

# NEWS & VIEWS

## חדשות והשקפות

OCTOBER 2022 / TISHREI-HESHVAN 5783

### RABBINIC REFLECTIONS

Rabbi Rachel Salston



Shanah tovah! I'd like to take this opportunity to share my First Day Rosh Hashanah Sermon. Wishing you and your families a year of health, happiness, good changes, and community.

Shana Tovah. Today, on Rosh Hashanah, in the Musaf service that we will recite in a little while, we will speak of the contrast between God and us. *Melekh El Hai v'Kayam*, the Ruler, God, Living, and Steadfast. *HaKadosh Barukh Hu*, The Holy Blessing One, the Eternal, the Unchanging, The One Whom Aristotle and then, as incorporated into our tradition, the Rambam, called the Unmoved Mover.

On the level of our person, we tend to not believe that we are capable of change. We have an illusion of continuity. This fiction is essential for having an identity. I could not go on existing without accepting that the mind or soul of the Rabbi Rachel Salston who went to sleep last night is the same Rabbi Rachel Salston who woke up this morning and now stands on this bimah. If I thought too much about this classic philosophy thought experiment, I would not be able to keep my sanity and function. But we do ask this question all the time, not just with our spiritual identities, but with our very faces. We deny that we age. Who here has not experienced the dissonance of looking in the mirror at yourself, seeing another gray hair sprout or bags sink lower under your eyes, and saying, "I don't look like myself?" If you break that sentence apart, it becomes hilariously nonsensical. "I-DO-NOT-LOOK-LIKE-MY-SELF." We have a construction of ourselves and the world around us that was built when we were children or at least, younger adults or smaller

kids than we are now, and the deviations from that ideal are foreign, other, wrong.

As it is with our identities and our faces, so it is with our experience as a community. Things were once stable and right, now they're all different and wrong. The carpet is pulled out from under us. I know that I am not alone in my idealization of the Jewish past. When I think about the Shtetl, or the time when the Holy Temple stood, or the Golden Age of Spain, or even 1990s Fair Lawn, New Jersey, when this synagogue had 900 members, I imagine that the Jews of that time "got it." What do I mean by that? There was a time when Jews agreed what Judaism was, when there was central authority, when we all got along, when we spoke the same language, not just Hebrew or Aramaic or Ladino or Yiddish, but a language of Jewish obligation to one another and to God. There was a time when Judaism was "real." Can I get some nods if you share this image even if you know it's incorrect? Yes.

This feeling and belief is called *yeridat ha'dorot*, the decline of the generations. According to this view of Judaism and the world, the Revelation of the Torah directly from God to Moshe, an historical event, was the climax of all human existence. For a moment, or maybe 40 days or the length of Moshe's lifetime, the Unbounded One spoke directly to a human being. And never again has such a thing happened. "It's all downhill from there." The principle continues to teach that each generation following the Revelation of Sinai is lower in Holiness than the one preceding it. The Torah that we receive, the Judaism that we practice, distanced from that singular pure I-Thou moment of Divine-Human interaction, is thus a dilution, pro-

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#### RELIGIOUS SERVICES

**Sunday through Thursday—7:30 PM on ZOOM**

Go to [Zoom.us](https://zoom.us) or dial 1-929-205-6099

Meeting ID: 992 9922 2789

Password: 609729

**Friday Evening**  
**Kabbalat Shabbat— 6:30 PM**  
**Shabbat Morning**  
**Shabbat Services 9:30 AM**  
**In Person and via Livestream**  
[www.fljc.com/worship](http://www.fljc.com/worship)

**Havdalah at the conclusion of Shabbat on ZOOM**

Go to [Zoom.us](https://zoom.us) or dial 1-929-205-6099

Meeting ID: 940 7714 6714

Password: 215407

**Sunday morning services 9:00 AM**  
**In the Chapel and on ZOOM**

Go to [Zoom.us](https://zoom.us) or dial 1-929-205-6099

Meeting ID: 991 2258 1312

Password: 731712

#### CANDLELIGHTING TIMES

Date	Lighting Time	Havdalah (next day)
October 4	6:15 PM	7:12 PM
October 7	6:10 PM	7:08 PM
October 9	6:07 PM	
October 10	7:04 PM	7:03 PM
October 14	5:59 PM	6:57 PM
October 16	5:56 PM	
October 17	6:54 PM	6:52 PM
October 21	5:48 PM	6:47 PM
October 28	5:39 PM	6:38 PM

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#### RABBI SALSTON'S CLASS

Coffee & Commentary will be held on **WEDNESDAYS**  
At 11:00 AM in the Sanctuary and on Zoom  
Next class will be October 12

Go to [Zoom.us](https://zoom.us) or dial +1 929 436 2866  
Meeting ID: 943 0394 9434 Password 226478

#### SYNAGOGUE SKILLS LEARNING INSTITUTE

Have you ever wanted to learn to read Torah? Have you ever wanted to learn to read Hebrew?

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Free and open to all members

To register, e-mail Ellen Wertheim at

[ellenwer@hotmail.com](mailto:ellenwer@hotmail.com).

#### WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Alex & Leah Gomberg, and Aiden & Sadie  
Alvin & Nili Cohen  
Jane & Arnold Cabasso  
Daniel & Lisa Kopp  
Jennifer Seligman

נחמו, נחמו עמי

Ina Fine, mother of Harold Fine  
Member Saul Shenberg, husband  
of Carolyn Shenberg

MAY THE LORD CONSOLE AND SUSTAIN YOU,  
TOGETHER WITH ALL THE MOURNERS FOR ZION AND JERUSALEM

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gressively more garbled through a depressing 3500 year game of telephone.

On its face value, a lot of our sacred texts and the liturgy we recite, which is based on those texts, reflects this decline in the generations. We pray for a return to what was. What is the point of this day? Teshuvah. Repentance. Return. When we put the Torah away and throughout the Selichot services of this Holiday Season, we constantly repeat the line "*Hashivenu Adonai eilekha v'nashuva hadeish ya-meinu kekedem.*" "Return to us God, and we will return to You. Renew our days as of old." Take us back, Hashem, to that wonderful time that was. That line comes from the end of the Book of Eikhah, the Book of Lamentations.

That is the line that our tradition teaches us that the Prophet Jeremiah said in some form of hope at the end of the book of horror depicting the destruction of the Temple and the City of Jerusalem. It is a plea offered to God, that if we are good enough, we might merit to see the rebuilding of these structures in our lifetimes. To live this line faithfully, argue many Jews, is to remain prepared to return to the way things were—almost at all cost.

According to the Babylonian Talmud Bekhorot 30b, a convert is not accepted if they refuse to accept the commitment to a single mitzvah. A basic principle, logical. If you want to join a club, you have to sign on to all of the rules. But wait a second, you need to accept every single mitzvah?! Every single one? In some circles, yes.

This summer, I came across a modern responsum that told the story of a vegan who stood before the Beit Din, the Rabbinic Court, applying for conversion, who, with conviction, I'm not certain to what degree of perfect faith, committed to cease her veganism when the Temple is rebuilt, in order to, once a year, eat the minimum amount of lamb of the mandated Pesach sacrifice. I've heard many vegetarians and vegans say, "Thank God I was born Jewish." I'm not mocking this. It is comical, but within that accepted narrative of Judaism the logic works out. A big part of me smiles at the logic and wants to believe it. But another big part of me does not and is unsettled.

