ 9 a.m.

Rosh Hashanah Morning: Family-Friendly Service ✎

Saturday, September 12 @ 10:30 a.m.

Yom Kippur Morning: Young Children's Service ✎

Monday, September 21 @ 9 a.m.

Yom Kippur Morning: Family-Friendly Service ✎

Monday, September 21 @ 10:30 a.m.

Services at National United Methodist Church (NUMC)

Erev Rosh Hashanah | Friday, September 11 @ 8 p.m. * ✎

Rosh Hashanah Morning | Saturday, September 12 @ 10:30 a.m. * ✎

Kol Nidre | Sunday, September 20 @ 8 p.m. * ✎

Yom Kippur Morning | Monday, September 21 @ 10:30 a.m. * ✎

Yom Kippur Afternoon | Monday, September 21 @ 1:15 p.m. *

Additional Services & Upcoming Holidays

Tashlich at Rock Creek Park | Sunday, September 13 @ 10 a.m.

Erev Sukkot at Temple Micah Sukkah | Friday, September 25 @ 6:30 p.m.

Sukkot at Temple Micah | Saturday, September 26 @ 10:15 a.m. *

Erev Simchat Torah at Temple Micah | Friday, October 2 @ 6:30 p.m. *

Simchat Torah at Temple Micah | Saturday, October 3 @ 10:15 a.m. *

* Livestream available



**Every person shall sit under his grapevine
or fig tree with no one to make him afraid.**

Micah 4:4



Temple Micah
2829 Wisconsin Ave NW
Washington, DC 20007