

TEMPLE ISAAH
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The Prophet

Magazine

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From the President



Why I Love to Welcome New and Returning Members

Temple Isaiah has been on a growth spurt for almost a decade. After hovering at the 400-member mark for several years, we are now blessed with nearly 560 member units. Some of our established members have moved away for a retirement location, while others for job or family responsibilities and may maintain an Associate membership. But, it always seems like I am notified of either new or returning members every few weeks. It is truly a joy to be in the role of President and to say hello to those joining or rejoining our Temple family.

Regardless of age, couple or single, or any other descriptor, it is easy for me to write a welcome email. When you are in love with something, like your Jewish congregation, you can't wait to shout it out from the highest hill! To quote a Shakespeare sonnet, "let me count the ways!"

For those joining a congregation for the first time, I get to introduce myself, share my family's story, and explain all the ways to get involved while focusing on that shared desire; to belong. For some who have moved from another congregation, I get to remind them of that great feeling of beginning anew. For others, integration into Temple life is derived from their religious school-aged children who will engage with Rabbi Daniel Plotkin and Kulanu. Many of our new members are the parents of their adult children members who will feel connected through our auxiliaries, social justice activities, and adult learning opportunities. Some of our younger families or singles will gather with our 20s/30s connectIon group, led by our gifted Family Educator Rachel Petroff Kessler. And for all of the above, we are all drawn into the wonder of Rabbi Craig Axler, whose sincere and empathetic nature fills all of us with gratitude and appreciation.

Let's be honest, joining a new congregation and getting that feeling of belonging is not easy, especially during this time of restricted gathering. Nevertheless, I always think back to the many moves my family underwent during my military career and the many congregations we joined. I would preach to my children (and myself) the phrase "Semper Gumby," which means "always flexible." With our three-year assignments, we never had the luxury of waiting for someone to ask us to participate or join a group. We dove in head first. I also repeated to them a Zig Zigler quotation: "You can get everything you need in life, IF you help others get what they need." Temple Isaiah membership gives us all the opportunity to help others; in our congregation, in our Howard County Jewish community, and in our extended world.

New members bring new perspectives, new ideas, new opportunities to experiment, and new vision. New members bring experiences that can improve and transform our congregation. Each generation not only adds to the mixture of membership, but helps propel us into our future. I recently listened to a presentation entitled, "How to fall in love with your congregation's future." For me, the answer to that question is easy. Fall in love with our new congregants. Listen to their stories. Respect their diversity. Provide opportunity for leadership. Be grateful they are here.

So, to all our new members, young and not so young, Jewish and Jewish adjacent, our arms are open to you. Temple Isaiah is your home now. A home where you can belong and feel valued. You are part of a family where we all have a seat at the table. ■

*Happy (secular) New Year,
Gary Perelman*

Midrash as Fan Fiction

by Rabbi Craig Axler

If you spend enough time listening to my sermons or in Torah study, you are likely to have heard me say something like “There’s an amazing *midrash* that says...” and then you can fill in the blank with some creative and interesting story. At least it’s probably interesting to me! But, every once in a while, someone will stop me and ask an incredibly important question: “What is a *midrash*?” In this issue of *The Prophet* magazine, focused on various forms of Jewish literature, I’d like to share a brief, non-academic answer to this question.

Technically, *Midrash* is a genre of Jewish texts which date back to the first few centuries of the Common Era, after the point when all of the books of the Hebrew Bible/TaNaKh had found their final form. *Midrash* is a part of what is called “Oral Torah” — the traditional designation of texts that, while not found in the codified Hebrew Bible, are nonetheless given the weight of having been revealed to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. These texts include the Talmud, as well as other compilations of Jewish law. A popular, concise definition of *Midrash* is given by Gary Porton: “a type of literature, oral or written, which stands in direct relationship to a fixed, canonical text, considered to be the authoritative and revealed word of God by the midrashist and his audience, and in which this canonical text is explicitly cited or clearly alluded to.”

But, as I’ve just mentioned, I’d like to offer a non-academic definition of *Midrash* which maybe hints at why I love this form of Jewish expression as much as I do. *Midrash* is essentially the “Fan Fiction” of the Torah. I am not the originator of this analogy, but it has become one effective way of understanding *Midrash* through the teaching of many of my colleagues over the last few decades.