Here is another example, with higher stakes, less funny. In the book of Leviticus, which is the guide book for the Kohanim, the Priests who served in the Temple, teaches that a Kohen may not marry a promiscuous woman or a divorcee. In a disturbing connection, which I will not enter into the details of for the sake of propriety, the Rabbis include every female who converts above the age of 3 in this forbidden category. So under the strict letter of the law, a Kohen is forbidden from marrying anyone other than

a woman born of a Jewish mother who has either never been married or who is a widow. If he marries another, he is disqualified from participating in the Service in the Temple. On the more lenient application of this law, as codified in the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*, a Kohen who marries a woman who has converted or a woman who is divorced is subject to lashes. In the modern world, maybe he forfeits his honors as a Kohen. His children might not be kohanim. He or they don't take the first aliyah to the Torah, bless the people, or receive payment in the redemption of first born sons. The price of love. But life goes on.

Then there's the strict side, followed by individual kohanim and priestly families who believe that they need to keep their lines pure so that they could return to service tomorrow when we wake up and the Temple is rebuilt. They restrict themselves to an even smaller dating pool than the already miniscule dating pool that is the modern Jewish world. That is to say nothing of non-male kohanim and/or those who are gay or asexual. Restrictions are heavy enough on the males who are attracted to women. The Torah puts restrictions on all of us, in every aspect of our lives, but few as personal as those on the kohanim. It can get nasty. Families might hope for and encourage the failure of forbidden marriages. There are dating profiles where men identify themselves as kohanim. With all due respect and generosity of judgment, the limited text of a dating profile is not a likely place to share the fun facts that you get the first aliyah and are available for a Pidyon haben. More likely, the frequency of the use of this statement in a limited length dating profile biography is deliberate. "I'm a Kohen," means, "I'm a Kohen, unfitting women, even wonderful ones with whom I might find a beautiful connection and love need not apply." Once again, it makes me angry and sad, but I am not mocking this conviction. The logic works out.

Is this the Judaism that you practice? Is this the real authentic Judaism of the past? Was it not that there were Jewish vegetarians and kohanim who married for love 100 years ago? Is this the Judaism you are choosing to practice? Given that all of you are sitting in this beautiful sanctuary of Fair Lawn Jewish Center/Congregation B'nai Israel, and not in an Orthodox shul (where I assure you, most people probably do not see things as the black and white picture have described), I can assume the answer to that question is "no." We know that the world of the past and of the possible future is not the world that we inhabit now. We know that the past was pretty great but could not possibly have been as great or monolithic as we idealize it as. As the great Lin Manuel-Miranda put it, "Look around, look around at how lucky we are to be alive right now." We have running water in all our

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## PRESIDENTIAL PONDERINGS

Evan Marcus

L'shana tovah! And welcome to the year 5783. A new year means new beginnings. To me, it likely is the year that we'll be able to put the 2½ year mishegoss of Covid be-

hind us. If I could make a wish right now, that would be it: let's get Covid behind us.

But we have to do it in a responsible manner. That's why for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we are requiring masks in the building. Once we get past Yom Kippur, masks will go. However, at least for the time being, we are going to continue the vaccine requirement for anyone who is old enough to qualify for one.

Believe me when I tell you that these decisions are not easy ones. A decision to require masks, for instance, makes a significant percentage of our members happy, but at the same time it makes a significant percentage unhappy. We get that. All we can do is what we think makes sense.

In the new year, we are adding 2 more physicians (Ilene Flanzman and Nina Gold) to the Covid Committee, along with Yana Garger, who is already a member. Thank you to them all, and to the other members of the committee for their time and focus on this important subject.

But we are opening up more and more and introducing new stuff. For example, we are back

to running a nice, small Kiddush after Shabbat services each week. We have also set up a small Play and Pray area in the back of the sanctuary to help engage small children who don't have the patience to sit through an entire service.

Over the course of the new school year, we are looking forward to at least a DOZEN B'nai Mitzvot and at least one wedding. We have a lot of wonderfully happy occasions that we'll be able to celebrate as a community.

But in order to complete the return of the Center from the depths of Covid, which is our goal for this year, we need something from you. More accurately, we need you. We need help with Kiddush. We need help organizing activities. We need help organizing new events. We need help setting up events. We need help with publicity. And so much more.

When people tell me that they wish we were doing more around the Center, I ask them what they are willing to help with. We are in large part a volunteer organization, and we need volunteers.

5783 is shaping up to a very exciting year, featuring a lot of fun and joyous activities. The thing we need most to make it successful is you. Please come lend a hand. You won't regret it.

*Evan Marcus*



### BOARD ROUND-UP

At the September board meeting, the board discussed High Holiday preparations, voted to accept a new investment policy, and reviewed financial reports.

Na'aleh High School opened for the school year on September 5.

CHSBC opened for the school year on September 11.

Building maintenance is ongoing, including necessary repairs for the air conditioning, the upstairs dairy refrigerator, and radiators in some of the classrooms. Painting, floor refinishing, and window repairs occurred over the summer.



## CANTORIAL CONTEMPLATIONS

### Cantor Yoni Stokar

Shalom to all,

I hope that you are reading this in good health and spirit. Having now entered into the month of Tishrei and celebrated Rosh Hashana, we find ourselves in a status that reminds me of the moments before a team leaves the locker room to enter the playing field before their first match. We've put in the extra workouts and drills through learning and prayer and *chesbon hanefesh*, or accounting of the soul, and now we're ready to hit the field.

As all great players and teams do, we began the process of preparing for this upcoming season during the off season, where we realigned our focus and our vision through reflection of the previous year and looking ahead to what we want to accomplish this coming year and what we need to make next season better.

On Rosh Hashana, we reaffirmed our commitments. We crowned *Hashem* the reigning master of the universe now and forever through prayer and praise. On Yom Kippur, we take that recognition to the next level. Realizing that we are human and all have faults and flaws, we have the opportunity to acknowledge those flaws and ask for forgiveness to seal our commitments and intentions to increase our level of service to *Hashem*.

It is only through these stages of acceptance and repentance that we can then be prepared for *Zman Simchateinu* (Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah), Our time of happiness. The celebration of a clean slate. The celebration of the time and energy spent during the off sea-

son preparing to praise and gain Their acceptance and atonement.

One of the ways that all peoples and nations celebrate is through song. Thank God we have so many songs that help strengthen our connection and elevate our prayers and our souls. Pump up songs, as they were. Why do you think baseball players have the same chosen song played every time they come up to bat? Because they've found their pump up song! The song that's going to give them the boost and the confidence to step up to the plate.

One of the greatest ways that I have found to maintain the feelings of elevation and closeness that I felt on a *chag* is to continue singing the songs even after the *chag* ends. From Sukkot to Chanukah last year I was singing the same tune to reorient myself to that special time, to give me that boost that I felt months back.

I invite everyone to find your entrance song! If you find yourself connecting to a tune over the High Holy Days or over Sukkot, find out what that song is, add it to a playlist, download it to your phone and maybe even teach it to a friend. So much of how we feel connected is in how we pump ourselves up.

May we all be blessed to find our song(s) this year, reach for higher heights and be able to continuously pump each other up so we can grow individually and collectively.

Wishing everyone Gmar Chatimah Tovah and Chag Sameach!

*Cantor Yoni*





## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** **Thorin Tritter, PhD**

The end of September and early October have been a particularly busy time in the synagogue office this year, as we try to get everything prepared for the High Holidays. One might think that since we prepare for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur every year, we should be well versed in arranging all the details and thus it should be smooth sailing. I suppose in an ideal world that, indeed, would be the case. The reality, however, is there are always some changes between years, and this year, with the reopening after Covid and a new executive director in the building, there are more than the normal amount of changes to deal with.

I mention this on the one hand to ask for your patience. We are, as you know, a small staff, and we have tried to get tickets and details out in a timely fashion, but if we have not responded to your inquiries or have not gotten information to you, I hope you will excuse us at this busy time.

While asking for your patience, I also want to ask for your forgiveness. Even in just the few months I have been here, I have no doubt that I have, at times, spoken more harshly than I should have, was not courteous or respectful, or behaved poorly in any number of ways. I apologize. I will seek to do better. My goal is for everyone to feel comfortable reaching out to me and to feel that I am listening to their questions and concerns.

