

TEMPLE ISAIAH
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The Prophet

Magazine

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From the Rabbi



I sat to write this note of introduction for this issue of *The Prophet Magazine* on the first day of winter. What a difficult and trying last several months it has been for so many, and particularly for anyone who loves and cares for the State of Israel. At the time, I was also beginning to pack my bags for a very short trip to Israel, just three (very full) days on the ground in the first week of 2024. In very direct ways, this mission trip I am about to join relates directly to the overall theme of this issue of *The Prophet*: May I Be of Service.

Ever since the events of October 7, I know that I have lived in a state of permanent alert, following the news, social media, local implications, and the emotional state of so many people I care for, both here at Temple Isaiah and five thousand miles away in Israel. One of the most exhausting things about this period is the feeling of being relatively helpless to change or impact the events that are breaking our hearts daily. And, at the same time, we are never truly powerless — we can do small things that have profound consequences.

Recently, I was invited to participate in a short solidarity mission being organized by the Zionist Rabbinic Coalition, a cross-denominational group of rabbis who care deeply about Israel and are able to join together for that common cause, while putting aside some of the denominational, political, or other issues that might otherwise separate us from one another. I was reluctant to commit to going, though not out of any sense of fear at being in Israel at this time (or any time). In part, it was daunting to think of travelling so far for so short of a trip, particularly one that I knew would involve long and emotional days. However, what was really holding me back from signing up for this mission was the nagging question in the back of my mind — will my presence there make any real difference?

As I needed to make a final decision and travel arrangements, I was blessed to talk with several friends who had been on similar brief solidarity missions and had just returned from their experiences. Each one said that wherever they went in Israel — in organized meetings or in the back of a taxicab — every person they interacted with expressed two things. First, Israelis of every kind shared the profound sense of being isolated and alone, as though no one in the world cared about them in this moment. And that this visit counterbalanced that sense of sadness and loneliness, that someone choosing to come at precisely this moment demonstrated the care that Israelis can count on from their American family in good times and in bad. Second, Israelis were acutely aware of a sense that American Jews are feeling lonely, isolated, and even under attack. And they expressed their care and solidarity with the American visitors, a concern for the safety and wellbeing of a community whose existential threat is of such a radically different degree than someone living in Israel, and yet knowing that this relationship of care and concern was a two-way street made a direct impact.

I travelled with a full suitcase, despite the reality that I needed only two changes of clothing for the trip. Ninety-plus percent of my suitcase was filled with 130 winter hats knit and purchased by individuals within our community, organized by Knitzvah and others who responded to a call by Michelle Jacobs to partner with a friend in Israel providing warm winter hats for IDF soldiers on the front lines. In much the same way, creating and donating these hats is a small act which counteracts the sense of helplessness, and answers the fundamental question: how can I be of service?

I also travelled with the care and concern expressed by so many members of this congregation, distributing love and tzedakah, making real the idea that “All of the Jewish community are responsible, one for another.” I will share here for the first time that I have set aside the dates of December 21–31, 2024 for an intergenerational Temple Isaiah Israel Mission. I hope and pray that this trip will find a people living in a time of peace, recovering

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Am I Doing It for **THEM** or for **ME**?

by Cindy Sandler



When I am asked if I am still working, my quick response is, "Not for pay." If they want more information, I will tick off how I use my time spread among 13 grandchildren, finishing a book about what happens in a medical crisis, and lots of volunteer work. As I inwardly reflect on my volunteer efforts, my mind leaps to a Philosophy class taken long-ago, in which we were discussing what motivates us to help others. The discussion evolved into two competing aspects: altruism and ego. The discussion swirled in different directions and as it is in philosophy, there was no resolution or final answer.

When I was younger, I thought that I did certain things out of pure altruism; I did it for the good of others. Through life experiences and self-awareness, I know that I do my volunteer work to assist in helping people and the world (Tikkun Olam), but I get something out of it. That warm feeling within my heart glows when I see the differences my efforts can

make. I still get the "glow" even when I don't see the result of my actions, as I imagine the clothes sent to Israel have eased some children's needs. My ego is happy.

In addition to the "glow," research shows that when we help, we often make connections with others. Having relationships is the best predictor of positive longevity and satisfaction. Bonds are built through shared missions and ideals. It's a natural way to develop friendships.

