

TEMPLE ISAIAH  
ישיבת

# The Prophet

Magazine

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**2023:3**

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## Photo and Illustration Credits

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# From the President

The theme for this month's issue is "Express Yourself." While the major focus involves artistic expression and creative hobbies explored by individuals in our community, there is yet another important element of expression that is particularly appropriate: how we express our Jewish identity.

A true confession: growing up, I never envisioned becoming involved in synagogue life, much less as a synagogue president. In fact, my Jewish background was fairly odd among my friends. My father is Jewish but unaffiliated, and my mother was a Quaker (though her father was Jewish). I attended Hebrew school and typically went to services with my best friend's family at the Orthodox synagogue in downtown San Antonio, Texas. Looking back, I always felt a bit out of place — though my friends and their families all accepted me, I also figured I would never truly be considered "Jewish enough" by others. So over the years, I always managed to keep a little distance between myself and the Jewish community. In college, although I was a member of AEPI, my attendance at Hillel events was pretty minimal and I honestly don't remember doing much more than attending the occasional Seder at my grandmother's apartment in Philadelphia. I was proud to be Jewish, to be sure — but a congregational leader? That was for others, with far more 'street cred' than me.

I mention this, being in the middle of two busy years as TI President, I can truly say that my connections to Judaism — and to this community in particular — are stronger than ever. Certainly when we first joined Temple Isaiah as Kulanu parents in 2010, I never envisioned I would be as involved as I am now. Yet each new connection that our family made seemed to inspire me to explore a little bit more, to take a more active role, to be willing to give a little more time to a community that truly welcomed us. In contrast to many of my childhood experiences where I wondered whether I was Jewish enough, I found that at Temple Isaiah, I could express my Jewish identity in so many ways. Whether helping to organize the MatzohBall Run, volunteering to help at the Cold Weather Shelter, building a sukkah, or enjoying a quiet moment of reflection during Friday night services, there always seems to be an outlet for spiritual and social connection. As I became a bit more involved, I found that leadership in those spaces can take many forms. We have so many individuals who work quietly behind the scenes to make our programs work, in addition to those of us with more 'forward facing' positions. As Rabbi Axler often reminds us, we each bring unique backgrounds, experiences, skills, and approaches to our community. Yet the ideals which bring us together are a desire to better connect with our Jewish identity, and to live up to the values embodied in the Torah. I am constantly reminded of just how lucky I am to be in a community where the full range of expression of our Jewish traditions, values, and identity is so apparent.

May we all continue to find ways to connect and express our Jewish identity, and find happiness and fulfillment, in this year, next year, and beyond. ■

*Alex Hoffman*





# Woodworking with Jonathan Cohen

by Doug Silverstein

Carpentry has been described as “the art of building dreams with wood.” About twelve years ago, Jonathan Cohen started fulfilling some of his dreams by creating and building household and personal items made with wood for his family.

Jonathan was inspired by seeing a friend create an entertainment center for his home. Thinking “that looks easy. I can do that!,” he found a project and plans online and set to work on building his masterpiece. Like his friend, his first creation was a home entertainment center. He recalls: “It was way over my head, and I bit off more than I could chew,” not realizing the complexity of it. “But I was proud of what I created. And it was a creative outlet.” By viewing his work and seeing the passion he has for creativity, one might expect Jonathan always had an interest in woodworking, or that artistry was in his family background. He said: “I like to work with my hands. But it doesn’t

come from my background. I used to joke that my father didn’t even know which end of the hammer to use ... My woodworking is all self-taught.”

Jonathan’s main line of work and source of income has always been as a freelance sound mixer for video and film. This also requires some creativity, although he seems somewhat reticent to admit it. He said, “My sound work [requires] some creativity but it’s mostly capturing the cleanest and most authentic presentation possible. I can’t take much artistic license.”

He was eight years into his hobby when the COVID pandemic shut down the film industry. Faced with lots of time on his hands, he threw himself into his woodwork. Some of this newfound work was building cutting boards for friends and family. And with lots of encouragement from both, a new business was born. He created Alder and Ash Woodworks, developed a logo with the help of a graphic artist friend, and built a website ([AlderAndAshWoodworks.com](http://AlderAndAshWoodworks.com)).

Similar to other artists, the ideas for Jonathan’s creations come from many sources, including items he sees online, nature, the arts, and even from a chocolate bar. His materials include domestic woods such as maple, walnut, and cherry, and more exotic species from around the world such as mahogany, bloodwood, and zebrawood. Each type of wood has its unique features. For example, he is very fond of cherry, which he describes as wood that “gets darker and richer looking with age.” He describes curly maple as “a beautiful, three-dimensional looking grain.” Jonathan is particularly adept at using all of the resources wood can provide — whole pieces for some parts of his projects to scrap pieces to fill gaps or highlight a design. He obtains lumber from a supplier who sources wood from all over the world,



and some wood (urban wood) is sourced locally from felled trees that Montgomery County mills, dries, and sells at an annual event.

Jonathan has created many items including cutting boards, trays, and exquisite custom furniture (cabinets, tables, mirrors). While visiting his home, his craft can be seen in every room from the coffee table in the family room, memory boxes for his three daughters, bed frames, and an incredible assortment of cutting boards. The furniture and other items in the house are beautiful, sturdy, and each one seems to have a unique quality of creativity. The woodwork contains several distinct features and the crafting is exquisite, yet practical. In one of his daughter's bedrooms is a five by eight-foot headboard made from different types of raw barn-wood. Last year, he created Halloween lanterns from cedar wood with cutouts of pumpkin faces and other Halloween themes. "Nothing too scary for the kids. You add a lit candle in it and it's good to go." He has given serious thought about making mezuzahs. "Hopefully, I create something that will last, something that my kids will have long after I'm gone." It becomes rapidly obvious that the source of his passion is his family. His wife (Becca) is also creative and makes stained glass art. He hopes one day he can incorporate one of Becca's stained-glass pieces into his woodwork.

