

Kol Bogrei Rambam is the Alumni Committee's monthly e-newsletter for and about Maimonides School graduates. Each month we share information on individual graduates' ventures and accomplishments, as well as general news notes, all reflecting the school's mission of preparing educated, observant Jews to be contributing members of society. Your ideas and accomplishments will help sustain and strengthen this key communications tool; please forward to alumni@maimonides.org.

Graduate's Hospitality Career Thrives in the Hub of Boston's Medical Universe

Heather Linda '97 has been in the hospitality business since the summer of 1998. And for 17 of those years, she has worked as a manager at what she describes as "a unique property" at the corner of Brookline and Longwood Avenues in Boston.

The Inn at Longwood Medical promotes itself as being "located in the heart of Boston's Longwood Medical and Academic Area -- Children's Hospital, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Harvard Medical School, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Joslin Diabetes Center, and other medical campus destinations, all just minutes from our hotel's front door."

Heather noted that "40 percent of our guests are here for medical-related reasons and another 20 percent or so are corporate clients with the hospitals or local universities and colleges."

As the reservations and revenue manager, Heather's primary function is to make sure that the hotel's rates are available through multiple channels -- direct bookings, the Global Distribution System, and online travel agencies such as Expedia.com and its subsidiaries. For the past few years she also has managed front desk operations, as well as forecasting and budgeting for the rooms division.

"I have always referred to our front desk as an emotional roller coaster," Heather observed. "You can have the businessperson who just got off a redeye that wants to take a quick shower before a morning meeting; a Red Sox fan who drove down from Vermont for a game; a family member who has spent the past 10 days sitting outside an ICU and just wants a solid eight hours of sleep; or a patient who drove in for their 15th round of chemo."

Many guests "become like family," she continued. "They ask to be called by their first names, they remember all of our names, and the staff knows their stories."

"Because of our location, people tend to forget that we are a privately-owned hotel, and that we are a business that is here to make a profit," Heather said. There are times when the hotel is sold out, or too costly for a prospective client, and "it is always hard when you cannot accommodate someone that you know is going through a hardship," she said.

The Inn at Longwood Medical "has always accommodated my religious needs. I originally started answering the phones on a Sunday through Thursday schedule. For the most part, it has stayed that way, allowing me to have Friday and Shabbos off."

"We have worked out a system where I am the manager on duty for all legal holidays,

which allows me additional flexibility and paid time off for use during the Jewish holidays," she added.

Heather said, "I knew what I wanted to do for a career when I was in seventh grade, and I was accepted to the school of my choice while still a junior. The traditional path, including SATs, was not on my radar."

Then her intended career path, culinary arts, had to change during her senior year for medical reasons. Teacher Dorothy Kaufman, b'71, "was a strong supporter of my alternative choices. She was an avid fan of Martha Stewart, and every month we would pick out a recipe from the magazine for me to present to the class. I'll never forget doing personalized cookies for February or the sunflower cake for a different month. Many of my classmates were also very supportive of my choices," she said.

"I find the hotel industry fascinating, and to be able to combine my math skills (thanks, Mrs. [Phyllis] Schwartz and Mr. [Michael] Schockett) with something as truly diverse as hospitality has been a great fit for me. I love what I do."

She has received abundant recognition for her performance, including Employee/Leader of the Year twice and of the Quarter multiple times. "One of my proudest moments, though, was when a customer service initiative that we created at the hotel, Hope the Bear, won the Innovation Award at the Massachusetts Lodging Association and American Hotel and Lodging Association levels. The award is given to the hotel that provides a unique and inspiring way to serve guests."



Heather Linda '97 with Hope the Bear, a customer service initiative she helped develop at the Inn at Longwood Medical.



Visit Maimonides on **Facebook**



Follow our Twitter feed, **KolRambam**



Subscribe to our **YouTube** channel, **MaimoTube**

Alumna's New Venture Explores Text, Tradition through Tangible Creating

The Torah portions *Vayakhel-Pekkudei* earlier this month describe collective artisan creativity in great detail.