Regardless of what motivates us to "do good," altruism or ego, choosing where you put your time and energy is important. Wondering where to begin? Make a list of your interests and skills. Serving in areas that suit you will be more satisfying and therefore you will be more consistent in your efforts. Howard and surrounding counties are replete with options for volunteers to make a difference. Links to the counties' listings of some nonprofits are below.

- <https://business.howardchamber.com/list/category/non-profits-and-organizations-35>
- <https://members.annearundelchamber.org/list/ql/non-profit-organizations-9>
- <https://visitmontgomery.com/directory/category/non-profit/maryland/rockville/>

Another pathway is to make a list of topics/actions that draw you (e.g., nature, underserved groups, children/teens, older citizens) and then search your area for nonprofits and ways to join and give your time. Some examples are listed below:

Arts

- Columbia Center for the Theatrical Arts
- Columbia Art Center
- Music Concert ushers at HCC Horowitz Center

Animals

- Animal Welfare Society of Howard County
- Animal Advocates of Howard County

Children and Teens

- CASA: volunteers are trained to advocate for a child's best interest in the child protection system
- Fostering Futures (part of CASA): helps adolescents who will be aging out of foster care at age 21 with no family support
- OhanaHC: a 10-year mentoring program assisting students from 9th Grade and beyond.



OhanaHC was founded by TI members Susan and Steven Porter.

- Prepare for Success: provides backpacks filled with school supplies for students in need. Coordinated by TI members Sue and Roy Appletree.

Housing

- DreamBuilders: TI teens and adults participate in national and international work trips, plus local workdays to help build and repair homes for people in need.
- Habitat for Humanity

Medical

- Gilchrist Hospice
- Johns Hopkins Howard County Medical Center

Nature and Preservation

- Community Ecology Institute and Freetown Farm: volunteers assist in hands-on opportunities in the organic farm, programming, and office work
- HoCo Conservancy
- Patapsco Heritage

New Americans

- Luminus: provides needed services to those new to our country and community

Social Action and Israel

- Israel Connect: helps Israeli high school students learn to speak and understand English. TI's Janis Wasser serves as a link to the program.
- Jewish Federation of Howard County
- Temple Isaiah's Social Justice group, Tzedek Isaiah: offers opportunities directed at the root causes of injustice and focused on promoting social change in institutions

with Chuck Koplik at the helm.

Underserved Citizens

- Cold Weather Shelter: TI members provide food and other services to the homeless during the cold months. Coordinated for TI by Susan Gordon and Cheryl Kaufman.
- Day Resource Center: offers prepared food for homeless citizens. Organized by TI members Susan Gordon and Cheryl Kaufman.
- Food on the 15th: provides food and delivery to elderly citizens. Founded by TI member Julie Rosenthal.
- Hopeworks of Howard County: volunteer program is supportive of the organization's mission to provide support and advocacy for those affected by sexual and intimate partner violence
- Howard County Food Bank: volunteers help sort and stock donated food, as well as assist shoppers in our Marketplace Pantry
- Success in Style: provides professional attire at no cost to individuals seeking employment*

**This list is not exhaustive but serves to spark possible avenues to pursue and get a glow.*

Back to that Philosophy class question, "Are our actions motivated by altruism or ego?" Philosophy loves to pose either/or questions, yet we know that life choices are rarely either/or but a mixture of motivations. The mixture of altruism and ego is supported by the tenet, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" which is a core commandment in Judaism (Leviticus 19:18). Bottom line, it doesn't really matter what drives us to "do good" as long as we do it.

Take that Philosophy class. ■

Why Serve?

by Gary Perolman

As I am now in my last year on the Temple Isaiah Board of Trustees, I wanted to share some thoughts about my decision to give more than a decade of my life in service to our beloved congregation. Although I had served in other volunteer Temple and Jewish community positions in the past, none compared in time, responsibility, or satisfaction. Serving on the Temple Isaiah Board is a unique experience and the people who serve on our Board take on a special place in our congregation's history. I do not minimize my time as President of our Howard County Jewish Federation or even when I was President of the TI Men's Club. Each had responsibilities and missions that I took seriously and a commitment I readily accepted. However, as I served in the various roles I accepted on the TI Board, my dedication to our Temple grew and solidified, as well as my relationships and sacred partnership with our clergy, staff, and teachers.