One of the pleasures of woodworking is the sense of accomplishment, but even a hobby and passion can create frustration. "Wood can be very hard to work with. Even though it's just a slab of lumber, it's still kind of a breathing thing. It's expanding and contracting with humidity and temperature. A milled piece of wood sitting out here today might change and tomorrow be twisted and cupped." Currently, he is working with Hormigo wood which he describes as a South American species. "Hormigo wood has been the bane of my existence. It's a beautiful, rich grain, but when I put a finish on it, there's a milky white residue that develops on the surface. I can wipe it away with my finger. But it comes back the next day. It's something in the wood and I haven't figured out how to seal yet."

Because the machines for woodworking create significant noise, which could adversely affect his profession as a sound mixer, he uses headphone protectors. Dust can be a real issue too, so he wears a mask and uses a large vacuum to control the dust. The most concerning risk is damage to hands and fingers using power tools. "I have to be conscious that every tool (e.g., spinning blades) can harm me if I'm distracted or get lazy."

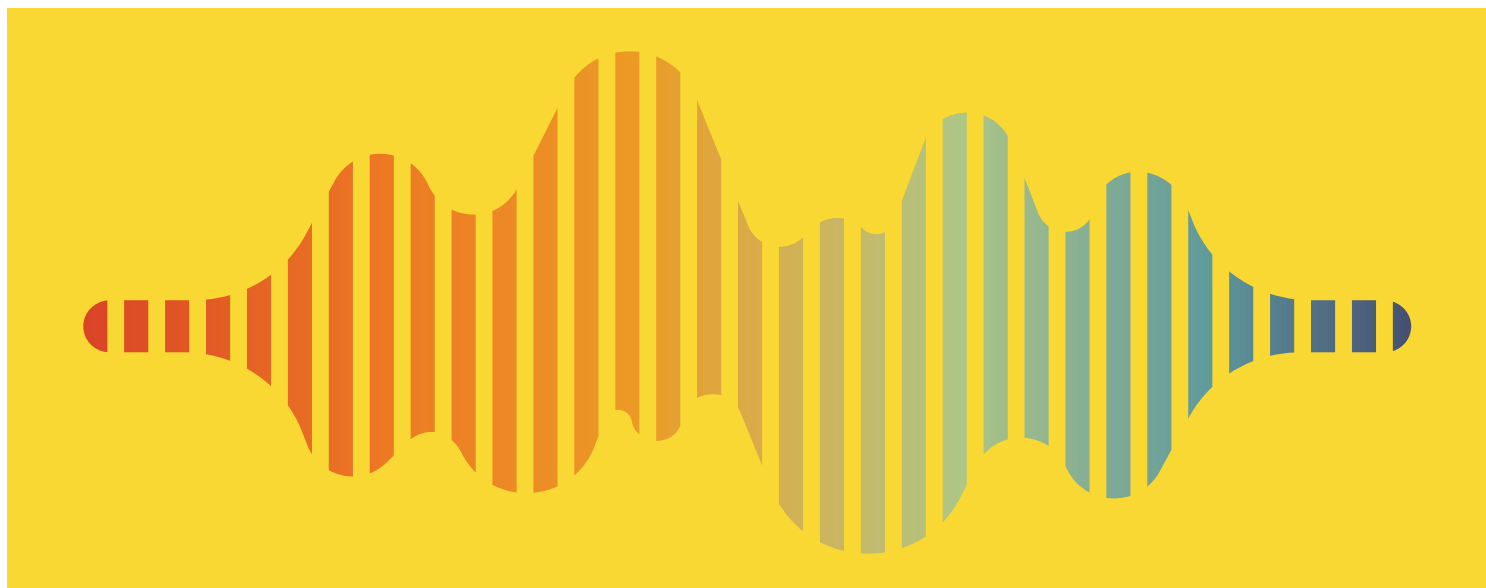
Jonathan's work is personal, passionate, and professional. I was so impressed with his work and passion I asked him to consider making a coffee table for my home. ■



# Unleashing Your Jewish Voice Through

by Rabbi Amanda K. Weiss

# PODCASTING



## “I’m not Jewish enough to \_\_\_\_\_.”

For more than a decade, this was the primary response by students, peers, friends, colleagues, and so many others who believed that they were not Jewish enough to express themselves in a certain way. Shabbat dinners, seders, and spinning dreidels never daunted these people. But anything that was deemed “more religious” was not a way in which many self-identified Jews felt comfortable expressing themselves.

COVID-19 empowered many such Jews to begin experimenting (literally “practicing” Judaism) at home. Eager to explore some sense of Jewish community and continuity, Jews were engaging in Jewish life on Zoom, through livestreaming, virtually experiencing a sense of connection to a millennia-old tradition.

Enter podcasting — a dynamic tool for individuals to explore and express their Jewish identities — in a way that empowered them to take ownership of their Judaism in their own terms and in their own time. Be it washing dishes, walking in the park, or wearily working from home, podcasts connected us in unprecedented ways and times, becoming a powerful tool for anyone with a message and a microphone to creatively engage with their chosen community.

At least that’s how the team at **Drinking and Drashing: Torah with a Twist\*** felt when we created our passion project. With a goal to translate our

tradition and texts into tangible tactics, we also aimed to challenge the conception that one needed to be “Jewish enough” to express themselves within a Jewish milieu. Combining three seemingly disparate elements — the weekly *parasha*, creative Jewish leadership and entrepreneurship, and a dash of “Midrashic Mixology” (we created weekly cocktails and mocktails that aligned with the portion) — we exemplified a Reform Jewish tenet: shaking up a classical tradition with an individual twist. We were passionate about hearing and sharing stories from across the globe and from an outstanding array of individuals.