Improving lines of communication is particularly important as we move forward with reopening

our building for events and programs. The pandemic made it difficult to hold in-person programs in our building, but I think many now are looking for the social interaction that was taken away by Covid. The FLJC/CBI seeks to fill that void. We had a host of programs in September, including the welcome back BBQ (see photos below), the "Play for the Cause" event, a meeting of the Sisterhood Book Club, a special Seli-chot Service, and a collaborative program with the Jewish Federation about "The Thread Collector." In October, even with Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simchat Torah, and Sh'mini Atzeret, we are hosting three Sisterhood events, a Men's Progress Club program, a field trip to see "Ragtime," and a book program with the author of "Cradles of the Reich."

I mention these programs to highlight that our building is open to host Center events and programs. It is true that Naaleh, our major tenant, has put some limits on the spaces in our building that are available during weekdays, but I am eager to work with you to find ways to host the programs you would like to create. Please reach out with any ideas and talk with me about what you would like to do. I will also add a reminder that we have a Room Request and Setup Form, that I ask you to use to help our staff know how to prepare for any event that gets scheduled. Please contact me or Rosemary and we will be happy to send you the form and talk to you about scheduling.

I wish you all a sweet and happy New Year.

*Thorin Tritter*





## RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

### *Holidays, Continued – Tishrei 5783*

Steve Montag

You will likely be reading this just as the High Holidays have started in the Jewish New Year of 5783. The year starts in the month of Tishrei with Rosh Hashanah and continues through Yom Kippur and then on to the holidays of Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, and Simchat Torah. What a wonderful period to celebrate our personal redemption, our memory of time spent in the desert after the exodus from Egypt and the joy of study of the Torah. This triennial year we will complete the full reading of the entire Torah and we start anew with the first triennial cycle again. I am also excited to celebrate with some of our center families their special simchas. On Saturday, October 1, we celebrate the Aufruf of Max Weil with his fiancée, Rachel Fastow, and on Saturday, October 8, we celebrate the Bar Mitzvah of Eli Garger. Mazal Tov to the Weil and Garger families. Please come and join us on Sunday, October 9 to decorate the Sukkah along with the school children. My tremendous thanks to all of you who help to build the Sukkah this year, but most importantly Vher Alvaro for his particularly skilled efforts. Yasher Koach to you all. The end of October provides a peek into the next month of Heshvan, starting on October 26. This year we have a wealth of programming events from our many committees, and I look forward to sharing Shabbat on Saturday, October 29 with the special annual Sisterhood Pink Shabbat service.

Please start this new year with a fresh outlook of your relationship with the Fair Lawn Jewish Center/Congregation B'nai Israel. Please trust that we are working hard to improve and build out from under the cloud of the last year's of separation from the community. Your engagement and support are critical for all of us to sustain our collective future of this wonderful conservative Jewish community.

We are always looking for more volunteers to help with religious affairs activities, learning and leading davening, Torah and Haftorah reading, and participating in all services. Your most important contribution is your time to attend Friday evening Kabbalat Shabbat, Shabbat morning, Sunday morning, and holiday services as often

as possible so that we can always have a minyan for those who need to say Kaddish for their dearly departed. We also need help with preparing Kiddish so we can continue to gather after services for an opportunity to catch up and chat with each other. It is wonderful to have the young and the old in our community be together to talk, listen and to learn from each other and celebrate simchas together. Please join us for the many B'nai Mitzvah that will occur throughout this year.

Rona and I look forward to seeing you in shul. Stay safe and be well. Shana Tovah u'metukah.

*Steve Montag*



Our Torah Scrolls are sparkling for the High Holidays!



## SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

Mark Meisel

It is the last few days of the Social Action **High Holiday Food Drive** running through **Thursday, October 6.**

We thank all of you who have already donated, it is truly appreciated. Please bring any remaining food donations of nonperishable food to the lobby by the parking lot.

Donations of grocery gift cards and check donations made out to the FLJC with *High Holiday Food Drive* written on the memo line are also extremely helpful to the organizations we work with that help food insecure families and can be sent to the Synagogue office.

The food will be donated to local food pantries—The Center For Food Action and the Fair Lawn Food Pantry. Some of the items needed the most are: peanut butter, jelly, mashed potato pouches, stuffing, gravy, snacks, cereal, baked beans, chili, beef stew, canned chicken, canned tuna, canned vegetables, pasta sauce, pasta, shampoo & conditioner, cleaning supplies, and paper goods. Please check expiration dates and

no glass containers.

**During the High Holidays, when we fast for Yom Kippur, let us remember the many people in our community who fast involuntarily because they do not have enough to eat.**

Starting October 19<sup>th</sup>, we will run a drive for items that can be donated to people in need in the Ukraine. Please look for updates in *The Insider* for what items are needed.

The Social Action Committee can also help congregants in their recovery from illness when returning from the hospital or rehab facility by bringing them a Friday night meal. Please let the office know if you would like us to bring you a meal.

If you are interested in joining the Social Action Committee please reach out to me.

Thank you again for all your support!

*Mark Meisel*



## Shana Tovah Greetings From Sisterhood

Arlene Albalah & Family  
Sima, Stuart, Miranda & Adam Alper  
The Ayes Family  
The Baer Family  
Shelly & Steve Baltin  
Anne & Bill BenLisa  
Ida & Gary Borer  
Susan M. Cohen  
The Danto Family  
Ilene & Rich Flanzman  
Ann & Brian Frisch  
Beatrice Goldstein & Family  
Joan & Steven Goldstein  
Rosalyn Goodman  
Estelle & Roger Haberman  
Arline Herman & Family  
Carol M. Hirsh  
Tamar & Jack Joffe  
The Kalina Family  
Gerry & Howard Kessel  
Fran Kessler & Family  
Karen N. Kurland & Family  
Carol & Evan Marcus & Family

Dr. Linda Susan Marcus & Sons  
Susan & Steven Meininger  
Phyllis Mirchin  
Rona & Steven Montag  
Andrea & Scott Pass & Family  
Donna Pasternak & Family  
Beth, Ken, Max & Tyler Perlman  
Myra Rosenblatt  
Loren Rosenthal  
The Rothenberg Family  
Gail & Zahavy Rottenstrich  
Judith A. Schlesinger & Claudia  
Sharon & Larry Schwartz  
Eileen & Steve Schwimmer & Family  
Susan & Michael Seligman  
Ann Golick, Bob & Sydney Sokol  
Barbara & Phil Steinberg  
Florence Thaler  
Marsha & Robert Thaler  
The Toron Family  
The Urbanski Family  
Ilene & Sam Wolosin



## ADULT EDUCATION COMMITTEE

### Charles Cohen

Shana Tovah and Chag Sameach to all new and old members, and best wishes to all for a happy & healthy and blessed New Year.

Rabbi Salston will have Wednesday Class (except holidays) at 11:00 AM “Coffee & Commentary” explanation & interactive discussion of the Parshah of the Week. This class is held in person in the rear of the Sanctuary, with a Zoom option for those who cannot attend in person. This is an ongoing learning program so please join us whenever you are able to do so during the course of the year.

Rabbi Emeritus Roth’s “Nosh and Knowledge” class will take a break for the holidays, returning on October 25.

Rabbi Salston will be presenting a new series of

classes in person prepared by the Shalom Hartman Institute, a pillar of Jewish Learning based in Israel. This ongoing series, “Together and Apart: The Future of Jewish Peoplehood” discusses contemporary issues in both America and Israel and the many unique challenges faced by American Jews and Israelis. Watch for more information on this series and the dates starting after the holidays. This series of Hartman classes will be free for all members.

Other Adult Education programs are in formulation so please watch for new information in the near future.