A word of explanation. Fan Fiction is a modern term for a genre of literature (or other art) where individuals who are fans of a particular work of art take the story, structure, characters, and plot and then create from it some additional layers, some extensions of what the artist initially revealed. They look for the “back story” or the alternate endings; new possibilities are imagined, and long-held assumptions about the story may be up-ended. A familiar example would be *Wicked*, the wildly popular (see what I did there?) 2003 Broadway musical — which itself is based on the 1995 fan fiction novel of the same name, which seeks to understand the back story of how Elphaba becomes the “Wicked Witch of the West.” Of course, this is Fan Fiction on the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*, based on the 1900 novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Now, that’s a lot of tracing back! But you get the point — somewhere along the line, someone who loved these characters and their story deeply enough had the creative spark to wonder “how did Elphaba become wicked?” Spoiler alert — it has to do with the deep cruelty and bullying she experienced from characters we always assumed to be “good” who could not accept her for being different, or green! And there is so much additional rich content in the Broadway musical explaining creatively all kinds of other questions you may have wondered about the original stories, or leading you to ask questions you’d never thought of before. This is the beauty of Fan Fiction. And I have little doubt that *Wicked* will yet inspire more Fan Fiction. I, for one, would love to see the Fiyero (who would become The Scarecrow) musical!

So, *Midrash* as an approach frees us to ask questions such as: “What happened that led to this famous story?” “Why did this character make the choices they did?” “What were the events between two moments of Torah that link them together?” and perhaps the most important question of all “What does this mean for us?” And part of the beauty of *Midrash* is that the various ways in which a particular question might be answered do not need to agree with one another — in fact, they can easily be mutually exclusive, in direct conflict with one another, lead to wildly different assumptions, and all of this is totally valid because,

"it's *Midrash!*" I find a liberating freedom in the notion that through the millennia, our ancestors were able to answer these well-worn stories with a multi-vocality that encouraged creativity, curiosity, and questioning.

One illustration of how *Midrash* does this is found in the collection *Exodus Rabbah*, which dates to around the 10th century CE but which includes a lot of earlier material. The verse Exodus 32:11 finds Moses defending the people of Israel when God has threatened them with total destruction after the building of the Golden Calf. The verse reads: "But Moses implored the LORD his God, saying, 'Let not Your anger, O LORD, blaze forth against Your people, whom You delivered from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand.'" Following are two examples (among many others posed) of interpretive creativity on this verse:

What does "And Moses implored" mean? Rabbi Helbo taught in the name of Rabbi Isaac: That Moses absolved the Creator of God's own vow! ... God said to Moses "I have already taken an oath that 'The one who sacrifices to other gods... shall be utterly destroyed.' (Exodus 22:19) I cannot retract an oath which has come out of My own mouth!" But Moses corrected God: "Lord of the Universe, did You not give me the power to annul oaths, saying 'When a person makes a vow to the Eternal, or swears an oath to bind their soul with a bond, that person shall not break their word.' (Numbers 30:3) — yes, THAT PERSON shall not break THEIR word. But a scholar can absolve the person of their vow if they come and request it of the scholar!" ... Whereupon Moses wrapped himself in judicial robes, sat in the posture of a Sage, and God stood before Moses requesting that he absolve God of God's own vow! (*Exodus Rabbah* 43:4)

The passage above uses a legal loophole, known to the Rabbis of the Talmud, that while a person cannot break their own vow, an appropriately appointed scholar or judge can do so if the person requests with sincerity and good reason that the vow be broken. And in this *midrash*, Moses seems to apply the same standard to God, who — in a fit of rage — has declared that the Israelites need to be utterly destroyed for their act of idol-worship at the Golden Calf. In using this logic, the *midrash* points out that EVEN God can lose God's "temper," make vows in the heat of that anger that God wants to walk back from; and that walking back from the things we say when we are not thinking clearly — especially when it is for the sake of those that we love and their well-being — can be done. If God can walk back from anger, certainly we can as well! A separate *midrash* takes this same verse to

have a completely different import:

"Let not Your anger blaze against YOUR people whom YOU delivered from the land of EGYPT..." — Why did Moses see fit in the course of his plea to mention going out from Egypt? Moses was pleading: Master of the Universe, where did You bring them out from? Was it not the land of Egypt, where they worship calves?!? This can be compared to a parable of a sage who opened a perfume shop for his son to run in the street of harlots. The street plied its trade, and the perfume business plied its trade, and the young man, like any other young man, plied his base inclination — he strayed into depraved behaviors. When the father caught him with a harlot, he began to shout: "I'll put you to death!" But the sage's friend who was there spoke up: "You yourself ruined your son, and now you are yelling at him?!? You ignored all other occupations and taught him to be a perfumer; you ignored all other streets and deliberately opened a shop for him in the street of harlots!..." (*Exodus Rabbah* 43:7, in *Sefer HaAgadah*)

What a chutzpah-filled argument the *midrash* makes on behalf of Moses. God bears at least some of the guilt for the Golden Calf! God can't criticize them too harshly for acting in ways they had seen in Egypt, particularly if God hasn't paid enough attention to their oversight, being too busy talking with Moses on top of the mountain, while the people were down below following their natural urges, even their base inclination. The *Midrash* often poses conversations between people and God which are theologically bold, if not shocking. And that, too, is part of its allure. In a religion with very little inflexible doctrine, the creative playing field of *Midrash* is often a place for testing out our beliefs, and even questioning assumptions.