Podcasts invite listeners to delve into the richness of any topic — for us, that included the diversity (and difficulty!) of Jewish texts and experiences. We were adamant that there was no ultimate way to be Jewish — that the fluidity of our Jewish identities could be amplified to show how Judaism could be vibrant, evolving, and powerfully individual. Listeners could access this form of Judaism anytime and anywhere, literally turning to and tuning into Jewish content as they were able and willing.

We were determined to use our platform to our highest potential: highlighting a mosaic of perspectives, backgrounds, practices, and guests. Through our podcast, we were able to share stories and insights that resonated with a wide range of listeners—highlighting that our listeners (and guests!)

were the heroes of the Jewish story — we were just acting as a guide for further Jewish exploration and expression. Our “open tent” transcended physical boundaries, creating a sense of unity through shared experiences and interests. Podcasting provided a platform for many who were looking to find their place and/or their people.

Some of the “pros” of podcasting includes its ability to rouse Reform Jews (and many others!) to express their Judaism in a manner that is uniquely their own. A comfortable entry point, podcasting can be a vehicle to deeper Torah study, encouraging curiosity and questioning by inviting listeners to engage

with Jewish texts in a way that feels approachable, resonant, and relevant to their lives.

If you ever find yourself (or anyone else!) saying, “I’m not Jewish enough to \_\_\_\_\_,” remember that there are countless ways to express your Judaism. Podcasting might be a fun way to do this; you just need to be willing to tune in, turn on the microphone, and amplify your own story — I know I can’t wait to hear it! ■

*\*Gabe Snyder, DFSSM '24; Rabbi Amanda K. Weiss '23, Edon Valdman*

*\*\*While Drinking and Drashing is no longer producing weekly episodes, you can visit our archives at [www.drinkinganddrashing.com](http://www.drinkinganddrashing.com) and listen to any of our older episodes on any of your favorite streaming platforms.*





## Revealing the Essence

Leslie Axler Interview with Rabbi Craig Axler

**Craig Axler:** At what point do you think you can remember first feeling as though you had artistic talent?

**Leslie Axler:** It was probably with the sculpting. I know I didn't feel that I had any artistic talent when I was younger. A friend got me involved in Chinese brush painting. That was okay, though I wasn't fantastic at it. Then I started doing Japanese flower arranging, *Ikebana*, and through that I guess I felt a little artistic. But it's not the same as when I started sculpting. Because of *Ikebana*, I started making pottery to create containers that I could arrange in. It was okay as well, but somebody I knew convinced me to try stone sculpting. After I did a couple of pieces, I thought "I might have something here." I continued, then I just fell in love with the process of carving stone and taking away rather than adding; seeing what would come out of the stone. My feeling was always that I was discovering and finding what was already inside the stone and then putting my stamp on it.

**CA:** What was the hardest thing to figure out when you first started sculpting?

**LA:** Where you were going with a particular stone. I had a wonderful teacher, Richard Lieberman, and he helped me find the process of taking away first all what was bad on the outside of the stone, so that you then knew what you were left with... The question was, can you communicate with the stone? Sometimes that was really hard. There was only one stone that I gave up on though... I really began sculpting as you guys were getting close to being out of the house, so I don't know how much you noticed or how it affected you, or if you paid attention to it.

**CA:** I mostly noticed the dust all over the basement, but — yes — I noticed every time a new stone came home, but I never asked the question. Clearly this was not something that just anyone could do, sculpting in stone.

**LA:** No, it's not. It is a unique ability that I found, and I'm so glad that I did. I'm glad that my friend Phyllis kept bugging me to try it. I thought she was crazy. I said,

"I can't do that." But that's the one thing that I would like my children and grandchildren to know is that you never know where are you going to wind up, you never really know what you are or are not capable of doing. Just be open to trying anything that comes your way, and it might actually be something you love.

**CA:** Are there particular sculptors that you found inspirational as you learned and explored sculpture?

**LA:** Definitely Henry Moore, but even much more so Barbara Hepworth. They were colleagues, and there are some similarities between their work. But I admired Barbara Hepworth partly because she was a woman and she had a family, and I think she had to overcome a lot in that sense. She is my main inspiration.

**CA:** Is there a stone that particularly spoke to you that you knew what it was going to be before you started sculpting, or are there stones that you kind of discovered as you were working on them?

**LA:** I usually had a pretty good idea at the outset what a stone would become. That pretty face on that head over there, the orange head, I figured that out really fast. But she was my first head. So that was a little scary, because I wasn't doing something totally abstract at that point. But I began to enjoy it, because obviously I've done a few of these semi-abstract heads. I always enjoyed sculpting in alabaster because it just had a good feel to me.

**CA:** Just because I'm your rabbi son, I have to ask the question. Do you think there's anything Jewish about your sculpture, or is there anything in your Judaism that that kind of speaks to your sculpture? (And the answer doesn't have to be yes!)

**LA:** That's an interesting question. The piece that I did for you when you got your Master's degree is Jewish, of course. But also, there's a head right over there. I have a couple of names for this sculpture, but one is "Head of the New Year," because I started working on it at Rosh HaShanah. The head is kind of interesting to me, it's even a little bit Roman in some way, but it spoke to me and I'm not sure why.

**CA:** That's funny, because I always saw in the ear of that head that it looked just like a shofar! That was my assumption for why that was called "Head of the New Year." I didn't know that you started it at Rosh HaShanah!