Happy & Healthy Holidays,

*Charles Cohen*

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## MEN’S PROGRESS CLUB

### Neil Garfinkle

The MPC has always prided ourselves as being the Strong Shoulders of the FLJC/CBI. This tradition continued throughout the pandemic, with our usual programs, albeit virtual, like wine tasting, our Paid-Up Membership breakfast, big breakfast, High Holiday ushering, keeping our temple safe from rascals on Goosey Night, and so much more.

Our members made us and our shul proud with so many participating in Shabbat services, and we even took the lead in making sure there was always a minyan on Sunday mornings.

Our service continues today as we slowly come out of the pandemic, reviving our Back-to-Shul BBQ along with Sisterhood, where even the rain could not stop us from grilling outside. We had an amazing turnout from our shul, the JCCP and our Religious School! By the end of the month, we were back at it again, ushering and providing security for Rosh Hashanah.

This month, we continue our strong service. Come and say hi as once again, we provide ushering and security, this time for Yom Kippur, and come and schmooze with us at the end of the month on Goosey Night.

Don’t forget to pay your dues so you can join us next month at our Paid-Up Membership breakfast, and then.... Drum Roll Please..... The return of the Fall Poker Tournament. ANTE UP! A special thank you to Lenny Kaufman, Jeffrey Herrmann, David Lauchheimer and all other members of your weekly game for supporting the MPC.

Come join us and become a part of something special. Please feel free to reach out to me, or any member of our club. You can find us any day, all over the shul, participating, helping and leading.

*Neil Garfinkle*



**Fair Lawn Jewish Center/Congregation B'nai Israel**

## **Tot Shabbat with Morah Vivian** **Saturday mornings 9:30 AM**

**Weather permitting, we will stay outside.**

**Indoors will be in the Youth Lounge**



**October 1 • October 22**

**November 5 • November 19**

**December 3 • December 17**



Vivian Gibilisco is a Jewish educator and song leader who has been teaching, leading song, and family worship for many years all over Greater Metro West, New Jersey. She loves teaching Jewish values and creating community and connection to our people through song.

### **Open to the Community!**

**FLJC/CBI • 10-10 Norma Avenue Fair Lawn, NJ**

**Security on Premises**

All attendees age six months and up must be vaccinated.  
(Covid policies may be revised due to changing conditions.)



**TOT SHABBAT**



**COMMUNITY HEBREW SCHOOL OF  
BERGEN COUNTY**  
**Marcia Kagedan**



Shalom! The Community Hebrew School of Bergen County started its third year with more families than ever before! All gathered on the first day of school to be welcomed by both Rabbi Weiner and Rabbi Salston, presidents from both synagogues, and by a talented and excited faculty.

The children each received a welcome back gift bag with lots of treats. Rabbi Weiner blew the shofar for everyone, and we all “woke up” to the new year, wanting to learn, improve, and celebrate together.

We had an open house that was attended by many families who are looking forward to the next special program for 3- to 5-year-olds, which will be held on Sunday, October 16<sup>th</sup> in the JCC Paramus/CBT Sukkah. Grandparents, bring your grandkids along for a fun time!

This year our students had a full 2 weeks of classes before the beginning of the fall holidays. This allowed them to have a deeper understanding of the meaning of the high holidays, take a close look at some of the most memorable prayers, and discuss with their teachers the meaning of these holidays to each of them.

Preparations for Sukkot are underway. The families are invited to help build and decorate the synagogue sukkahs and we will enjoy time in each of them over the next few days.

On October 22<sup>nd</sup> the Hebrew School kids will be at Shabbat morning services at the FLJC/CBI where they will help lead the closing prayers with Cantor Yoni and Rabbi Salston. A special child-friendly kiddush plus some gym and game room activities

are planned too. I hope many members will be at services to welcome these Hebrew School families.

On Sunday, October 30<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM, Rabbi Salston will be leading a Torah Service Tutorial for any adult who would like to learn or have a refresher class as to how to participate in the Torah Services. All are welcome.

I wish you a Chag Sameach, and enjoy Sukkot and Simchat Torah—what a wonderful time of year!

*Marcia Kagedan*

**ALL YOUTH WELCOME AT OUR OPENING EVENTS**

*Synagogue affiliation **not** required*

**USY - grades 8-12**

**KADIMA – grades 4-7**

*FLIPPER chapter of USY and Kadima is sponsored by  
Fair Lawn Jewish Center/Congregation Bnai Israel  
Jewish Community Center of Paramus/Congregation Beth Tikvah  
Temple Israel Jewish Community Center Ridgewood.*

**USY OPENING EVENT**

**Sunday October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022**

**1:00-2:30 pm**

**TEMPLE ISRAEL JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER,  
475 GROVE STREET, RIDGEWOOD  
LUNCH AND SPORTS ACTIVITIES**

**KADIMA OPENING EVENT**

**Sunday October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2022**

**12:30-2:00 pm**

**FAIR LAWN JEWISH CENTER/CBI,  
10-10 NORMA AVENUE, FAIR LAWN  
LUNCH AND SPORTS ACTIVITIES**

**1<sup>st</sup> Event is FREE. ALL ARE WELCOME!**  
**ANNUAL FLIPPER MEMBERSHIP IS JUST \$18. Free in house events!**  
*Fees apply when at an outside location.*  
*Synagogue membership is not required to join FLIPPER youth.*

*RSVP: Youth advisor Marcia Kagedan,  
201-815-8136 or edudirector@chsbc.org*

## SENIOR INITIATIVES

### Yiddishe Vinkle

Our Senior Initiative is partnering with Temple Beth Rishon for a monthly gathering to speak and listen to Yiddish. Open to all levels! Program will be Tuesdays at 1:00 PM on the following dates:

October 25  
November 15  
December 13  
January 17  
February 14  
March 14  
April 18  
May 16  
June 16

Just show up and introduce yourself!

Temple Beth Rishon  
585 Russell Ave., Wyckoff

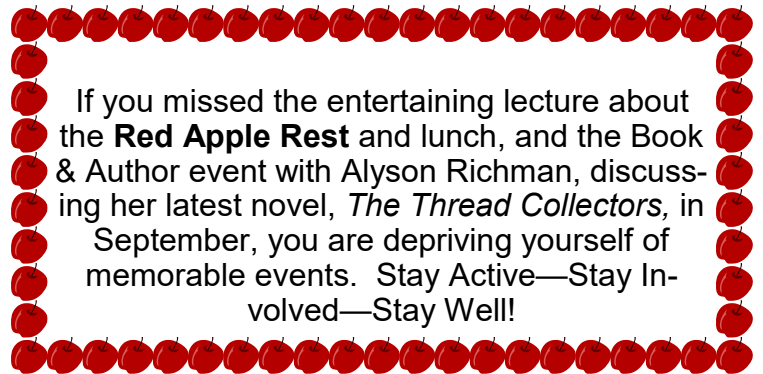


Valley  
Health  
System

### Virtually Valley Videos

Learn more about the health issues that matter to you and your family with our "Virtually Valley" video series! Our videos offer information, insights and advice on health and wellness topics, from Valley Health System's own specialists.

Visit [www.valleyhealth.com/virtuallyvalley](http://www.valleyhealth.com/virtuallyvalley)



If you missed the entertaining lecture about the **Red Apple Rest** and lunch, and the Book & Author event with Alyson Richman, discussing her latest novel, *The Thread Collectors*, in September, you are depriving yourself of memorable events. Stay Active—Stay Involved—Stay Well!

## OLDER ADULT SERVICES

### Jewish Family & Children's Services of Northern New Jersey

Through these many programs and services JFCS significantly enhances the lives of our most isolated, vulnerable seniors. JFCS recognizes the needs of this population of the frail, vulnerable and homebound elderly and offers specialized, targeted services provided by our knowledgeable, experienced and caring professionals.