I love *Midrash* because it is an expression of my love for Torah; I am a FAN of Torah, and so this Fan Fiction appeals to me! I also love that *Midrash* is both a genre — with volumes of *Midrashic* Collections over the millennia — and also a process. *Midrash* allows for the fact that we can still write, create, improvise, and explore our own answers to the questions on the blank parts of the pages of Jewish text, and that our answers today are every bit as valid as the ones penned by generations before us. *Midrash* is an invitation into the ongoing process of Torah, of revealing layer upon layer, meanings leading to other meanings, leading to ever-more questions, and occasionally answers. *Midrash* makes ancient text as fresh and relevant as the current box office, perhaps even more so. And isn't that what it means to be a Fan of Torah? ■



Joani Rothenberg

Walking in Their Shoes

Interview with Rachel Petroff Kessler

Joani Rothenberg is an artist based in Indianapolis. She has illustrated numerous children's books, many in collaboration with Rabbi Sandy Sasso. You can visit her websites at www.joyapublicart.com/ and at www.artbyjoani.squarespace.com/. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

relevant in today's world. I really enjoyed raising four young children and seeing how those stories, feelings, and situations impacted their lives and being able to portray that.

Rachel Petroff Kessler: How did you get started in this work?

Joani Rothenberg: When I was in college, I wanted to illustrate children's books. I loved that you could enter a story and imagine it differently from the author but also bring it to life. That always fascinated me, how an artist imagines that world. I lived in Israel for many years and when we moved to Indianapolis, Sandy Sasso was the rabbi and I said, I want to illustrate her books! The first book was Cain and Abel; I had gotten a Masters in Art Therapy and worked with really violent children, and that was [the publisher's] biggest concern, how to portray violence in a safe and understanding way for youth, and they liked how I had Cain kill Abel, or how that felt for Cain. I just imagined their remorse, how they felt, and how to portray that.

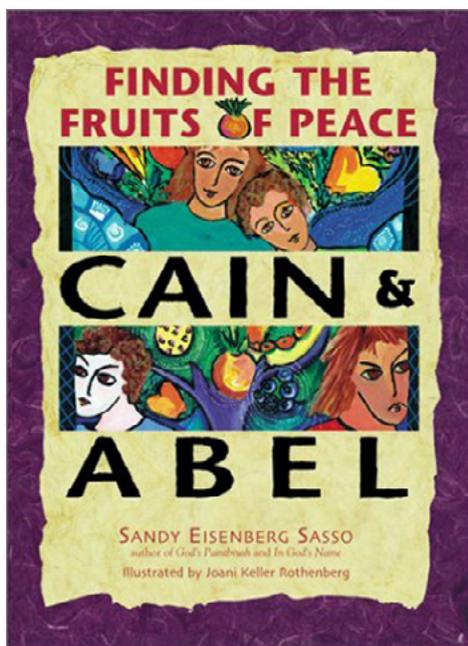
For me, being a Jewish illustrator, (Rabbi) Sandy (Sasso) does such a good job making stories

RPK: How do you approach depicting Biblical stories visually?

JR: The first time I heard (Rabbi) Sandy (Sasso) talk about Miriam, she said, "imagine yourself as a slave and then as someone who is given freedom to cross the sea. And not only does she cross the sea without fear, but she crosses with tambourines in her hand and singing." That was one of the first things I heard from her, and her emphasis is always, put yourself in their shoes. That always helps me visualize the characters and modernize them.

A lot of the Biblical stories that I've found through my childhood, there was nothing that came out to me as being "fresh." I wanted something that was imaginative, and in a make-believe world with a lot of color that kids could

identify with and find pleasing to the eye. I wanted the characters to be universal, so everyone could identify with them.



RPK: Can you tell me a little bit about your work creating public art? How do murals tell a story?

JR: I started off doing Biblical stories at the school my kids attended, and each one had a different theme. Then I went to do a large installation at our partnership city at the Galilee Medical Center, and I met with people from the Federation in Israel and the U.S., and we decided the best way to create a partnership was a bridge between the two. I did [the work] in a public space and people could give me input. I also did a piece for the JCC (Indianapolis), and asked what the Jewish community means to them; I put their images into the mural.

I didn't get much feedback about my work but people were telling me how they like to paint, so I started to think about how I could activate their participation. We started doing large mosaics with cancer patients — we have a really large painting and people place tiles wherever they want — they are part of the art and feel very connected to the piece. When they talk to each other, their stories and participation become part of the art piece. Their stories are transferred into the mosaic forever. When the community sees it, they see that hundreds of hands have been on this piece.

RPK: What suggestions would you make to someone trying to tell stories visually?

JR: Find a story you've connected with. What's really nice is maybe to read *midrash*, because the whole idea of *midrash* is to take that story into your own life. Find a story you connect with and you can imagine yourself in those shoes; connect that story into your own life. Find something that's similar.