I recently read a book entitled, *Yes to Life, In Spite of Everything*, by Viktor E. Frankl, a Viennese Psychologist and Holocaust survivor. In his first chapter on the meaning and value of life, he quotes a poem from Rabindranath Tagore, an Indian poet, playwright, and writer. He writes:

*I slept and dreamt
That life was joy.
I awoke and saw
That life was duty.
I worked—and behold,
duty was joy.*

I have seen my life primarily consumed with duty: duty to our country as a career Army Officer and service to the many Jewish congregations that we joined in all the years leading up to our moving to Ellicott City. Without question, each position I held brought me joy through fulfillment.

Why does anyone serve?

When I was young, and because my parents were not actively involved in Temple life, I always thought it was the people who were important or wealthier who served on Temple boards. Serving was for others and certainly not for me. Through a child's eyes, that made a lot of sense. But of course, nothing could be further from the truth. Our TI Board of Trustees is made up of congregants who have one main thing in common: not deep religiosity, not wealth, not even a history of service, only a love for the Temple and a willingness to add their voice to others to lead our congregation.

I was asked!

There are some natural leaders out there though I have met very few. Most people who serve were asked to do so. I recall the Chaplain's Office at my first Army assignment



in Germany contacting me. The Chaplain told me that I was the senior Jewish person (in rank) on our Installation and asked if I would serve as the Jewish Lay Leader. As a 29-year-old and newly-minted Captain, I felt I had no choice but to accept, but I probably would have accepted anyway. Connecting with other Jews in the military, and civilians who worked with or for the military, provided a Jewish “home away from home” for me. It helped me renew my understanding of what it meant to be a Jew, something that was on the back burner post-high school. It was at that point that I realized that waiting for someone to ask was not the best way for me to get involved. I needed to step up. But there are many other reasons to serve that I have heard along the way.

I Want to Give Back. This was a phrase I heard from our Past President Larry Gordon. Larry explained that he had received the benefit of so many TI leaders before him and that he felt it was time to return the favor. Based on my long-term relationship with Larry, I suspect he had been giving back his entire life in other ways, but this was a special feeling and duty he had for his shul.

It is My Time to Step Up. For many, they would like to serve but feel that family and other time constraints limit their ability to step up. This group is made up of very active individuals who serve the congregation in various ways through volunteer and sometimes committee roles. Adding one more major responsibility can seem like too much. That is a valid point. However, we know that a commitment to something you care about does not really take away time from other commitments and in fact, can add meaning to your other interests. All of us who have children had busy lives before they came on the scene, but our lives, both personal and work, did not end when our families began and increased. Our lives became more meaningful and fulfilled. The point is, as my Mom told me some six decades ago, “if you want something done and done right, give it to a busy person.”

What's So Special About Temple Leadership?

Serving on the TI Board is a unique privilege. It is the rare individual who has served and regretted the decision. Here are some benefits from board service:

1. You get to meet, know, become friends with, and work with other board members.
2. You get to have a closer relationship with all our rabbis, but especially Rabbi Axler, our Executive

Director, Shelley Engel, and the TI staff.

3. You get to learn about how the Temple operates, and have an in-depth understanding of how it is maintained.
4. You get to interact with our member families by representing the Board at B'nai Mitzvah and attending shiva gatherings.
5. You get personal updates and insights from our educators, Rabbi Plotkin, Rachel Petroff Kessler, and Allison Weil.
6. You learn more about the finances of the Temple and how our Member Commitment is used.
7. You engage and interact with congregants as a Board representative at erev Shabbat services.
8. You become an Ambassador for Temple Isaiah in the larger Jewish community.
9. You take part in working to make our Board and Temple stronger.
10. You share ideas to improve processes and solve problems.

My Board Service

When I volunteered to join the TI Board as a Trustee, my goal was to serve as a point of contact for social action and justice activities. Despite numerous attempts in the past, this was an area needing a lot of attention. Serving under Presidents Denny Rapport, Larry Gordon, Donna Kasoff, and Marshall Kohen was an honor few people receive, and a true pleasure and a great learning experience. And I continue to learn, under tutelage of our President, Alex Hoffman.