Very much inspired by that model of holy creativity, a group of people, ages 11-80, from the Berkeley, CA Jewish community gathers each week at the Beyond Noah's Ark Maker Beit Midrash. As a group, and in *chevruta* pairs, they learn Jewish texts, experiment with art and craft materials, and create interactive, tangible resources in preparation for Pesach.

"In some ways, you could think of this as experiential *divrei Torah*, where people learn by interacting and participating," said **Adina Polen '01**, founder of Beyond Noah's Ark (www.beyondnoahsark.org).

Adina, who studied graphic design at Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design and Hadassah College in Jerusalem, explains, "In this tech- and digital- focused world, we get so much out of tangible creating in community; engaging with the layers of deep stories, texts and traditions of our people; and developing a sacred material culture that honors and gives access to those."

"The focus of Beyond Noah's Ark is on developing multi-generational, multi-denominational communities of practice around *chevruta* learning and creating," she said. "We emphasize process and creative exploration, but we also seek to produce new items that will be personally relevant points of access to Jewish texts and tradition."

During the current Maker Beit Midrash series, "we have a *chevruta* exploring interlocking Möbius strips that signify different ever-repeating dualities within the *seder*. The participants reflect on how family members hold links in the chain, and discussion is generated based on what each person is holding. Another *chevruta* is working on a shadow puppet theater box, with a story that tracks personal and ancestral journeys, while highlighting some universal themes."

The contemporary Maker Movement is a key inspiration for her startup organization, Adina explained. "Making builds somatic knowledge. When we think with our hands, we deepen our understanding."

A graduate of Barnard College, where she majored in music and took some intensive art classes, Adina made *aliyah* a few months after graduation. In Israel she was a counselor on the tour program Nesiya, where American and Israeli high schoolers encounter the land and discover a personal Jewish path through text learning and experiential art. "In many ways this provided the spark for what I'm doing now," she said.

Returning to Boston in 2010-11 while her husband, Ariel Mayse, was completing Ph.D. studies at Harvard, Adina taught at Maimonides Middle School. (Rabbi Dr. Mayse is now an assistant professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Stanford University.) This also gave her the opportunity to rejoin the Maimonides Jazz Band after a nine-year hiatus. Adina noted that director Michael Maleson's, b"r, "serious emphasis on playfulness and experimentation inspired a central value at Beyond Noah's Ark."

Back in Israel, Adina worked as an in-house graphic designer for Nefesh B'Nefesh. A few years later, the idea for Beyond Noah's Ark "developed when we were moving from Jerusalem to Ann Arbor for Ariel's post-doc. In the transition from being an in-house designer to being a full-time artist and freelancer, I felt a need for more robust creative community. At the same time, I became aware of the need for a wider array of high-quality creative resources that inspire a personal, authentic relationship with Jewish tradition."

The family now resides in Berkeley. Ariel is the rabbi-in-residence on the Beyond

Noah's Ark team and has been instrumental in thinking through how to bring Jewish ideas into manifest form. Additional inspiration also comes from Adina and Ariel's three children, Ezra, Nahum and Daniel, who insistently pepper them with interesting questions about big and small things, she said.



Adina Polen '01, Rabbi Dr. Ariel Mayse, and their sons.

As Beyond Noah's Ark takes root in the Bay Area, Adina's vision includes "a funded artists' and educators' *kollel* as an opportunity for this type of creating to become a professional path for Jewish makers; a permanent institutional home; and satellite maker programs, including one in Israel," she said.

Some items created will also eventually be available for distribution. Already in the Beyond Noah's Ark online shop is a publication that Adina and her father, Rabbi Dr. Nehemia Polen, produced this summer, which explores the significance of the moon, and a total solar eclipse, through a Jewish lens.

Beyond Noah's Ark is a fiscally sponsored nonprofit, with an aim of providing programs that will be accessible for a wide variety of people. "I'm very much involved in grant writing and fundraising through a variety of foundations," Adina said. "We're always looking for partners and supporters in this work."