JFCS offers the following services to seniors and their families and/or caregivers:

- Care Management
- Kosher Meals on Wheels
- Friendly Visitors
- Telephone Reassurance
- Dental and Other Assistance for Survivors of

the Holocaust

- Café Europa
- Shabbat Meals

As people age, their health, psychosocial, and/or safety concerns often become paramount. Children and other family members may find themselves trying to make important decisions in a crisis. This can be overwhelming for those living alone or for those caring for aging parents. The JFCS Senior Service staff are highly trained professionals who compassionately assist families coping with these issues.

For assistance, call 201-837-9090 or email [info@jfcsnj.org](mailto:info@jfcsnj.org).

## CENTER WEDDINGS—MAZEL TOV!

Max Weil, son of Bena and Steve z"l Weil, and Rachel Fastow, daughter of Nancy and Bruce Fastow of River Vale, will be married on Sunday, October 2, 2022. Please join the families for the Aufruf at the FLJC/CBI at Shabbat Services on Saturday, October 1. Max is a Director of Supply Chain, and Rachel is a mental health therapist. The couple resides in Wayne, NJ. Mazel Tov to the Weil and Fastow families!



Asher Rottenstrich, son of Zahavy and Gail Rottenstrich, and Caryn Rich, daughter of Howard and Suzan Rich of Buchanan, NY, will be married on Sunday, October 16, 2022. Asher is an Assistant Operations Manager at Zago Manufacturing Company, and Caryn is the Sales Coordinator at the MC Hotel in Montclair. The couple resides in Montclair, NJ. Mazel Tov to the Rottenstrich and Rich families!

## BAR MITZVAH—ELI GARGER Son of Yana & Alexander Garger אפרים ארון בן יאנה ואלכסנדר October 8, 2022/13 Tishrei 5783



Hello, my name is Eli Garger. I am so excited about becoming a Bar Mitzvah on October 8, when I will be called up to the Torah to read Parsha Ha'azinu. I am an eighth grader at Glen Rock Middle School. I have two brothers – Ben who is a senior, and Zevi who is in second grade. My favorite activities are making origami and seeing my friends. I also have three cats and I love playing with them.

One thing you should know about me is that I was born deaf, and I use cochlear implants to hear. That is why when I grow up I want to become an otorhinolaryngologist (just like my great grandfather in whose memory I am named), to become a cochlear surgeon. When I was little, I attended Lake Drive School, where I had amazing teachers who helped me learn to use my hearing skills and to speak. I am very, very grateful for all their help.

I started volunteering with the Sound Start Foundation, working with the students at Lake Drive School, giving back to the people who helped me so much, and helping the next generation of

kids with hearing loss to achieve their greatest potential.

If you would like to hear more or help this amazing cause, please ask me or my mom, and please visit <https://soundstartfdn.org/> or to donate, please visit <https://soundstartfdn.org/donate/>

I would like to thank Morah Rachel Blumenstyk for teaching me from the beginning of Hebrew School to today. I would like to thank Rabbi Salston for teaching me Torah and Haftorah, and for learning with me to help me with my D'var Torah.

I would like to thank my mom and dad, my brothers, my grandparents, and everyone who always support me and are always there for me.

Thank you to everyone from Fair Lawn Jewish Center/ Congregation B'nai Israel for celebrating with me and for welcoming my family to the community.

**Mazel Tov to the Garger Family!**

**A note from Rabbi Roth - A New Expanded  
Edition of my book *The Jews of Pacov  
Remembered in Fair Lawn, New Jersey***



**The above is a photo of a verse in our Holocaust Memorial Torah from the town of Pacov in the Czech Republic.**

It is part of the first verse of the Book of Exodus. It reads, "These are the names of the Israelites..." I plan to print this photo in the new edition of my book about the Jews of Pacov, and follow it with the names of the Jews of Pacov who were murdered by the Nazis, as well as the names of the few survivors. I am working from several lists available on the internet. Those include one prepared under the Nazis of all the Jews, 115 in total, who owned real estate in Pacov in 1939. It was created to enable the Nazis to confiscate those properties. The new book will include additional photos and stories about the Jews of Pacov and updates about the synagogue there, now being renovated so it can be community center and permanent memorial to the Jews who lived there for over four hundred years. Below is a photo with the names of one Pacov family.



The Weiner family of Pacov:  
Elsa, Viktor, Marie and Hana

They owned a leather goods  
factory in Pacov.

All were murdered by the Nazis.

**How you can help:**

**Donations:** You can contribute to help publish the book by sending a check make out to Fair Lawn Jewish Center/Cong. B'nai Israel with the memo line Pacov Book Project. The donations will be added to the Cecile Roth Memorial Fund, a fund that is dedicated to recalling the Holocaust, and then used to pay for the book's publication.

**Volunteer Typist:** Can you volunteer to help type an Excel spreadsheet? I need someone who is familiar with Excel spreadsheets to type the results of my research.



Documentary filmmaker Dale Bluestein interviews Julie Davidson.



Standing by the Torah from Pacov. (left to right) Karen Koblitz, Rabbi Roth, Rabbi Salston, Julie Davidson

The two photos on this page were taken in our Main Sanctuary on August 31, 2022. Above, documentary filmmaker Dale Bluestein is working on a film about the Torah Scrolls from Pacov. Our Holocaust Memorial Scroll comes from that town, and Dale is in the midst of visiting all the synagogues that have Pacov Torah scrolls, as we do, on permanent loan.

Karen Koblitz is a Los Angeles-based artist and Associate Professor Emerita, University of Southern California, where she was on faculty for over 20 years. She is descended from a Jewish family that lived in Pacov, and her great grandfather was married in the Pacov synagogue. She has spearheaded the efforts to renovate the synagogue there and create a permanent memorial to the Jews of that town. We were honored by her visit to our congregation.

Also pictured is Julie Davidson. Julie's parents, Ed and Alix Davidson, may their memory be for a blessing, were instrumental in bringing the Pacov Torah to our congregation. Ed and Alix Davidson went to London, where the Holocaust Memorial Torahs are kept, and brought the Pacov Torah back to our congregation in 1978.



## SISTERHOOD Ann Golick

I hope you had a wonderful Rosh Hashanah. It was great seeing so many of you back in shul. Sisterhood is extremely busy this fall. We hope that you will join us in at least one of our upcoming events.

On **Sunday, September 11**, Sisterhood and the MPC sponsored the Back-to-Shul BBQ. Although the weather did not cooperate, we were able to pivot and move the festivities indoors. Thank you Thorin for facilitating that move. More than 90 people attended this gathering, including many religious school families and members of the Paramus Jewish Center. We were all pleasantly surprised about the wonderful turn out. Yasher Koach to Howard Kessel and helpers who prepared the food (somehow Howard anticipated that there would be many walk-ins and had enough food) and to Ilene Laufer who coordinated the event. It was fun having such a great in person gathering.

On **Thursday, September 15**, Sisterhood held our annual Play for the Cause IN PERSON for the first time since 2019! About 20 of us (women & men) played Trivia, Name That Tune and Scattergories while mingling, having snacks and raising over \$400 (so far) for the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) specifically supporting Ukrainian refugees. Thank you to Beth Perlman and committee for organizing such a fun evening.

On **Sunday, September 18**, we held the first of 5 book club events this year. This was the first time in a few years where some of us were in the shul and some were on Zoom. We discussed Tovah Felshuh's book ***Lilyville: Mother, Daughter and Other Roles I've Played***. Look out for the flyer in this *News & Views* which shows the other books we will be discussing throughout the year.

This is an extremely busy time for Sisterhood. Here are some upcoming events. Please look for the flyers:

- **October 9** we will be decorating the Sukkah along with the Religious School.