Caring about our congregants, our congregation, our facility, our clergy, our staff, and our educators was what called to me. They say that when you love what you do, it is not work. That is how I felt and still feel.

Is it time for you to give back or step up? In my view, it is a perfect time to add your voice and help lead our beloved congregation into the future. We are so fortunate to have our clergy and staff, but it is the lay leadership that keeps the three-legged stool steady and can make all the difference. As my 12th Board year comes to an end, it is with humility and pride that I close this meaningful and sacred journey. I hope that you will consider board service. Reach out to a Board member, our Executive Director, or our clergy and let them know you are interested! We need you. You will never regret it! Promise! ■

Temple Isaiah Serves Elizabeth House Clients

Year after Year

by Ben Levitt



Just ten miles from Temple Isaiah, Elizabeth House manages a food pantry, distributing non-perishable items to the homeless and to low-income families in Prince Georges County. This non-profit food pantry began in the basement of a private home, and moved to the basement of a small house in Laurel in 1988. Elizabeth House continues to rely on private and public donations of food to feed those in need today.

Around 2004, when TI moved to our new building in Fulton, members Susan and Matt Soifer brought the concept of a food drive from their former synagogue in New Jersey. Matt contacted potential recipients in the local area; Elizabeth House graciously accepted the offer. Thus began a lasting relationship of community service, thanks to the generosity of TI's congregants, that grows year after year. Matt and Susan took the reins, obtaining paper bag donations from Giant Food, creating flyers and stapling them to hundreds of bags, and renting a cargo van. On Rosh Hashanah, they handed out empty bags to congregants, and then...on Yom Kippur, members returned the bags full of nonperishable food! The following day, the Soifers delivered the groceries — via one overloaded van plus their car for the remainder of the bounty. Elizabeth House pantry staff expressed their appreciation for the mitzvah. This was only the beginning. Over the next couple of years, the Soifers recognized the success of their endeavor; the van sizes got larger until they needed a truck and helping hands at TI. As the collection grew, the Soifers were becoming overwhelmed by TI's enthusiastic response! In 2011 Matt approached the TI Men's Club, offering an opportunity for direct involvement. The Men's Club took ownership of the program in 2014, covering the expense of truck rentals and continuing the pursuit of community service to this day.

In addition to the food pantry, Elizabeth House operates a daily kitchen where volunteers prepare and serve hot meals every day of the year, to anyone in need in the greater Laurel area. Due to Susan's knowledge of Elizabeth House, she and Matt began volunteering for monthly meal kitchen duty upstairs. Next, Susan recruited and coordinated a team of volunteers from TI to help. The Soifers then started another TI tradition: organizing the Christmas Day meals that TI volunteers continue to prepare and serve every holiday season.

The commandment of doing for others is not without challenges. However, the worthiness of the deed provides motivation to overcome obstacles. Imagine handing two or three hundred, and now 400+ bags of groceries through an 18" x 30" basement window at ground level, sometimes in inclement weather, to stock shelves to the brim, in a 6-foot-

high basement! Even COVID would not deter the effort. At the Temple parking lot, the High Holy Day food drive became a contactless drive-thru! TI members sporting COVID masks took care of unloading donations from cars and loading bags onto the truck. On the delivery end, TI volunteers offloaded hundreds of bags of food to an outside storage container for distribution by staff. The number of Elizabeth House clients soared during the pandemic. Despite these challenges, all were amazed at our congregation's desire to meet increased demand.

Each year, the number of families and individuals in need rise at Elizabeth House. Fortunately, TI donations of non-perishable food have also grown in volume year after year. Elizabeth House is grateful for TI's generosity and care for the community. We make a difference in the lives of others. Learn more about Elizabeth House on their website: <http://www.fishoflaurel.org/>. ■



Connecting With *Israel Connect*

by Janis Wasser

How can I have a positive impact and help Israel?

You may be asking yourself this question, especially in this time of need for Israel and the Jewish people!

I've got a great answer for you!