**LA:** There's all kinds of things that people say that they see in a particular piece. Michael (my grandson) was here a few weeks ago, and I asked him if there was a piece that he would want for when he has an apartment of his own some day. And he pointed at this particular piece



"Father and Child"



"Head of the New Year"



"Figure in Figure"



"L'Dor VaDor"

and said, "Yes, this one is my mother." And he's right. It's not that it is an actual sculpture of Merri, but the way that the hair is flying back, and the inspiration for the piece was absolutely inspired by her. There's a feeling of her in it.

**CA:** Is there a particular sculpture of yours that you are most proud of or that you hold kind of closest to you?

**LA:** I'm sure there are a few. My sculptures are like my children. I like that father and child that I made, the one that is in your house. It's just there's a feeling of warmth in the embrace that I captured. I really like the flower and figure that is in dad's office. I felt very proud of what I accomplished on that piece, and it was not easy. And, of course, the one that I made for your office, I'm proud of that.

**CA:** It has been a number of years since you have been physically able to sculpt. Is it something that you miss?

**LA:** I thought I would miss it more than I did. I have found other activities to fill my time. I do miss the creative process, but I think I did it long enough. My shoulder is not happy that I started, but it is what it is. I am glad that I did it. Despite my physical issues that resulted from this work, I am very proud of my accomplishments. I have a body of work that makes me feel good.

**CA:** Is there some way that you continue to express yourself artistically today?

**LA:** I still have my Japanese flower arranging, I'm still able to do that. So that is an artistic expression.

**CA:** It was surprising to me that you didn't feel like an artist until you started sculpting, because I always considered you an artist with flowers. As a child, as far back as I can remember, I always saw you as an artist with flowers.

**LA:** I know. It's not just the flowers that I arranged, but the flowers that I planted in flower beds. A big piece of life is being able to have my gardens.

**CA:** So then the last question is what did I miss? Is there anything else about your art, your sculpture, or are there lessons that you've learned from sculpture that are kind of big lessons?

**LA:** As I said, the importance of being open to trying new things. But also, the thing that you missed is the support that I have always had for my art from my husband. He was supportive of my heart and whatever I wanted to do, whatever I wanted to spend money or time on. And he was always encouraging me to do it. He also encouraged me to push harder to sell my sculpture, which I didn't really do. If I didn't have his support, it probably wouldn't have been as good or natural of a process for me for all of these years. ■



# Hi, I'm Sam

by Samantha Swirsky

I'm a senior at Reservoir High School and I am very passionate about art. Creating art has always been an important part of my life. I used my free time during the COVID-19 pandemic to explore different media and really focus on what kind of art resonates with me. I have experimented with many different media including acrylic paint, colored pencils, and collage. What I love about art is that there are so many ways to combine different materials to create something really interesting.

My art classes in high school have always been my favorite part of the day. I continue to spend a lot of my free time working on art projects, especially now as I start to prepare my college portfolio. I am always enthusiastic in class when I get a new idea or a new way to create a project that represents my unique art style.

It is extremely common for artists to hate their work after they create it and not want anyone to see what they made. However, as my skills have grown, I've learned to become proud of the work that I create instead of insisting on destroying it. It is rewarding to me to show my friends and family with a smile on my face and have them reciprocate my enthusiasm for a piece. I used to immediately say "Don't look! It's not good!" when someone was looking over my shoulder while I was working. When I am happier with my work it is easier for others to comment so I can receive feedback. I think being able to critique artwork is an important part of the artistic process that promotes growth.

My friends are always asking what I want to do as a career because I have a lot of ideas, but I always reply with "Something art-related" because I know that my future job just has to be creative. My creativity also bleeds into my everyday life. An example of this is when one of my teachers wanted my opinion on creating new shelves in the classroom. My interest in interior design was clear when I surprised my teacher by the amount of time I spent explaining the multiple ideas I had to save space and decorate the shelves. I'm also interested in photography and the multiple opportunities that are created with photoshoots and developing pictures. This includes digital photography, film cameras, and even creating our own cameras in class. Photography focuses a lot on composition and focal points, which can improve my skills in painting or drawing if I can start to pay attention to some of the more simple elements of design. I hope I am able to combine my many art-related interests when I go to college, and I can't wait to learn more about what inspires me creatively and see how my art will evolve over time. ■



# A Place for *All Young Artists*

by Rabbi Daniel Plotkin, RJE

Each summer since 2018 (except 2020), I have had the privilege of spending time at a truly remarkable place. I get to serve on the faculty of The Union for Reform Judaism's 6 Points Creative Arts Academy<sup>1</sup> in Westchester, PA. The 6 Points Creative Arts Academy (CAA, as we call it), is a place where a multitude of young artists gather each summer to practice and advance in their craft, and to be a part of a community of artists that accepts everyone for exactly who they are.

These artists represent a diversity of the arts: visual arts, dance, instrumental music, vocal music, musical theater, contemporary theater, photography, and creative writing. While I am an instrumentalist, first and foremost, I have had the opportunity to work closely not only with instrumental musicians, but also visual artists, photographers, and (in the pre-COVID era) culinary artists. Being with the campers and learning from high-level professionals in this field has been a true education for me, even in my comfort zone of instrumental music.

I was fortunate to be with two young artists from Temple Isaiah who attended third session with me this past summer. Cady Schwartz is a visual artist in 5th Grade, and was a first time camper at CAA. As I worked with visual artists this summer, I had the privilege of seeing her at work and assisting when I could. Watching her try new things, and truly grow as an artist in those 12 days, was an education for me in a process I am less familiar with.

The other camper is one who I have seen engaging in his art for many years, well beyond the summertime. Joshua Plotkin is a dancer who is in 8th Grade, and was in his fourth summer at CAA. I make a point of not being involved in the dance program both to give him his own unique experience, but also, if you've seen me dance, I don't need to say more.