[When doing Cain and Abel] we talked to kids at school: what does it feel like when you're angry? Tell me about a time you were angry, what you did, and what are some alternatives to be safer? Kids were able to share, relate to that moment, and say, if I had to do it again, this is how I could react. You can do that with any story — put yourself into that story, think about what it looks like. You could write a short poem and find a way to connect yourself.

Have a sketchbook, come up with ideas, portray that character in different scenarios. Just be creative, imaginative, have a project. Everyone can do that; we just don't allow ourselves to do that. ■



Rothenberg recently created an art piece for "Theater at the Fort" in Lawrence, Indiana that incorporated artwork created by DREAMers into a fused glass American flag. Speaking about the piece, Rothenberg says, "We had them each do a large star to represent that they are a star in our country...[Their] stories were not easy, and they still have a lot of fear, but they felt like their voices were being heard. When I think about what's the biggest message, it's that everyone's story deserves to be heard and everyone has a story to be told."



The Mythical Town of

Chelm

by Rabbi Daniel Plotkin

The Jewish people have always delighted in scholarship and intelligence. Our heroes in the bible and beyond are not necessarily warriors (although some are) but the wise. Solomon is permitted to build the Temple in Jerusalem because he is wise, his father David having been barred from the task for having to get his hands dirty in war. This trend continues through the centuries where our scholars, not our warriors, carried us through the years of exclusion and persecution.

This thread of extolling intelligence and wisdom is prominent as well in Jewish folklore, as is a thread extolling kindness and justice. There is another thread however, and it comes to light in a multitude of ways, a thread in which fools and the clueless are praised and end up either as the hero or the butt of the joke. For those suffering under (often) cruel governments, this humor is necessary. Nathan Aubusel, in his book *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore*, states (p. 319) "There is within us a deep-seated psychological drive to achieve self-elevation by means of disparaging others whom we are pleased to consider less bright than ourselves. A fool, of course, is always the other fellow, never ourselves."

For Jews of Sephardic or Middle Eastern descent, this thread appears in the form of Joha, a trickster and fool; a similar character, Herschel of Ostropol, appears in European Jewish folklore.

For Jews of European background, no thread in Jewish folklore better exemplifies this need to laugh at the expense of a fool than the stories of Chelm. Chelm, which is the name of a real town in Poland, is seen as a city of simpletons and fools; even their "wise" Rabbi isn't so bright. Exactly how and why this particular town became the locale for these stories is not known, but it follows a pattern of folklore in other countries in which a real town is picked out as being inhabited by fools, including Schliburg in Germany, and Gotham in England (Aubusel, p. 320 — note that this Gotham is not connected to Gotham of comic book fame).

Within its own folklore, Chelm is a city of fools because as God fills the world with different types of people, the angel carrying a sack full of fools catches the bag on a mountain where it tears, and they all pour out into Chelm.

While there is no one typical story of Chelm, most of them have to do

with the people of the town either being tricked by an outsider or being tricked through their own ignorance of natural events. In one story that is a combination of both, the people of Chelm are worried about a boulder that might roll down and create damage in the town. As they drag the boulder down the hill while standing in front of it, a stranger passing by says it would be easier to just roll it from behind. They decide this is a good idea, but they drag the boulder back to the top of the hill and only then let it roll down in a controlled way.

Even among fools there is a wise fool, and in the case of Chelm, they were not different than other towns; their rabbi was the source of wisdom. When the townspeople argue over which is more important, the sun or the moon, they go to him to decide between the two positions. After immersing himself in deep thought, the rabbi concludes that the moon is more important because it gives light when it is dark outside, and the sun only does so when it's already light out.

Besides Chelm serving as a group of fools to laugh at from the outside, some stories of Chelm suggest that within folklore there is a thread of satire, of the storytellers poking fun at themselves or some foible of their own society.

In once such tale, clearly a satire of a town that can't ever make a decision, the people of Chelm argue over building a bridge. The merchants want it wide enough to bring goods into town, the artists insist it must be visually pleasing, while the young people want it only wide enough for romantic walks in the moonlight. Of course, as often happens in cities and nations everywhere, they only ever argue

about the bridge, but never build it.

Of course, this is only a sampling of the stories of Chelm. Below is a full story, [Chelm Justice](#). Several sources for stories of Chelm exist and a few are listed below.