Every Thursday at 11:30am, I meet with a young Israeli high school student over Zoom, through a program called Israel Connect. I learned of this program from a friend who had been a mentor for several years. It seemed like a great activity to do when we were in COVID lockdown.

This year (my 4th), I work with a 14-year-old student from Petach Tikvah. I have continued to find it rewarding and enjoyable. The lessons provided are interesting and have broadened my knowledge of Israel. Israel Connect pairs volunteer mentors in North America with students across Israel to improve their English proficiency, increase their access to higher education, and put them on the path to economic mobility.

Once a week from the comfort of their homes, Israel Connect mentors lead one-on-one video meetings focused on English conversation, reading comprehension, and vocabulary development. Through our immersive online approach, mentors give students the skills — and the confidence — to prepare for Israel's university entrance exams, which focus heavily on English proficiency, setting them up for future success.

Israel Connect mentors aren't required to have a teaching or education background, nor do they need to speak Hebrew. Israel Connect provides the training and curriculum, and our mentors share their passion for empowering young people in Israel. When I presented this project to the Temple Isaiah Sisterhood several years ago, several members were excited to participate. Those of us living in Howard County are linked to the very active group of Baltimore mentors. We have attended both Zoom and in-person Israel Connect meetings where the leaders introduced themselves and shared their mission. The idea that stood out to me most was that we are helping Israeli students improve their chances for academic and economic success in the future. That can impact career choices, status in the military, and other opportunities. Many of the students come from lower-income families. They express their gratitude repeatedly for this opportunity.

Some mentors from Baltimore shared their enthusiasm at the meeting, as well as ideas to enhance lessons. Ideas for a blog and other ways to connect were also proposed. Everyone was very positive about their experience.

I am very grateful to be a mentor in this exciting program. Now you too can help bolster Israel's economic future!

Israel Connect continues to need mentors. If you are interested please contact me, Janis Wasser at divajan17@gmail.com, and I will provide you with information on how to get started. It would be great to have an active group of Temple Isaiah mentors to share ideas and experiences! ■

Care Committee

A Light in the Darkness by Barbara Davis



In August of 2021 Ellen Strichartz, chairperson of Temple Isaiah's Care Committee, asked me to write something about the committee. This was my original response, with an addendum.

When my husband needed his kidney replaced almost five years ago, I was contacted by the committee and asked if we'd like meals delivered to our home for a few weeks when he returned home from the hospital. I initially declined, even though there were follow-up calls, to just 'check in!' After the first few weeks (which were more difficult than I had expected) I gave in and accepted the offer. To be honest, I think I was kind of embarrassed. Preparing meals was extremely challenging for these incredibly giving volunteers because of my husband's many kidney- and diabetic-related diet restrictions. But they all figured out the most welcomed and delicious meals for us at least three times a week for six weeks. We are forever grateful to everyone who participated. I think it truly saved my life or at least my sanity! There have been two or three times that we have called upon the Care Committee for help, and they DO NOT DISAPPOINT!!! After our first experience, I joined the committee. It's an amazing feeling to know you are helping others at TI, whether you know them or not. You never know when you may be the one who needs our help. We will always be there for you!

Nothing I wrote in the 2021 article has changed, other than we have lots of new members who have joined us and so many more people who have benefitted from the Care Committee, often writing words of gratitude and kindness. Fortunately, my family has not needed this group's help lately and for that I am very grateful. But I also have not been able to help very much recently and I'm looking forward to changing that in 2024! I miss the smiles and fist bumps I shared with those I visited. I remember the warm conversations with people I had not met before I joined this awesome group of volunteers.

Today I am reminded about all the bright lights who are members of the Care Committee, totaling about 40 now. These beautiful members of TI bring amazing meals but also provide warmth and caring for all the folks they're helping. It's not a job, not a burden, it's a mitzvah for all of us; it makes us feel so good to be able to do something that brings comfort, light, and help to others.

Currently our world, our country, our Jewish community is experiencing such upheaval, such sadness, and sometimes fear. If you are feeling stress, sadness, loneliness, even depression, joining us on the Care Committee and helping others as you struggle yourself can be uplifting, soul healing, and give you connection to our community. Giving to others feels even better than the gratitude we hear from some of the people we've helped, and will continue to help, in any way we can.