At the end of each session, the campers put on a showcase for the rest of camp and parents who are able to join. The visual artists and photographers put together a gallery walk in the lobby of the main arts building that all of camp and visiting parents get to see. The performing artists put on a performance in the theater, as the creative writers read passages they wrote in between acts.

CAA is about the arts but it is how it goes beyond the arts that makes the place truly special. Besides supporting the arts mentors





and staff in various ways, my role as faculty includes helping to bring a Jewish flavor to camp, instilling Jewish values in the art they create, leading appropriate Jewish rituals from serious to silly (this summer in an earlier session, they had a spider funeral in the camper dorm).

Furthermore, CAA prides itself on the campers, staff, and faculty being able to be their true selves. For some, CAA is the only place where they can express their identity in its fullness, for others it's an opportunity to play with a sense of identity and see what fits and what doesn't, and yet for others, it is affirming of who they are able to be away from camp, and lets them integrate their identity with arts and Judaism.

Camp truly comes together on Shabbat.

The Friday night services are 100% participation by the entire camp community. Each member of the community chooses an artistic discipline; it can be their main one or they can try something entirely different, and each discipline offers one of the prayers of the service through that discipline.

This may result in a vocal ensemble sharing *L'cha Dodi*, while the photographers have a slide show expressing themes of the prayer for creation, an instrumental group does a setting of the Shema, and the visual artists create and spread giant butcher paper tallitot over the entire camp community as we say the prayer for the evening, and three dozen other variations over the camp's first five summers. The musical theater performers also share an original mini-musical about the week's Torah portion called the *Jewsical*. Every member of the camp community is a part of it.

Because of the richness of the community, the seriousness of the artistry, and the amazing fun we have at all times, I am proud to be a part of the CAA family. Those two weeks each summer refresh my spirit as much as it does for the campers, including Josh and Cady. If you have a child for whom CAA would be the right place, please be in touch, I would love to have them join me in the summer of 2024. ■



<sup>1</sup>The URJ 6 Points camps also offer camps for Jewish children interested in sports or in science/technology, to which Temple Isaiah members go.

# Making a *Mitzvah* by Julie Rosenthal with Rachel Petroff Kessler, RJE

Temple Isaiah is the new home of Food on the 15th, an award-winning program that collects non-perishable foods, which are then sorted, bagged, and delivered to low-income older adults at Morningside Park Apartments in Jessup, MD.

"Mom, there's nothing to eat!" How many times have your children said this to you when you had plenty of food to eat? When my 5th Grade daughter complained that "there was nothing to eat," I told her we had plenty of food to eat and that people on the other side of Howard County truly didn't have food. Jenny was incredulous. She wanted to know why they didn't open the pantry or the refrigerator. I explained that the fridge and pantry were empty.

Then Jenny asked why the mother didn't go to the ATM. I realized that my children had no clue as to how fortunate they were to have so much food to eat in our home.



At the time I was working for a local non-profit that served low-income older adults who told me that their social security check ran out mid-month, at which time they were left scrambling for food. These same economically-challenged older adults shared with me that they sometimes took their medications every other day. No one should have to choose between food and taking their medications.

I created Food on the 15th to be a tzedakah, tikkun olam, and mitzvah project for not only my children, but for all children. It gets children of every age involved in helping others who are less fortunate in our community. I wanted to teach children that no matter what their age, they could make a positive difference. It gives them hands-on experience collecting, sorting, bagging, and delivering healthy, non-perishable foods to residents who signed up to receive a free bag

of food each month at Morningside Park Apartments. The kids are not just putting food in a box without knowing where it will end up, because they are actively involved in every aspect of the project AND they are seeing the recipients of their hard work.

The residents love seeing the kids when the food is dropped off at participants apartments. It makes them smile that people who don't know them care enough to bring them a bag of food around the 15th of the month to help tide them over until the next social security check arrives. Food on the 15th is a "feel good" project for the whole family. Anyone of any age can volunteer. One does not have to be financially wealthy to make a difference in their community, as volunteering your time, energy and creativity are very important to the success of any community service project.

I'm delighted that Temple Isaiah is the new home for Food on the 15th, allowing this amazing program to continue to thrive and grow with this vibrant and caring congregational community. I'm so grateful to Allison Hoffman and Jennifer Gamiel for taking the lead on organizing with me, and look forward to working with many different individuals and groups in the congregation. ■



# How Can YOU Help?



Here's the list of non-perishable food items we are asking the congregation to donate:

The most needed items are highlighted in yellow — these are items that we never have enough of.

- Plain cereals (non-sugar sweetened) — e.g., oatmeal, Cheerios, Cream of Wheat, Corn Flakes, Raisin Bran (or store brand)
- Canned vegetables (also with no salt or low salt)
- Canned fruit packed in its own juice or made with Splenda
- Plain rice, quinoa, couscous, etc.
- Canned tuna and chicken packed in water
- Healthy soups (low fat, low carb, low salt)
- Pasta sauce
- Peanut butter and jelly
- Other items that are healthy: snacks, cookies, etc.
- Please no glass jars, no ramen type foods and no expired food.

We hope you will donate non-perishable foods whenever you are able and that you will volunteer to help sort, bag, and deliver. There is no minimum age to volunteer as long as the child's parent, guardian, or teacher is there to supervise the child at volunteer events. This is a terrific project for every generation of your family.