- **October 12** we will be having Sushi in the Sukkah – open to all FLJC members – please send a check to FLJC Sisterhood for \$15 pp/\$45 per immediate family. Please RSVP by October 9 to Lisa Urbanski at [lrurbanski@hotmail.com](mailto:lrurbanski@hotmail.com) or call Ann at 201-927-0232. For this event we cannot accept walk-ins as we are ordering food.
- **October 23** at 10:00 AM we will be having a B'reishit Hike at Ramapo Reservation. Look out for the flyer. Please RSVP by texting Nina at 201-694-4377. Please RSVP so we know who to wait for.
- **October 29**—Please join us, in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, for our **Pink Shabbat** service at 9:00 AM. We are partnering with Sharsheret, an organization supporting Jewish women and their families facing breast or ovarian cancer. We invite any synagogue member or Sisterhood member who is a survivor or son or daughter of a survivor of breast or ovarian cancer to participate in the service with a prayer or English reading. Please reach out to Ilene Laufer at [rflanzman@aol.com](mailto:rflanzman@aol.com) or 201-693-1477 or Donna Pasternak at [dpast123@aol.com](mailto:dpast123@aol.com) or 201-320-3360 if you would like to participate.
- **November 1** – SAVE THE DATE - Paid Up Membership Murder Mystery Night. All FLJC/CBI Sisterhood members are welcome to join us for what will certainly be a fun evening. You will be able to join Sisterhood at the door. More information will be available in coming weeks.

**January 28** is Sisterhood Shabbat – You will be hearing more about that soon, but if you would like to read a Torah portion, please let Nina Gold know so you can have the time you may need to practice.

I wish you all an easy fast and a wonderful remainder of the holiday season.

*Ann Golick*



Fair Lawn Jewish Center / Congregation B'nai Israel



## Join Sisterhood for Sushi in the Sukkah

Wednesday, October 12 • 7:00 PM

Open to all FLJC/CBI Members & Sisterhood Members



Rain or Shine  
We will be under the Sukkah!



Cost:

\$15 per individual

\$45 per family (immediate family members only)

Sorry, no walk-ins allowed.

Checks made payable to FLJC/CBI Sisterhood. Write 'Sukkah' in memo line on check.

RSVP Required by Sunday October 9th to  
Lisa Urbanski at [LRURBANSKI@hotmail.com](mailto:LRURBANSKI@hotmail.com)

All attendees age six months and up must be vaccinated. (Covid policies may be revised due to changing conditions.)



Fair Lawn Jewish Center / Congregation B'nai Israel



## B'reishit Hike

Sunday, October 23, 2022 • 10:00 AM

Ramapo Reservation

608 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah

RSVP Required By 10/19 to Nina Ron via text message at 201-694-4377

We Will All Meet and Hike Together!

Bring Your Own Water Bottle & Snack!





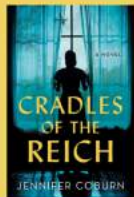
Fair Lawn Jewish Center/Congregation B'nai Israel

Welcomes Author Jennifer Coburn

## CRADLES OF THE REICH

Wednesday, October 26, 2022, 8:00pm

In-person and virtually



*Cradles of the Reich* uncovers a topic rarely explored in fiction: The Lebensborn Project – a Nazi breeding initiative to raise the birth rate of “racially pure” Aryan children. The story of three very different German women who meet at a Nazi breeding home, this poignant historical novel speaks to the strength of women and the bonds they can forge in the most harrowing of times.

Jennifer Coburn is the author of “We’ll Always Have Paris” and six contemporary women’s fiction novels.

**Open to the Community!\***

Registration includes attendance at the author’s lecture and book signing.

**Ordering:** Books are available for purchase, in advance, at a discounted price of \$25.93, including tax and shipping **if ordered on or before September 18.**

After September 18, books can be ordered through [Private House Party](#), for \$31.50. Book copies will be shipped to your home.

Books can always also be purchased directly from Amazon for \$27.99.

All books ordered before September 18 through the link at the bottom of this page will be available for pick up after October 12 from the Fair Lawn Jewish Center/Congregation B’nai Israel at 10-10 Norma Avenue, Fair Lawn. (The book’s release date is October 11, 2022.)

**Registration Deadline with Book Order:** Sunday, September 18, 2022

**Registration Deadline without Book Order:** Monday, October 24, 2022

**REGISTER NOW** by clicking this link: [https://fljc.shulcloud.com/form/Jennifer\\_coburn.html](https://fljc.shulcloud.com/form/Jennifer_coburn.html)

Questions: [AndreaPassPR@gmail.com](mailto:AndreaPassPR@gmail.com)

\*All visitors entering the building must be vaccinated.  
Masks are required for unvaccinated children under 6 months of age.



**Thank you to the following for sponsoring the beautiful Rosh Hashanah flowers on the Bimah:**



Vher, Judith & Jessica  
Alvaro  
The Ayes Family  
The Baer Family  
Lily Chedzhemova  
Susan M. Cohen  
The Danto Family  
Ilene & Richman  
Fianzman  
Joan & Steve Goldstein  
Arline Herman  
& Family  
The Kalina Family  
Fran Kessler & Family  
Ruth & Harold  
Kirschenbaum

Karen Kurland  
& Family  
Phyllis Mirchin  
Rona & Steven  
Montag  
Deborah & Mark  
Oppenheimer  
Loren Rosenthal  
The Rothenberg Family  
Tony & Mozelle &  
Sansone Family  
Susan & Michael  
Seligman  
Ann Golick & Bob Sokol  
Allen Wallen

Fair Lawn Jewish Center/Congregation B'nai Israel Sisterhood

Join Sisterhood for Pink Shabbat in  
honor of Breast Cancer  
Awareness Month

Saturday, October 29th, 9:30 AM in Sanctuary if  
vaccinated or via Live Broadcast from home

We are partnering with Sharsheret, an organization  
supporting young Jewish woman and their families facing  
breast cancer by creating a connection with networks of  
peers, health professionals and related resources.



Our *Pink Shabbat* is designed to educate women and men  
about the increased risk of hereditary breast and ovarian  
cancer among Jewish families.

We invite any synagogue member who is a survivor or  
son/daughter of a survivor of breast or ovarian cancer to  
have an honor during the service.

(Note: The service will be held in the sanctuary  
and you must be vaccinated to participate.)

Please contact Ilene Laufer at [RFlanzman@aol.com](mailto:RFlanzman@aol.com)  
or Donna Pasternak at [dpast123@aol.com](mailto:dpast123@aol.com) if you  
would like to participate in the service.



Fair Lawn Jewish Center/Congregation B'nai Israel



Neve Shalom Sisterhood Weaving Program



**Weave a Judaic Heirloom  
You Can Do It!!**



We are proud to announce a partnership with the Neve Shalom Sisterhood Weaving Program in Metuchen. Available to all of our members, this program allows you to weave a custom tallit, tefillin bag, challah cover, or matzoh cover. No experience is necessary!! Volunteers from Neve Shalom Sisterhood Loom Room will guide you through the process. With their help, you can weave.

This ongoing program is open to the entire FLJC/CBI community! All ages welcome! Remember, you do not have to be crafty, handy, or a weaver. Everyone can weave!

For more information contact:

FLJC/CBI Shari Toron at 201-693-1789 or [sktoron@gmail.com](mailto:sktoron@gmail.com) or reach out to Neve Shalom Cory Schneider at 717-574-1807 or [corstan65@gmail.com](mailto:corstan65@gmail.com).

A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the Fair Lawn Jewish Center/CBI Sisterhood.

Click the [Loom Room](#) to fill out a sign up form for your weaving project.