We invite you to join us! Who wouldn't like to bring smiles, love, and comfort to our fellow TI members? Who wouldn't greatly appreciate someone making a meal or two or three for us when we are feeling ill, recuperating from surgery or an injury, mourning the death of a loved one, or feeling alone? So please think about it! And you don't have to cook... you can send a gift card for DoorDash, GrubHub, or a restaurant. You can send a meal. You can run errands for someone who is homebound. You can drive folks to their appointments. Any way that works for you works for us! We look forward to seeing you.

And if you need help for anything, PLEASE call us! Don't be embarrassed, don't be hesitant! We all need a little light in our lives, right?! ■



I've volunteered at Girl Scout Howard County Day Camp (GSHCDC) for more than 20 years now. Back then, the only sure way to get your kids a spot was to volunteer. Everyone thought so highly of the camp and I thought, "What, I get to go, too?! Sign me up!" It meant taking a week off from work, and a few trainings before. No big deal, I used to be a resident camp counselor as a teen. I had not taken into account the years in between — it was exhausting! The first year, I wasn't sure I'd survive. But it was a great time — the outdoors, the familiar songs, the instant friendships, and how much my kids loved it. We were all hooked. After a few years, we started going for both weeks the camp operated. Then the camp needed a new program director. With 10 years of experience at that point, I was well-qualified — also the only person who volunteered for it. Joining the year-round Headquarters team meant monthly meetings for most of the year, much more planning time, and a lot more stuff stored in my basement!

At its peak, the camp served about 200 campers from ages 3–13 (including sons of volunteers) and more than 100 PA's (teen program aides 14–18) over

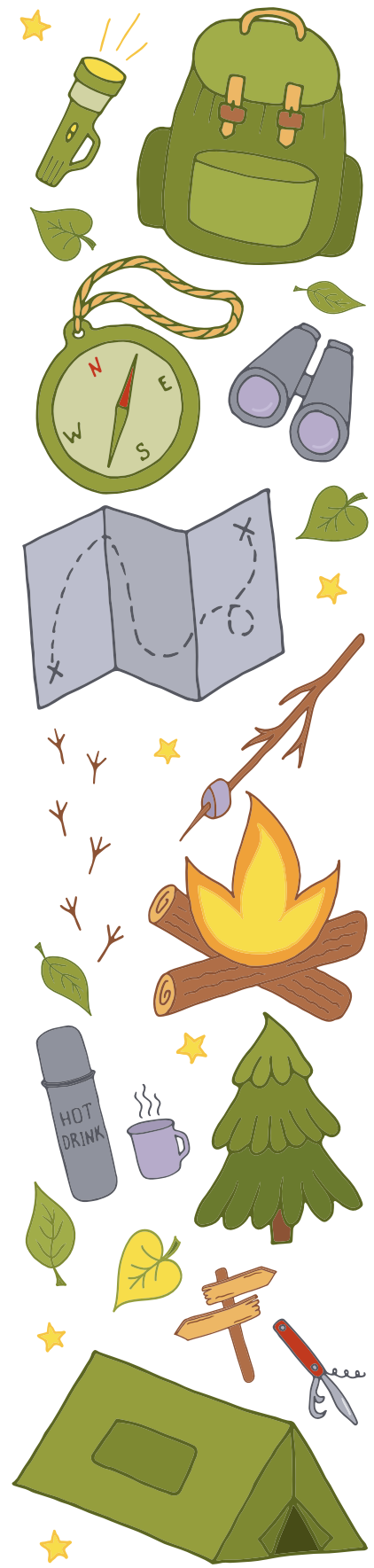
two weeks. The adult staff — all volunteers, including the camp director — was about 150, some staying both weeks and some only there for one session. It was a place where girls could learn leadership by doing and a place where everyone was celebrated for their strengths. It was especially good for girls who didn't fit in at school but thrived in the outdoors. My kids grew up there and returned as adult volunteers, eventually joining the Headquarters team, too.