The donation box is in the main lobby of Temple Isaiah. You may also make a monthly pledge at <https://bit.ly/TI-Food-15-pledge>. If you are interested in volunteering or would like to organize a volunteer opportunity for your group, Contact us at [foodonthe15th@gmail.com](mailto:foodonthe15th@gmail.com). ■



# JSSA and JCS Joint Staff Retreat

## New Treatment Options for Holocaust Survivor Trauma

by Deborah S. Adler and Beth Hecht



At first we would meet monthly about the Holocaust Survivor Programs (HSP) we both manage for the National Capital Region and the Baltimore Metropolitan Region for collegial sharing and support. Later, we came up with the idea of bringing our teams at the Jewish Social Service Agency (JSSA) and Jewish Community Services (JCS) together. We recognized the significant honor, duty, and responsibility of providing support and resources to Holocaust survivors in our communities. At the same time, we acknowledged the impact that this difficult work had on our dedicated staffs, who shared similar challenges including large caseloads and increasing client acuity, as well as limited resources.

On August 23, the JSSA's and JCS's HSP teams finally came together at Temple Isaiah for a day-long retreat. Rabbi Craig Axler warmly welcomed the group and recognized the important and challenging work being done. Eliana Posner, Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) Program Officer for both HSPs, came down from New York to join the group, providing valuable information and answering questions.

The goals of the day included:

- taking a step back to reflect on the work and understanding its importance for clients and the community;
- recognizing the shared values and goals of the two programs;
- learning new ideas and gaining different perspectives;
- recognizing the importance of self-care; and
- identifying areas for continued learning.

One highlight for our teams was a presentation from Kiran Dixit on Healing-Centered Engagement. Dixit, who serves as JSSA's Director of Learning & Inclusion, explained that this is a new concept recently developed by Shawn Ginwright, Professor of Africana Studies at San Francisco State University. Typically, Holocaust Survivor Programs in North America use an approach known as Person-Centered Trauma-Informed



(PCTI) care. This is a term coined by the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL) and refers to recognizing the impact of trauma that someone has gone through by promoting his or her safety and well-being, while at the same time, making room for individual preference and self-determination. When we use PCTI care, we don't ask, "What's wrong with you?" Instead, we ask, "What happened to you?"

HSP care managers have an additional tool at their disposal with the Healing-Centered Engagement model. It is asset-driven and focuses on the well-being we want, rather than symptoms to suppress. It asks "Who are you? What is right with you?"

“As Senior staff we do our best to provide support and encouragement, but we recognize the benefit of sharing our common goals, values, challenges and successes together — we are better together.”

— Beth Hecht

And what is right with your community?"

This training was extremely valuable in terms of the teams' direct work with survivor clients who experienced trauma as children, as well as their direct work with the families of these individuals who were impacted by the trauma experienced by their parents and grandparents. In addition, it offered encouragement and validation on the importance of self-care for staff working with survivors and their loved ones.

We were thrilled with how the day went and believe it initiated a whole new level of collaboration. ■



OPPOSITE PAGE: Deborah S. Adler (left) and Beth Hecht (right) pose with Eliana Posner, from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany. ABOVE: Workshop attendees from the Jewish Social Service Agency (JSSA) and Jewish Community Services (JCS).

# My Life of Photography

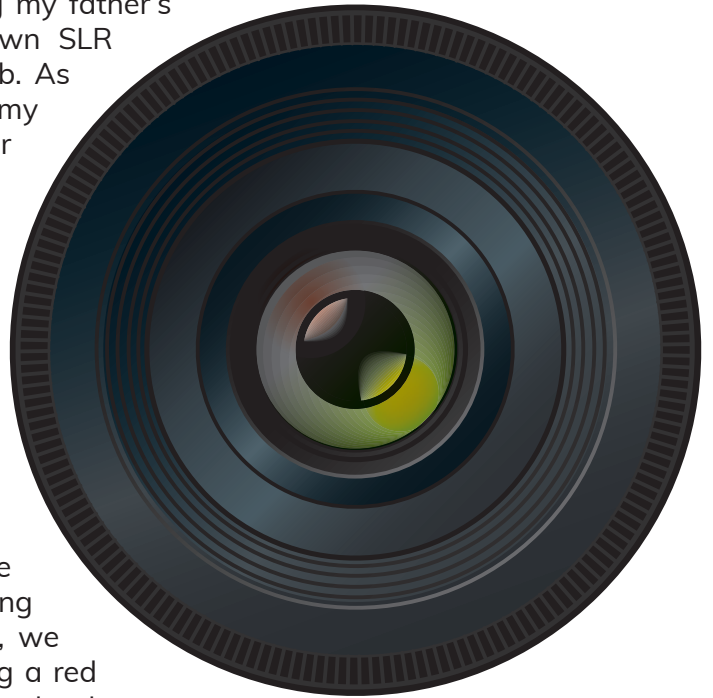
by Jeff Friedhoffer

I have been involved in photography most of my life, starting when I was seven years old and given a Baby Brownie camera. I snapped many black-and-white pictures with that camera, some of which I still have. I graduated to a Brownie Hawkeye and then to using my father's 35mm range finder camera. Finally, I bought my own SLR cameras, first an Ashai Pentax and then a Canon FTb. As the years passed, there were numerous snapshots of my growing family and many snapshots documenting our travels, all on slides, which I am now slowly digitizing. After retiring from NSA, I decided to take a 3-credit photography course at Howard Community College (HCC) to improve my photographic skills. In this course, I learned about composition and the benefit of using different perspectives when taking photos of a subject. One of the best parts of the course was having our photos critiqued, which helped us improve our picture taking. The professor, Donna Jones, was and continues to be an excellent photographer and teacher. I then participated in many courses that she taught, among them digital photography courses, where we learned the art of using Photoshop and discovering the advantage of shooting in RAW. In these courses, we were given photography assignments such as shooting a red object or architectural subjects, emphasizing how to make them interesting, and using the critiquing to improve our techniques. The last formal class that I took at HCC was a studio lighting course focusing on the art of portrait photography. Taken together, these classes created a great learning experience. I certainly recommend taking photography courses at HCC.