Graduate Finally Finds Income, Spare Time to Pursue Comedy Projects

Etai Shuchatowitz '13 studied math at Yeshiva University and works as a software engineer in New York City. He is also an occasional actor and stand-up comic with a personal YouTube channel, and the author of screen and stage plays including *I'll Be Right Here*, a political drama that was produced at the YU theatre in 2016.

For almost three years Etai has been collaborating with actor and YU friend Moshe Lobel on a 10-part web-based program entitled *Untold Genius*, which salutes and satirizes the format of documentary films. A pilot episode has been released online as the producers continue fundraising via Kickstarter to complete the series.

"I've always wanted to be a screenwriter and/or comedy writer -- that's really my secret-not-so-secret passion," Etai related. "I've been writing movies and TV since I was 10, making sketch comedy. Back in Maimo, friends and I made a pilot for a show that was terrible, and nobody will ever see. *Untold Genius* is just the natural extension for somebody who has wanted to do this for his entire life, finally getting out of school and having an income and a little bit of time."

Although he likes to "write and watch things across all genres, I do have a soft spot for very silly comedy." He describes *Untold Genius* as "a comedy that features people making a ridiculous, overly dramatic and sensationalist documentary series; a show with its roots in sketch comedy but aspirations in long-form episodic storytelling."

Etai said he was inspired by the Comedy Central program *Review*, about a critic who

reviews the most intense experiences of life by living them. Etai defined the format as "playing in the sandbox of sketch comedy before revealing its more pathos-driven narrative -- a comedic technique I had never seen before."

"I like playing in the world of genre, or sensationalism," he said. "I like poking fun at the various tropes and themes of very self-serious work. I thought it might be really funny and/or interesting to have a documentarian who is always on the wrong side of every issue, but uses the very modern weapon of editing to make it seem like he's in the right."

"Doing documentary felt feasible," Etai continued. "Unlike a lot of other ambitious projects, this one actually felt like something that I, with limited experience, could pull off."

The pilot episode, a retrospective on a fictional jazz prodigy whose over-the-top antiwar protest ended his career, is replete with parody and humor, built into interviews and pretentious narration -- listing the Monkees as a socially conscious band; crediting rap music as the origin of jazz; subtitles that include bird calls; and commercial interruptions by non-sponsors. "The line between sincerity and irony is incredibly thin, and it seemed like well-made documentaries about subjects that shouldn't warrant them was a good way to explore this," Etai said.

State-of-the-art technology is essential to Etai's effort. "In addition to the fact that a show like this couldn't practically exist

without Kickstarter, or the distribution available on YouTube, it also couldn't really exist as a form," he observed.

"We're making very silly 10-minute videos. Before the Internet, the only place to put



Etai Shuchatowitz '13 at the storyboard for an episode of *Untold Genius*.

this would've been some version of a film festival. But the format in which people watch something really does matter -- and I couldn't imagine trying to show this at a festival where we'd be sandwiched in between a real documentary and a heartbreakingly bad film. The only place where a show like this could thrive is on YouTube where silly nonsense can have its place."

Etai noted that "I owe a great debt to Mr. (Jack) Fidler, my eighth grade English teacher, whom I've sent things to since graduating, and Ms. (Sharon) Pywell, who always inspired creative writing and would read drafts of things and provide notes."

His short dramatic film, *Leibniz's Law*, is set to be produced in the summer. It is not in the style of *Untold Genius*. The film looks at the disintegration of a marriage over five years after a young man clones himself.



Mark Blechner '67, right, poses with Dr. Matthew Levitt '88 at the AIPAC National Policy Conference on March 4. Mark attended a presentation by Matt, who is the Fromer-Wexler Fellow and Director of the Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.



CLASS NOTES

Class of 1967

Mazal tov to Cynthia and **Rabbi Chaim Tabasky** on the birth of their granddaughter.

Class of 1975

Mazal tov to **Abby (Jacobs)** and Daniel **Wyschogrod** on the birth of their granddaughter, Orli Eydit. Parents are **Meggie (Wyschogrod) '07** and **Eli Fredman**.

Class of 2005

Mazal tov to

Tobi Betesh-Abay and Girum Abay on the birth of their son, Shahar Avraham Asres. Grandparents are Debbie and Victor Betesh.