And then in 2022, the Girl Scouts sold our home base, Camp Ilchester; we had to find a new home. Finding a new one proved difficult. State parks didn't have indoor facilities and we had to have somewhere to go during Maryland's standard afternoon summer thunderstorms. We needed shade because we are outside most of the time; we needed spaces big enough for the whole camp to have opening and closing flag ceremonies. We needed electricity for food storage and the camp computer; water sources; bathroom facilities; and room for the buses to drop off. And we'd packed all our equipment from two sheds into one pod — we'd need somewhere we could unload it. Talks with a local church near the old site went well, until

When talk of selling camp had started in 2021, Rabbi Axler immediately offered, “Come here!” I wasn’t sure we had enough room or that TI was ready for all of camp’s chaos. But since TI was willing to have us, the HQ team came last winter and we walked the grounds. There was so much more space than I’d realized! And the barn was offered to us for storage — a dream opportunity vs. unpacking and repacking the pod! So we asked our landscaping company — camp alumni — to clean the barn and mow some of the wild areas by the barn and house. We came in with our own saws and clippers to clear dead branches and thorn bushes. We debated placement for our activities. We advised our kitchen team that ham sandwiches were off the menu! And we refigured bus routes, camp traditions, policies, and pretty much everything.


Everyone at camp kept marveling at how TI was so welcoming. They all wanted to give something back. Girl Scouts try to leave a place better than they found it and make the world a better place—doesn't that sound familiar? Leftover ice pops were donated for summer Shabbat gatherings. A new fire pit was installed as a gift behind the House. There are Gold Award projects being planned (that's the highest award GS has, similar to the Boy Scout Eagle). And the archery team offered a free session for JYTI. Archery is one of the most popular activities at camp and TI has space for it behind the barn.

Volunteering for camp is a lot of work, but so rewarding. To paraphrase an old Army slogan, "It's the hardest fun you'll ever have!" Camp meant so much to me and my kids growing up; it's great to be able to make it possible for other kids. Temple Isaiah has done a huge mitzvah for the campers in Howard County! GSHCDC is already scheduled at TI for summer 2024; all girls in Kindergarten through 6th Grade can register as campers. (If they aren't Girl Scouts, they'll need to register first with GSCM.org, but they don't have to join a troop.) Adult volunteers are welcomed (with two required trainings before camp) and can bring their younger children (ages 3–5) and sons (3–11), too. Registration starts in February. ■



Looking Back to Look Forward

by Cynthia Lifson and Betsy Singer



Under the sweltering summer sun this past August, Temple Isaiah members traveled by bus to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC to celebrate an important event. “Our Tzedek Isaiah members and others from the Jewish community in Howard County joined with neighbors from the African American community to march with thousands of people from all over the country and remember the 60th Anniversary of the March on Washington,” explained Tzedek Isaiah member Charlotte Sass.

At the original March on August 28, 1963, around a quarter of a million people from different religious, racial, and cultural backgrounds demonstrated to address the need for jobs and economic opportunities in the African American community. The crowd included many well-known citizens and entertainers, along with prominent members of the clergy — among them Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who delivered his famous “I have a dream” speech at the Lincoln Memorial.

Fast forward 60 years and the 2023 anniversary March addressed the themes of the original March, but added new issues related to current threats to democracy, hard-won voting rights, and the criminal justice system. Its organizers considered the event to be a continuation, rather than a commemoration.

Spurred by the chance to join in solidarity with our neighbors in the African American community of Howard County, Tzedek Isaiah responded to the call from the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of the Jewish Federation and joined with the African American Community Roundtable (AACR) and the Howard County Office of Human Rights and Equity (OHRE) to share a bus to the March at the Lincoln Memorial. Of course, in 2023, the bus was air conditioned and had its own “facilities” to lessen the hardship.

Rabbi Gordy Fuller, Temple Isaiah member and Board Chair of the Jewish Federation of Howard County, and Rev. Larry Walker Sr., Deputy Pastor and Chief of Staff for Celebration Church in Columbia, led the group in words of prayer before taking off from Columbia with a full bus of marchers. (Rev. Walker has recently been appointed by Gov. Moore to lead the Governor’s Office of Community Initiatives in Moore’s new administration.)

“The bus was filled with people from the Jewish and African American communities, who shared common goals and concerns and a desire to act on those concerns,” said Betsy Singer, Tzedek Isaiah member and JCRC Co-Chair. CJ Stone Ridgely, AACR first Vice President, and Laura Salganik, JCRC Co-Chair, were the groups’ leaders.