Our need to laugh is a human need, expressed in various ways in every culture on earth. Jews, with our hardships and challenges through the centuries, certainly needed to express laughter and humor to get through difficult times. The stories of Chelm reflect the humorous sensibilities of the time no differently than modern day comic writers such as Larry David and Seth Rogen, and Jewish comedians have done the same. The stories of Chelm endure due to their humor, but also due to the timeless truth they tell about the human condition. ■

Chelm Story Collections:

1. A Treasury of Jewish Folklore, Nathan Abusel, ed., Crown Publishers, 1948 *The definitive anthology of Jewish folklore, music and even a few recipes.*
2. The Jewish Story Finder, 2nd Ed., Sharon Barcan Elswit, McFarland and Co., 2012 *Quick summaries of 600+ Jewish stories organized by theme for the storyteller to adapt and tell.*
3. Right Side Up: Adventures in Chelm, Eric A Kimmel, Apples and Honey Press, 2019 *Distributed by PJ Library, fun illustrations by Steve Brown help bring the stories of Chelm to life for children.*

Chelm Justice, as told by Rabbi Daniel Plotkin

A crisis has come to Chelm, the shoemaker has committed a terrible crime and must be sent away to prison for life. Because he is the only shoemaker, before he is sent away, the people of Chelm demand to know what they will do for shoes.

The town elders gather to discuss the situation and deliberate on it before sending the shoemaker to his deserved prison cell. They first say, we can have him train another shoemaker. But then they realize that could take years.

Then they decide, we'll hire another shoemaker and bring him to town. They try to do this, but at first each shoemaker they bring, for some reason, wants nothing to do with the town. Finally, they hire one and find out he's terrible at making shoes.

They discuss letting the shoemaker go, not having punished him for his crime. The townspeople say, no, this was a terrible crime and justice must be served. They keep hitting dead ends with every solution.

Finally, one of the elders speaks up and says, "I know EXACTLY what to do! We have two roofers, but only one shoemaker, let's choose one of the roofers to go to prison instead of the shoemaker; that way someone will pay for the crime and we'll also have a shoemaker in town."

The people, upon hearing this heartily agree, and the two roofers are summoned. After drawing lots, one of them is sent away to prison and Chelm never again is in need of shoes or roofs.



a form of *midrash*. He explained that *midrash* comes from a Hebrew root which means “to explore or investigate” and that is exactly what they had begun to do that day, in a very new and engaging way.

The class was so successful that they requested he return and he did, at first as a guest speaker and then actually teaching a class. All this began in 1984.

I want to jump forward now to the time that I became involved in this process, which I subsequently used in my religious school, adult ed classes, teacher training, and other teaching opportunities. As I learned to guide others through the process, I also learned about myself and how I go through the process. Therefore, in my descriptions that follow I will often use “we.”

I learned that we all will have moments in the process where we feel comfortable speaking out and times when we hesitate to participate and are uncomfortable. As we go through the process, we begin to form bonds with our co-participants and begin to feel safe to explore out-of-the-box ideas. We learn not to be afraid to let our inner actor/actress come out. And most importantly, we learn that there are no right or wrong answers.

Here is a short story of one of my first experiences as a participant. At the workshop I attended we were an interfaith group of Jews, Catholics, and other Christians of various denominations. As we began to prepare our presentations for our groups, we agreed that each of us could use the text we were most comfortable with be it Torah (Old Testament) or New Testament. My group was made up of the President and the Chancellor of St. Thomas, two priests, a Protestant minister, and two Jewish educators.

The Chancellor used a text that spoke about Jesus sending his disciples out on a Friday afternoon to a town where they did not know anyone, without any money nor place to stay, in order to go out and preach his word over the Sabbath. Somehow as it started, I could not even imagine standing up and saying I’m a disciple of Jesus; it bothered my Jewish soul to do so, or so I felt at the moment. But as the discussion went on and people kept saying things like “Jesus, how can you do this to us? What is the purpose for us to suffer this way?” All I could think of was, “Wow, Jesus you are so smart! What better way for me to get into someone’s home to talk about you and your teachings.” So, this nice Jewish girl swallowed hard, and said, “Jesus, I am your disciple, and you are so brilliant.”

In that moment, I realized that participating in role playing does not threaten who you are but enables you to see, and help others see, a different point of view. We all learned much that day. But most importantly, as I went forward and presented more and more Bibliodrama classes, this story has helped others realize they can overcome their discomfort and participate fully.

It has been exciting to watch children and adults I have taught participate in this very different way to study Torah. It is amazing, the insights that people of all ages discover when they are able to let go, put themselves in someone else’s place, and let their imagination go. I highly encourage each and every one of you, whether you love to study text or maybe have been afraid to go to Torah Study because you think you don’t know enough, to try this technique if you are given the chance.

To learn more, please visit Peter’s website at www.bibliodrama.com/. He just recently told me that he hopes very soon to be adding some sample sessions to the website. ■

Introduction, Aspiration, and Inspiration

by Joel Kaufman

My Journey into Artistic Woodworking



Introduction

My father introduced me to woodworking at a young age. He always had a nice workshop filled with amazing tools and machines and I became comfortable working by his side while using that equipment. When I became a father, I started to assemble my own basement shop to make projects for my family. These projects, although very nicely made, utilized basic carpentry skills with little artistic expression.