To view lots of items that have been woven  
in the Loom Room go to [dropbox.com](https://dropbox.com)  
Sign in with the email:  
[neveloomroom@gmail.com](mailto:neveloomroom@gmail.com) and the  
password: 250grove

## FAMILY MATTERS

### Refuah Shlemah to:

Ahava bat Hadassah  
Avraham ben David v'Shaindel  
Malka Aviva bat Chana Golda  
Avraham ben Chaya Sarah v'Yisrael  
Sally Baker (Sarah bat Chana)  
Gary Borer (Gedaliah ben Freyda v'Chayim)  
Yosef Chaim ben Huddle u' Moshe  
Chana bat Rivka  
Nava Deena bat Sterna  
Laili Golda bat Reuvat v'David  
David Gotlib (David ben Sarah u'Binyamin)  
David Hayim ben Batya u'Refu'el  
Leo Henner (Eliezer ben Shoshanah v'Yosef Meir)  
Beth Karetnick (Blima bat Devorah)  
Natalie Klein (Nechama bat Chasha v'Leib)  
Fred Krantowitz (Fivish ben Chaya)  
Mayer Leib ben Yarna  
Moshe Leib ben Rivka  
Liat bat Chava  
Neal Lipshitz (Nahum ben Haya Perel v'Yaakov)  
Shimon Ma'aravi ben Edna u'Mordechai

Irene Mandel (Itka bat Yente v'Chaim)  
Larry Mandel (Leibel ben Chaya)  
Judi Margolis (Zisa Ita bat Rachel v'David)  
Pincus ben Mina Sora  
Irv Pollack (Yehezkel ben Sarah v'Yaakov)  
Raisa bat Aviva  
Tova Raiza bat Yitzhak v'Malka Esther  
Tziporah Rivkah bat Sima v'Aryeh Leib  
Debbie Rosenzweig (Devorah Surah bat Tzirl v'Eliyahu Meyer)  
Jesse Rosenzweig (Yehuda Laib ben Rachel)  
Stanley Sanders (Sender ben Ettie v'David haLevi)  
Kenny Schmier (Kalman ben Rivka)  
Judith Shain-Alvaro (Yehudit Chasida bat Perel)  
Bob Steinberg (Reuben David ben Tzivya)  
Giszel Szackamer (Giszel bat Golda)  
Dalia Tzril bat Riva Braina  
David Wertheim (Binyamin ben Eta Shifra)  
Ilene Wolosin (Chaya Rossa bat Celia u'Max)  
Yochevet Tzini bat Moshe  
Yosef ben Devorah u'Moshe  
Roni Zerowin (Rachel Chana bat Tamar)

**Mazel Tov to our October Birthdays:** Manuel Abiague, Stuart Alper, Neil Astmann, Robin Baer, Victor Constantine, Brian Frisch, Beatrice Goldstein, Linda Herrmann, Frances Kessler, Jane Levine, Myron Linderman, Irma Newdorf, Don Peloso, Ronald Roth, Mozelle Sansone, Olivia Schoenberger, Alex Shinkar, Amy Stolar, Bena Weil

**Mazel Tov to our October Anniversaries:** Rachelle & Paul Danto, Lisa & David Gotlib, Sheryl & David Lauchheimer, Andrea & Scott Pass, Robin & Joel Ringer, Sharon & Lawrence Schwartz, Heidi & Seth Seigel-Laddy, Ann Golic & Robert Sokol



### Fair Lawn Jewish Center / Congregation B'nai Israel

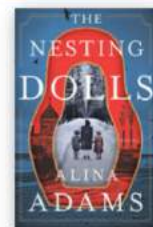


**November 13th**



**Thread Collectors**  
by Shaunna J. Edwards  
Moderator: Pauline Mont

**January 8th**



**Nesting Dolls**  
by Alina Adams  
Moderator: Tammy Smith

## Sisterhood Book Club Reading Selections 2022-2023

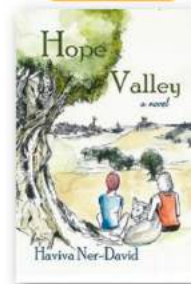
In Person and on Zoom

**March 5th**



**Matzoh Ball**  
by Jean Meltzer  
Moderator: Jen Mendelsohn

**April 23**



**Hope Valley**  
by Haviva Ner-David  
Moderator: Ilene Laufer

All attendees age six months and up must be vaccinated. (Covid policies may be revised due to changing conditions.)



# JOIN US FOR LUNCH IN THE SUKKAH!

THE FIRST DAY OF SUKKOT  
MONDAY  
OCT. 10  
AFTER THE  
MORNING  
SERVICE



\$18.00 per Adult/Children are Free  
RSVP by October 6 to [info@fljc.com](mailto:info@fljc.com) with number  
and names of people attending.

Pay by check or pay online at  
<https://fljc.shulcloud.com/form/lunch-in-the-sukkah-2022.html>.

(Continued from page 3)

homes. We have abolished slavery. People of all genders have the right to vote and own property. We have much greater equality in our society, despite recent setbacks by Supreme Court decisions, than we had a generation ago. We have vaccines. We have a bivalent COVID booster vaccine. We have the right to love whom we love publicly and not in secret. We have the right and the ability to be a practicing vegan and a practicing Jew.

I would argue that this living in the imagined future/imagined past is not even the Judaism that the Rabbis of the Talmud imagined God wanting us to practice. I acknowledge that that is a bold claim. It would be unjust of me or anyone else to tell you, "Judaism says that this is the meaning of life. Full stop." But I'd like to share with you a Talmudic text that I have come to see in a new light since this past summer:

**Rava said:** After departing from this world, when a person is brought to judgment for the life they lived in this world, the tribunal ask them:

**Did you conduct business faithfully? נִשְׁאַתְּ בְּאִמּוּנָה?**

**Did you designate times for Torah study?**

**Did you engage in procreation?**

**Did you await salvation?**

**Did you engage in dialectics of wisdom or understand one matter from another?**

When we enter the final court of judgment after our deaths, Rava, the 4<sup>th</sup> Century Talmudic master, taught we are asked five simple questions. And let's be real: When the Rabbis speak about what we'll be asked when we approach the heavenly tribunal on our final day of judgment, what they're really saying is: "Here are the questions you need to ask yourself every single day or at least every High Holiday season."

First off: Did you conduct business faithfully? On the most basic level, the question is asking, were you fair and not deceitful in your business dealings? A worthy question. But let's go deeper. As I often note, inspired by my teacher, Rabbi Dr. Elliot Dorff, English translation doesn't fully do justice to the Hebrew. The English word business is *busy-ness*, being occupied. The rabbinic expression is *masa u'matan*, giving and receiving. There is a human relationship implied in every dry transaction. One could thus read the question as, "Did you treat your employees, your customers, your coworkers, the clerk, the receptionist, the produce-man, the sanitation worker, with good faith?" Were you true to yourself? Did you live an ethical life? Did you look in the mirror and recognize yourself?

Second: Did you designate times for Torah study? Did you dedicate yourself to being a lifetime learner? Were you able to say, "I do not know all the answers, but I will dedicate time regularly to finding more questions?"

Third: Did you engage in procreation? The basic meaning of this question is, of course, did you have biological children? But this is not the only way to get to a "yes" answer to this question. The Rabbis of the Talmud understood elsewhere that anyone who supports a child, fosters them

in the home, or teaches them is considered like their parent. My own teacher, Rabbi Dr. Bradley Shavit Artson, noted this in his piece this summer titled, "We need Mish-pakhah, not family values," that:

Marriage is not for everybody, nor is it an option for everybody. In contemporary life, with so many divorces, so many singles, and so many others who don't fit into the Jewish ideal of marriage (sometimes by choice, often involuntarily) this value requires some translation. There are many today who can't have children, or who suspect that their own parenting would not do a child a favor and therefore opt out of child-rearing. Some are unable to find life partners with whom to raise kids. In all these cases, the ideal of kiddushin [that is, sanctified partnership] still offers guidance and support. Above all else kiddushin enforces the notion that all adults have a positive role to play in raising and teaching the next generation. The ideal of child-rearing as the central creative act of adult life need not be limited to biological parents. The survival of Judaism depends on the willingness of rabbis, cantors, youth group leaders, volunteers, religious school teachers, and parents of children's friends to "parent" these children Jewishly.