Gabi and **Yitzi Zisblatt** on the birth of their son, Zev Chanan Raphael. Grandparents are Drs. Laura and Sam Zisblatt.

Class of 2007

Mazal tov to Sarah and **Adam Lamport**, on the birth of their son, Eric Clarence. Grandparents are Cheryl and Jay Lamport.

Meggie (Wyschogrod) and **Eli Fredman** on the birth of their daughter, Orli Eydit. Grandparents are **Abby (Jacobs) '75** and Daniel **Wyschogrod**.

Class of 2013

Mazal tov to Rachel **Blaszkowsky** on her engagement to Michael Goodheart. Rachel is the daughter of Ami and David Blaszkowsky

Class of 2014

Mazal tov to **Josh Jacobson** on his engagement to Rotem Budagzad. Josh is the son of Sharon Becker Jacobson and Prof. Joseph Jacobson.

Maimonides Alumni Here and There...

The latest multi-media artistic venture by **Joel Tauber '90**, entitled "Underwater," opened on March 8 at the Koenig2 gallery in Vienna. The show is constantly visible from the street via the gallery's large windows.

"It's a seven-channel video installation that's also an operatic disco -- a fusion of environmentalism, trance music, and mysticism," said Joel, an associate professor of film and video art at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC. The preview video ([vimeo](#)).

[com/249554709](#)) includes Joel's chanting in a style resembling *Kol Nidre*.

According to promotional materials, "Underwater" suggests, in interactive and immersive ways, that we're all connected to each other and to the land and sea." Five of the videos focus on what Joel finds underwater, one shows him disappearing into a cloud of air bubbles, and the seventh is a map of his 40 scuba dives. "Underwater" comes out of my Maimonides education and Orthodox roots in many ways," Joel commented.

"I've been thinking a lot about *tikkun olam*, about how many mystics describe how we're all connected to each other and to the land/sea, and about how caring for the Earth and all its inhabitants is therefore both an ethical and spiritual mandate. It felt like it would make sense to frame how we are acting environmentally as a collective spiritual and ethical call to repent."

He added, "My hope is that 'Underwater' will help us think about our responsibilities in ways that are not preachy, that engage us actively and that empower us to do what we can to fix the world."



Alicia (Hanau) Packer and Ari Massefki (with teacher Rabbi Yaakov Jaffe), both 2010 graduates, joined the faculty and staff for lunch at a professional development day Jan. 15 and spoke about teachers' positive impact on their lives. They also had an opportunity to personally speak with former teachers, including **Gina Saucedo (second from left)** and **Rabbi Yaakov Jaffe (right)**.



A few days after his brother AJ '09 finished competing as part of Israel's Winter Olympics team, Alex Edelman '07 spent some time in the spotlight, delivering a comedy segment on the national late-night television show hosted by Conan O'Brien (left).



Another recent informal reunion of Class of 1976 members in Israel, including, from left, Renee Blechner Hirsch, Debby (Cohen) Mlotek, Mindy Schimmel, Elihu Stone, Esti (Hoelzel) Gross, Judy Thaler-Lev and Ian Tick.



Rabbi Allan Houben '98, Lisa Bergman, and family celebrate their first Purim in Atlanta.



Posing with the championship trophy that Maimonides School brought home from the annual tournament of Jewish middle school basketball teams are coaches, from left, Avi Packer '09; Josh Yarmush '09, head coach; and Brad Baskir '10.



Dr. Leora Leeder '86 (right), with her third-grade daughter Raphaela and her cousin Sara Laya Heller, daughter of Shayna (Bonniebell Leeder) Heller '72, at the starting line of the Jerusalem Marathon, which took place on March 9.



Yitz Steinberg '93, Maimonides School's all-time basketball scoring leader, was in Jerusalem to run the half-marathon this month when he enjoyed an impromptu reunion with classmates and M-Cat teammates Dr. Danny Fax (left) and Matt Brenner in the Machane Yehuda shuk. Later Yitz got together with another former teammate, Elie Gertel '91 (right). "It's the first time we've seen each other in about 20 years," Yitz said.