When my kids moved off to college and we became empty nesters, I wanted to get deeper into woodworking, but wasn't sure what area I wanted to pursue. I knew I wanted projects with more artistry, but I wasn't sure what that was.



Aspiration

That answer became clearer when I visited a neighborhood friend's house. Their home was filled with beautiful works of wood art created by his father, Kurt Simenauer. Kurt was a master carpenter by trade his entire life, creating high-end fine woodworking for clients throughout the region. Kurt had fled Germany prior to WWII and lived in Italy where he apprenticed with master carvers, and also learned carpentry. These skills launched his career and when he retired, his skills were perfect for intarsia. Intarsia is an Italian form of wood art, where you're basically "painting a canvas" with natural colored wood pieces to form an overall picture.

When I first saw his work, I was in awe and impressed, but also very intimidated. I immediately aspired to create that level of detail, craftsmanship, and quality myself. Instead of fully jumping into intarsia, I started honing my skills with scroll cutting. Working in printing and graphic arts, creating patterns is second nature to me. I scroll cut my wedding portrait after making the pattern from our wedding picture. This piece inspired me to go further.



As long as I can remember, my father kept a fallen tree limb in our garage. When he told me it was from a big cherry tree in his childhood backyard, one that I used to climb up as a kid, I asked to take it and would make something from it.

I cut part of the tree limb into rounds used for six scroll-cut portraits, and another section into boards for framework. I converted my three kids' and my sister's three kids' high school graduation pictures into patterns I could cut. This project became "Part of a Family Tree from Part of a Family Tree."

After that project I felt the confidence to try intarsia. I started with some simple projects and with each piece, added more complexity and learned new skills and techniques. I bought my first couple of patterns but modified elements of those patterns to my liking with my graphics software proficiency. Subsequently, I started making my own patterns of pictures/items of interest. When each of my kids graduated college, I created a piece with their college mascot. After those projects I was ready and looking for more of a challenge.

Inspiration

I grew up a few houses away from Phillip Ratner. Phil's work is so unique and amazingly diverse, utilizing many different mediums. I'd seen his talent and was inspired by him since I was a kid. His work adorned my first synagogue and my parent's house. My father had commissioned Phil for several art pieces, two of which were beautiful biblical tapestries. These gave me inspiration to move to a higher level of intarsia artwork. I created the intarsia patterns, adding in some detail and adjusting for cutting practicality. Noah's Ark, Abraham and Isaac, and Moses and the Burning Bush are my Phillip Ratner-inspired intarsia trilogy. Upon completing the first of these major pieces, Noah's Ark, I took it to Phil at his Bethesda museum/studio and he said it blew him away. That boost of confidence motivated me to continue with the other two, and I'll attempt similar major intarsia pieces in the future. ■

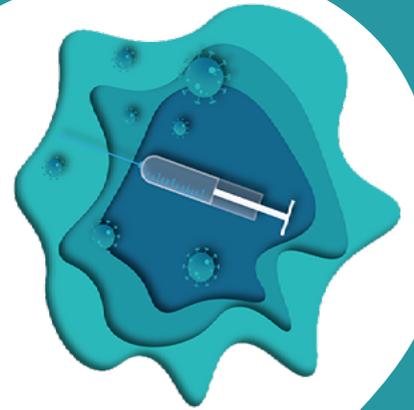
Check out more photos on the next page and other project/build details: www.lumberjocks.com/jfk4032/projects





A note from Rabbi Craig Axler:

Among the principles that Judaism holds highest, *Pikuach Nefesh* — the Preservation of Life — factors among the highest of high *mitzvot*. Doing what is necessary and possible to sustain quality life, and to act in ways that help protect the lives of others cannot be minimized in their sacred importance. The incredible blessing that is the development of multiple effective vaccines against the terrible plague that is COVID-19 has arrived and over the next months, our fervent hope is that all who are eligible to receive the vaccine will do so. Viewing it through the lens of *mitzvah*, sacred commandment, there is (as always) a blessing for vaccination. You are invited to bring this with you when you go for vaccination — I know I look forward to doing so myself.



A Prayer for Receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine

I have been praying for this day and now it is here!
With great excitement, a touch of trepidation
And with deep gratitude
I give thanks
To all the scientists who toiled day and night
So that I might receive this tiny vaccination
That will protect me and all souls around this world.
With the pandemic still raging
I am blessed to do my part to defeat it.
Let this be the beginning of a new day,
A new time of hope, of joy, of freedom
And most of all, of health.
I thank You, God, for blessing me with life
For sustaining my life
And for enabling me to reach this awe-filled moment.
Amen

Rabbi Naomi Levy

Traditional Jewish Blessings, Appropriate for this Moment:

Shehechyanu is a blessing that is recited upon occasional events that spark gratitude, thanking God for permitting us to reach a given milestone:

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, shehechyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Sovereign of all, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

Hatov V'hameitiv is a blessing, said to mark occasions that are considered to bring pleasure to the entire community, and not only an individual:

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, ha-tov v'hameitiv.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Sovereign of all, who is good and bestows good.