Read in this context, the question is, did you invest in the future of the Jewish community and the world community? Was a synagogue a place where people of all ages were welcome? Did you advocate for those young Jews-in-training? Were you open to change?

Fifth: Did you engage in dialectics of wisdom and understand one matter from another? That's wordy. It means, I think, did you use all the tools of the previous three questions—treating people fairly, being a learner, and being a parent, teacher, or supporter of children—to find conclusions? Did you contribute to the discourse and the development of the Jewish people? Did you sit on the sidelines of the community or did you engage with fervor and devotion? Did you acknowledge that Judaism is not a spectator sport, that despite the fact that I am up here, truly honored to be speaking to all of you, all of you are participating in the worship service? No one in this room is part of an audience. If you find that's the case, I owe you a personal apology and I want you to know that I would like to make this better in the future.

I know I skipped a question. Fourth: Did you await salvation? I'll admit, of all the questions, this is the closest one to interpret according to the "the best future is the idealized past" dogma that I'm trying to deconstruct. But the nature of the redemption mentioned in this text is not specified. Rava could have said, albeit presciently 800 years too early, "Did you follow the Rambam's 12<sup>th</sup> Principle of Faith, did you believe with perfect faith in the coming of a human Messiah?" Indeed, none of these five questions start with, "Did you believe anything?" I will note that the Talmud continues by saying that Fear of Heaven, often translated as belief in God, is essential for giving these things meaning. This doesn't negate the value of the question. Perhaps the only thing we should believe, or the only thing that we can possibly believe, is that the world can be

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a better place in the future. Some, like my teacher Rabbi Jason Rubinstein, say that God is the difference between the world as it is and the world as we wish it could be.

Every single one of these questions has an underlying question: “Did you live your life acting on the knowledge that you, your community, and the world were not stagnant”? Judaism has always changed. There is no such thing as a perfect past. We need look no further than the books of the Prophets to know that the mitzvot in the Torah were never universally practiced. Some of our ancestors were faithful to Hashem, but a lot of them worshiped other gods. Even for those who followed the Torah, there have always been disagreements. Every generation has seen its Jewish diversity, sometimes cooperative, sometimes antagonistic.

While the concept of Jewish “denominations,” an English and Christian term, is a modern development, at no point was the Jewish community a monolith. There has never been one way to be Jewish. You are not a bad Jew if you have questions or if you are on a different point in your journey of observance. Our ancestors in every single generation that came before us had the same struggles as us. And on Rosh Hashanah, they stood before God, the community, and their own selves. Our Torah reading that we just completed this morning makes a point to tell us that God heard the voice of Yishmael crying in the place that he was. Not in the place he had been, as the first born son of his father and not as his future self, the ancestor of another great people. God heard Yishmael as a scared, crying young boy. God sees and hears us all in our places where we sit and stand right now.

That is the thing that has not changed. On Rosh Hashanah, Jews throughout history have asked themselves those same five core questions in some way or another. By the way, there’s another more succinct version of the questions you’re asked in heaven. This is a Hasidic story that I’ve always been fond of, recounted by the philosopher Martin Buber:

Before his death, Rabbi Zusya said, “In the coming world, they will not ask me: ‘Why were you not Moses?’ They will ask me: ‘Why were you not Zusya?’”

Did you live the life that God gave you or did you spend your entire time on this earth trying to be someone ideal? Were you flexible enough to experiment with your identity and find out who you are really supposed to be? It takes a lot of confidence to admit that our lives are not scripted and we are all doing our best to change course when needed. Do we have the confidence to live lives of change? Do we have the confidence to be realists, to say, we are not in the year 60 when the Temple stood, we are not in the year 1170 in the time that the Rambam lived, we are not in the shtetl of 1830, we are here, in the Fair Lawn Jewish Center/Congregation B’nai Israel in 2022, the first day of 5783! We cannot move backward. We’re going to preserve the core values, the answers to those five questions. We’re going to be ethical and kind. We’re going to be learners. We’re going to support and raise children. We’re going to be doers and discussers. And we’re going to work towards a better future, knowing that

it is not going to look exactly like the Jewish world of the past. Unlike certain Jewish institutions, we will not resist change by putting a stake in the ground and saying, “THIS is Judaism. This, as it is now, is my synagogue, my university, my school. Those people will make it something else.” Because Judaism is about change. We will open doors to those seeking a Jewish home. The symbolic open doors will still support the roof of this building. And for those who have been here a long time, this is still your home.

Tradition is really really important. And that’s why we’re following the traditional liturgy today. That’s why we still read the same stories in the Torah, why we still wear a kittel and a tallit, and why we still use the Hebrew language. It connects us to the chain of our ancestors. But we are forging our own chains. There are things that we have already and are continuing to change here to live Jewish lives that speak to us, here in this moment. I live by and love tradition and the traditions of the Fair Lawn Jewish Center/Congregation B’nai Israel. We will not have a revolution, we will continue to have an evolution. The changes we will make will make us a more inclusive community and one helps us all live up to the expected “yeses” to the five questions.

For example, in the coming months, we will experiment with the layout in our sanctuary. As I noted, the core of the fifth question is, “Did you act as a player in the community, not a viewer from the sidelines?” As I said earlier, the bimah is not the only place where the action is happening in this room. All of you are part of this show as it were. So, starting once or twice a month after the Holidays conclude, we’re going to change things up. We will move the Torah reading table off of the bimah and into the center of the room. When this sanctuary was so beautifully remodeled about a decade ago, there was deliberate change made to the furniture in the room. All of the chairs that you are sitting in today can be picked up and moved around. This room is our playground and we’re going to use it! The two visions I have, and we’ll probably try both arrangements, are both everyone facing and standing in the same direction, surrounding the prayer leaders and Torah readers, as is done in many synagogues, and sitting in concentric circles around the table, which is done in many other synagogues. If the bimah is the barrier to feeling a connection to the service, we’re going to try moving the core of the action off the bimah. If you have other ideas for a layout for our prayer space, let us know, we might give it a try!

The rearranging of the chairs will be a different experience than the one any of us has had in this room before. I acknowledge that it will affect the optics and audio of our livestream. But we’ve already tried different things together before. Hey, two years ago, we were all davening in our houses across screens from each other. We can evolve.

Additionally, I’m sure that you have all noticed that we are davening from *Mahzor Lev Shalem* this year, having fully replaced the *Harlow Mahzor* which we used for a few decades. We made this decision because we feel that the English translation and abundant transliteration and the

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## THE GENEROUS HEART WILL BE FULFILLED

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Randi Blumberg and Family

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Ronald Litchman

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Linda Herrmann

#### Mae Mirchin

Phyllis Mirchin

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additional commentaries will create a more enriching and inclusive prayer experience for you and your fellow congregants. A special shout out of gratitude to all of our donors who made this significant change possible. On Kol Nidre night, I will be speaking more extensively about gendered and non-gendered language for God. I hope you take the time over the next ten days to explore the *Mahzor*. I welcome your feedback and questions. That's how we play the game.

It's not our jobs to be Moshe. It's not our jobs to be Zusya even. It's our jobs to be us, where we are right now and where we're going to continue to go. God is eternal and we are changing. Wherever you are standing on your journey, a slightly or a radically different place from this time

last Rosh Hashanah, that is okay. That is where you are. In a little while, after the silent Amidah, Cantor Stokar is going to recite a prayer that is one of my favorites of the entire year. Hineni, here I am. He will begin in the back of the room so that the prayer will, in a way, represent where every one of us is, as he proceeds slowly up to the bimah. Here we all are. Not where we were, not where we plan to be. But where we are, prepared to stand before God in judgment. Shanah Tovah.

*Rabbi Rachel Salston*



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**G'Mar Chatimah Tovah!**