The primary subjects of my photography are landscapes and birds. Having been an active birder for about 30 years, I gradually upgraded my camera equipment to capture better pictures. I currently use Canon DSLR equipment, a D7 Mark II and two Tamron zoom lenses (17–55MM and 28–300mm) for everyday use. However, for bird pictures my lens of choice is Canon 100–400 mm lens, which has excellent glass resulting in very sharp pictures of birds at a distance.

After a recent trip to Israel, I questioned why I was walking around with heavy camera equipment when my iPhone 13 Pro Max takes beautiful pictures. This iPhone has three lenses: ultrawide, wide, and telephoto. The wide lens covers a wider angle than the Tamron wide-angle lens on the camera. However, the iPhone telephoto lens does not compare to what can be done with the Canon telephoto. Therefore, I use the camera for certain situations, and the iPhone for others. At the beach this summer, not wanting to expose the camera to the sand and salt air, I chose to use the iPhone to take pictures of the family and was pleased with the results.

For my continuing education, there are three photographers that I follow



online, who write books, lead photography trips, and provide a lot of free information. They are:

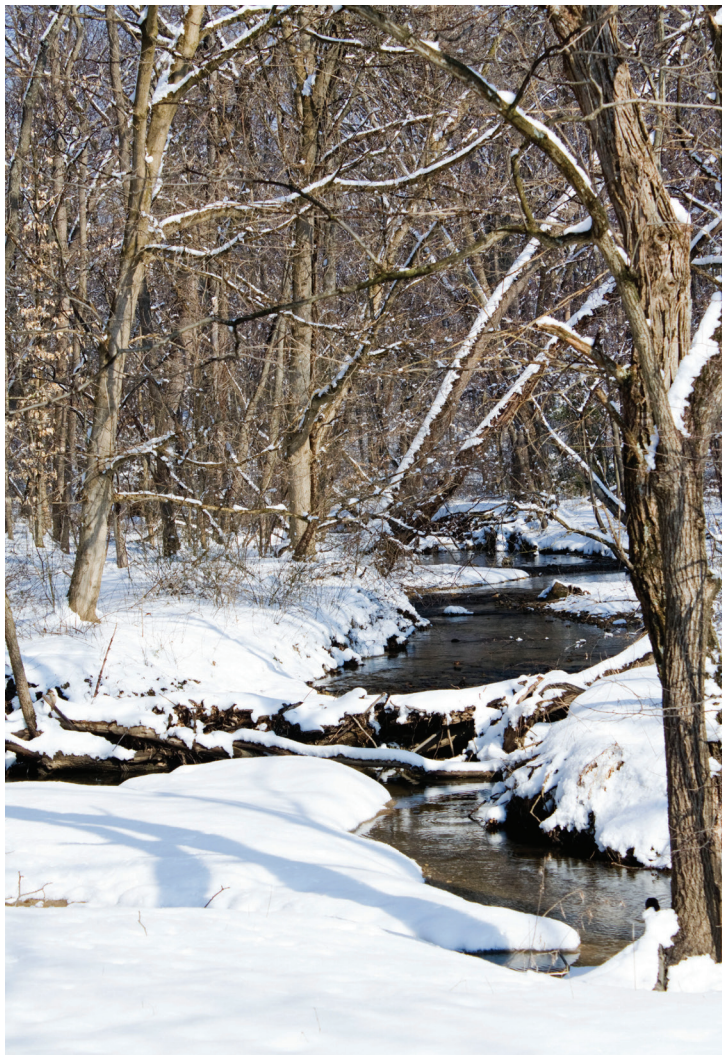
1. **Arthur Morris**, a world class bird photographer with Birds-As-Art website, which has a link to his blog.  
<https://www.birdsasart.com/>
2. **Tim Grey**, with many online tutorials which I have used to learn about Lightroom and Photoshop updates.  
<https://www.timgreyphoto.com/>
3. **Denise Ippolito**  
<https://www.deniseippolito.com/>

Several times I've been asked to photograph Temple events, which I enjoy. The latest were pictures for the 50th anniversary of the Temple. I provided pictures for the TI

archive from the first Temple Isaiah trip to Israel in 1984 with Rabbi Fuchs and a Temple event at Judy and Milt Kline's summer camp.

Overall, photography has been a wonderful hobby and its progression into the digital world has made processing pictures so much easier and cleaner than a chemical darkroom. All it takes is a computer, and the willingness to learn and use tools such as Photoshop or Lightroom to turn your photographs into works of art. The cost of taking a photograph is negligible, which leads to taking too many pictures and then having to select those worth keeping, and an even smaller number to print. Currently there are over 60,000 pictures on my computer of which perhaps a few thousand are keepers, hundreds used in printed photobooks, and a handful printed and framed. ■

<sup>1</sup>Digital Photography is using a computer to process the images, vs. analog photography which uses a darkroom.



LEFT: Wilde Lake Creek in Winter.

All photos courtesy of Jeff Friedhoffer.

# What Do I Do With It?

by TI Staff

Disposing  
of Judaica

On October 22, we invited members to bring in their sacred books and ritual items that were no longer kosher, or just not needed. If you missed out but have been collecting items to donate to Temple Isaiah, we'd like to offer suggestions on other ways to dispose of these items. At TI, we regularly get boxes of books donated to our already crowded library and while we thank you for thinking of us, there's a good chance that we already have it (sometimes several copies!) or simply don't have the room available. This article is a re-run from the Spring 2021 issue of The Prophet Magazine.



Cleaning out is always a challenging process, all the more so when it is the home of a recently-departed loved one, or your childhood home. It's always difficult to know what to do with things that had personal value and you just aren't sure what to do with them. Judaic items, like ritual objects and books, often fall into this category. This article is a guide to what you can do with those items you no longer wish to keep.