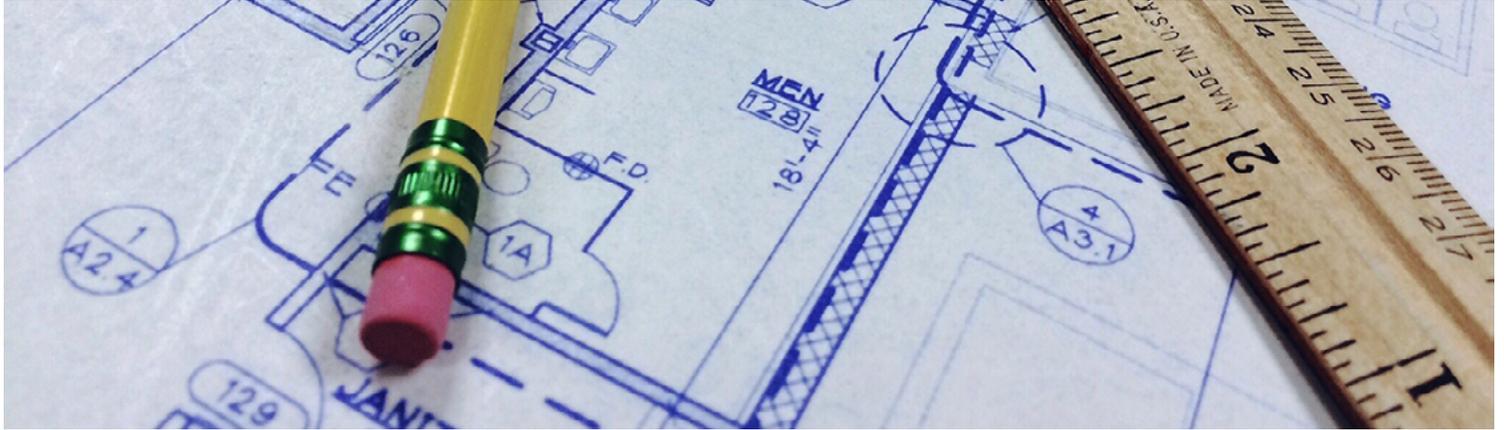
The traditional blessing that thanks God for the proper functioning of our bodies:

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, rofeh kol basar u'mafli la-asot.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Who heals all flesh and performs wonders.

UPDATE: Temple Isaiah Building Expansion

by Denny Rapport



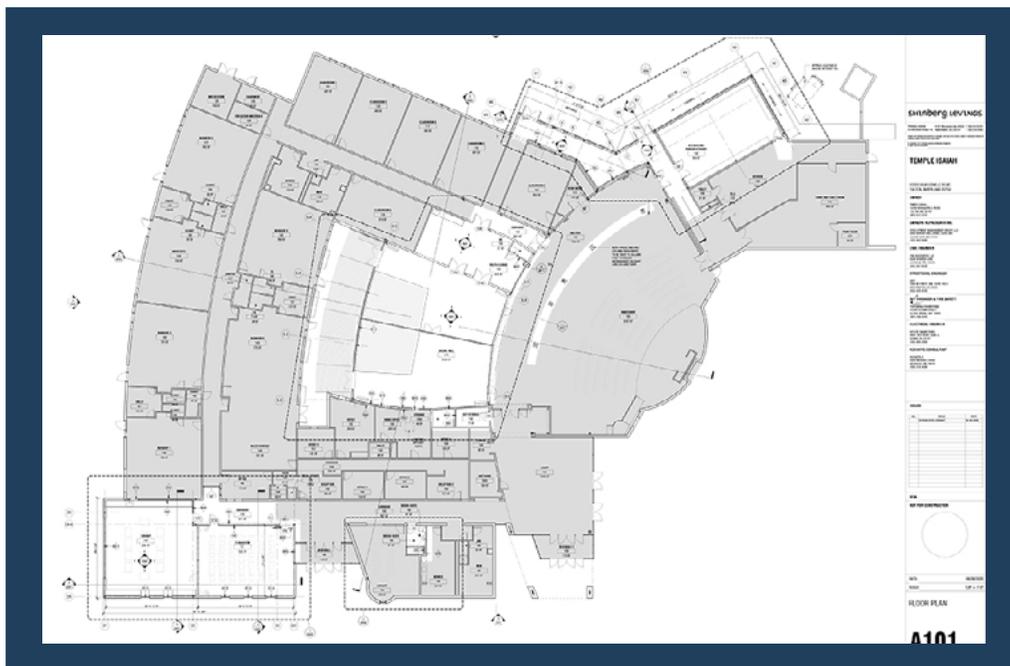
Like most of you, I am so grateful for all that Temple Isaiah has done during this pandemic to keep us connected through the technology of video communications. From regular worship services to an expanded set of on-line courses to online social connections, our amazing clergy and staff have kept us engaged. But I really miss being in the building seeing people face to face.

We are all looking forward to erev Shabbat services, singing along with Cantor Droller or Shir Isaiah and then mingling in the lobby for an oneg. I miss the happy voices of our preschoolers when I need to drop by the Temple on a weekday. Shabbat mornings had the energy of Torah study, caterers setting up for a b'nei mitzvah reception in the lobby, worshippers arriving for services, and parents with young children coming together for Tot Shabbat. Sunday mornings might have a Men's Club brunch on one end of the sanctuary and a Kulanu assembly on the other end. Leaving the sanctuary, we'd wind through Kulanu students lining up for pizza and greet fellow congregants browsing in Isaiah's Gifts.

You get the picture. The Temple was a truly a beit kneset, a place to gather, not only a synagogue.

But now we have even more to look forward to. As we have presented in this space over the past several issues, a Building Expansion Committee has been looking at our building's shortfalls and constraints to see what is needed to enhance our experience and programming as well as fix some issues that have come to light in the 15+ years we have been in the building.

The design of the building expansion is now complete. The concept is shown in this floor plan.



You can see three new areas.

At the top is a large storage area with a new hallway that goes along the north side of the building. The hallway provides access to a new social hall built in the current courtyard. The current youth lounge is converted to an annex for set-up or drink service for receptions, dinners, or *oneg shabbat*.

The social hall can be divided in two for Kulanu classrooms and assemblies. This space can also open up to the sanctuary for extra seating for High Holy Days.

At the bottom of the floor plan is a chapel and lounge area. The lounge will have running water and coffee service. The room will be used for special programs, like *Babies & Bagels*, as well as provide a place for parents to meet and socialize while waiting for their Kulanu students. The chapel, which is to the right of the lounge, will be used for Torah study (which has outgrown its current spot in the library), adult and youth classes, *b'nai mitzvah* tutoring, and small services (for example, the "lobby minyans" on *Shabbat* mornings when there is no bar/bat mitzvah).



Here is an artist's rendering of the lounge and chapel.



You can imagine how an addition like this will enhance our worship experience, study options, and provide a welcoming place to gather, work and learn with each other.

The obvious question is what happens now? As I mentioned, we have a complete set of drawings and specifications. We have engaged a general contractor as well as specialists like civil engineers, landscape architects, and audio-video consultants. But actual groundbreaking, with equipment and workers on site is still a ways off. The Board has a number of questions and issues to resolve before we have authorization to start. Nevertheless, we will get there in due time. After all, our ancestors waited forty years to get from Egypt to the Promised Land. We can wait a little longer for this much needed expansion to our building. ■



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Bits & Pieces

Who's Who @ Temple Isaiah



Name: Mina Alon Pertman

Family: Mina and Allan have three children — Jackie, Tova, and Brian; and five grandchildren, Megan, Ryan, Daniel, Leo, and Nathan.

Hometown: Marriottsville, MD

Something You Might Not Know About Me: We lived in Kauai for three years with Allan's job, with our three young children. I got together a few young Jewish children and had a small Jewish religious school.

Position at Temple Isaiah: Teacher in Kulanu (Temple Isaiah's Religious School).

Worked Here Since: 1980.

Parents and Teachers Can Come to Me If They Need: Any assistance or have any questions related to the students' class work for Kulanu.

Why I love being at TI: Everything about TI is wonderful — TI staff, Kulanu staff, TI members, and the programs they offer.

Welcome

New Members!

Anna Denzel

Did you Know?

Temple Isaiah will soon be switching to a new database system that will integrate with our website. You'll be able to access a number of services directly, and with a customized Temple Isaiah app (which you can download from the Apple and Google Play app stores) you can even access them while you're on the go.

Watch your email for more detailed information and instructions on how to register.

You'll be able to:

- Pay Your Member Commitment
- Pay Kulanu Tuition and Fees
- Pay Preschool Tuition and Fees
- Register for Programs and Events
- Check Your Account Balance
- Make Donations
- Find Contact Info for Other TI Members



Up Next...

The Nosh Issue



Temple Isaiah
12200 Scaggsville Rd.
Fulton, MD 20759



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Wanted: talented writers!

If you have a way with words and a knack for telling great stories, *The Prophet Magazine* could use your skills.

We're looking for "reporters" to:

- + interview long-time members about their lives and Temple Isaiah's history
- + write great stories about ways that members connect with each other
- + profile TI staff and board members
- + write stories about Jewish practice and some of the ways to get involved and care for the world

Interested? Email
Raya@templeisaiah.org
with your story ideas and
she'll put you to work!