Some items have sacred meanings. If you are in possession of a Torah scroll, old prayer books, tallitot, tefilin sets, mezuzah scrolls, or Jewish sacred texts such as Bibles in Hebrew/Chumashim, Talmud volumes and other such items in Hebrew, these need to be buried.

If you have space and ability to do a burial yourself, it's halachically acceptable (check local ordinances!). If you don't, Sol Levinson's Funeral home in Pikesville accepts such items, so plan a trip on a weekday, and enjoy some great deli or bagels afterward. If the books are still in good condition, contact Rabbi Daniel Plotkin, as he has worked with a dealer of used books and will be glad to connect you with him.

For papers containing the name of God, composting is an excellent method of disposal, and recycling is acceptable (Reform Responsa 5762.1) if composting is not available. Other items are considered on a lower level of kedusha, but should still be handled with respect. These items include: mezuzah cases, Hanukkah menorahs, Shabbat candlesticks, seder plates, and more. These items may be thrown away, but donation to a store like Goodwill or listing on a site like freecycle.org, can give these items new life. Kippot are clothing items and can be discarded.

For Judaica and Judaic books, including old Hebrew school texts, many people are inspired to donate them to a synagogue (the same is true of old Judaica). While we appreciate the thought, we respectfully ask that people find another option. At Temple Isaiah, our space is limited, our library is full, and any Hebrew school book that is more than five years old is likely out of date and has been replaced with newer items, especially with all the new Kulanu curriculum. These items can be placed in recycling bins or thrown away. We simply don't have the space to keep it or the resources to process it.

Of course, if you still have questions about what to do with a particular item, feel free to reach out to our Rabbis. An email with a picture of the item and description, if necessary, is a great way to do this and they are usually pretty quick to respond and offer suggestions. ■

# Bits & Pieces

## Who's Who @ Temple Isaiah



**Name:** Linda Blandford

**Family:** Steve, daughters Julie and Ashley, son-in-law Bryan, son-in-law to be Michael, and four grand dogs!

**Hometown:** Silver Spring, Md.

**Something You Might Not Know About Me:**

I am a dog and beach lover! I also enjoy traveling and spending time with family and friends.

**Position at Temple Isaiah:** Lead teacher of the 4's preschool class (TIPS).

**Worked Here Since:** September 2005

**Parents and Students Can Come to Me if They Need:** For parents — any support or advice about their children, or insight regarding Temple Isaiah Preschool. For students — hugs, help, fun, and laughs!

**Why I love being at TI:** I love the family atmosphere and getting to work with the best coworkers, children, and families. I enjoy the many close friendships with current and former families and coworkers that I have met during my many years at TIPS! ■

# Welcome

## New and Returning Members!

Louise Andrews & Benjamin Shovlin  
Cecelia Andrews Shovlin and Clara Andrews Shovlin

Emerald Becker & Robert Weinstein  
Gale Jules Becker

Nick & Lauren Barone  
Shane and Hunter

Jill Blickstein

Steven & Darlene Bloom  
Stacey and Matthew

Edie & Seth Boyer  
Miles and Grant

Rachel Boyar  
Jack, Max, and Mathew Sheppard

David & Gail Fox

Lindsay & Hannah Freedman  
Brody and Jordan

Erick Galban Salinas & Freyja Galban  
Forrest, Milo, and Fenn Galban

Michael & Lisa Goldman  
Jeremy, Maya, and Rachel

Aaron & Jennifer Goodman  
Rylee, Noah, and Kai

Bronia Kogul

Renee Mankoff

Robert & Linda Markowitz

Patrick Masler & Felicia Metz  
Jake Masler

Adam & Aliza Mayer  
Maxwell

Chris & Rozalina McCoy  
Elie and Henry

Robert Mentle & Davina Pruitt-Mentle

Brad & Susan Norman

Matthew Paul & Victoria Barg  
Emma and Max Paul

Adam & Beth Satisfsky

Richard Sohn & Rita Rome

Celia & Jamie Strickler

Scott & Laura Wakefield

Matthew Weiner & Rachel Lorber  
Max, Leo, and Ava Weiner



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## Kulanu Update

Kulanu has begun for another year of learning, fun, and community. Our enrollment is larger than it has been in quite some time, topping out this year at about 425 students from Pre-Kindergarten to 12th Grade. Kulanu is divided into four distinct groups to help with education, organization, and building community.

**Bonim** (building) is our Pre-Kindergarten to 3rd Grade group and this year we have a total of 14 Bonim classes. In Bonim, students are learning the basic building blocks of Jewish life: rituals, stories, and values, have music on a regular basis, and participate in our Hebrew Through Movement program.

**Olim** (growing) is for our 4th–6th Graders. We have nine classes this year, learning together and later breaking into smaller groups. This semester the topic is **God, Mitzvot, and Me**, allowing students to explore various Jewish ideas of God and then learn the rituals and customs that come from the historic Jewish understanding of our relationship with God. Later, students engage in *Ivrit* — learning how to read and chant our traditional prayers while building their Hebrew skills, and explore Jewish prayer and the meanings behind it. Finally, students are exposed to a wide variety of Jewish topics and activities including art, chanting Torah, the weekly portion, Jewish music and dance, being a mensch, and more.

On Sunday evenings, the 7th Grade **Gesher** (bridge) group allows students to explore some significant topics of Judaism: figuring out where they belong in the larger Jewish community before delving into the Holocaust, Israel's history, and its current (and ongoing) challenges. Also on Sunday evenings, our 8th–12th Grade **Next Dor** program is a chance for teens to explore Judaism on their terms. The core is a set of classes and electives taught by our TI rabbis, educators, and guest teachers. The enrollment for Next Dor and confirmation this year is also at a high, with more than 50 total students enrolled. ■