“Despite the seriousness of the issues, we had a lot of fun and got to know each other better during the ride down to DC and back,” said Rachel Petroff Kessler, Director of Lifelong Learning at Temple Isaiah.

Martin Luther King III, the eldest son of the slain civil rights icon and the late Coretta Scott King, addressed the crowd when he said, “Despite the significant progress we have made, we need to rededicate ourselves to the mission my dad gave his life for.”

Amy Kaplan, a Temple Isaiah member who attended with her husband, Bruce, pointed out that the 15-year-old granddaughter of Dr. King, Yolanda, was there with her father and mother and said that since past generations have failed to implement her grandfather’s Dream, her generation needs to continue the fight and rededicate themselves to fighting racism.

Robyn Dennis, a new member of Temple Isaiah, was joined by her daughter at the March; she spoke for Tzedek Isaiah when she said, “This anniversary gives us the opportunity to commemorate Dr. King’s historic calling, and, importantly, to re-energize for the work for justice and equity still needed.”

Rabbi Gordy reminded the group that the ADL, represented by Jonathan Greenblatt, had an important Jewish presence at the anniversary. The ADL was a co-sponsor with Al Sharpton’s Drum Major Institute. He noted that while both the original March and 60th Anniversary occurred on Shabbat, Rabbi Heschel reminded Jews that then, as now, we as Jews sometimes need “to pray with our feet.”

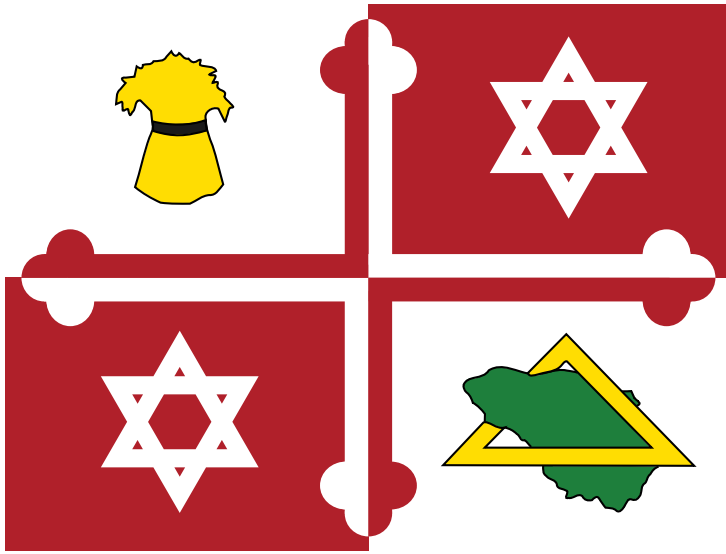
Temple Isaiah can be proud that its members have a hand in raising awareness of critical issues facing our country. We are a part of a big coalition with other Americans with whom we can engage in meaningful ways to repair the world. Tzedek Isaiah looks forward to other opportunities as we practice our key Jewish value of Tikkun Olam together. ■



TOP: Betsy Singer Marcus, Rachel Petroff Kessler, Charlotte Sass, Amy Kaplan, Bruce Kaplan, and Robyn Dennis are among the marchers from Howard County.

MIDDLE: Rev. Larry Walker Sr., Deputy Pastor and Chief of Staff for Celebration Church in Columbia, offered prayers with members and friends of the Jewish Federation of Howard County, the African American Community Roundtable, and the Howard County Office of Human Rights and Equity.

BOTTOM: Rabbi Gordy Fuller, president of the Jewish Federation of Howard County and Temple Isaiah member, led the group in words of prayer before taking off from Columbia with a full bus of marchers.



Milt & Judy Kline

Pioneers of Howard County Judaism

by Doug Silverstein

On June 25, 1963, Milt and Judy Kline welcomed a new son, David, into the world. They were living in the College Park area, but desired to move to a community with land and opportunity. While one option was to return to the Baltimore area, they also considered Montgomery County, where both Milt and Judy taught school. However, they concluded that that area was expensive. Baltimore, which to that point was their life, had become less safe to raise a family. After consulting several people, they decided to move to Howard County (HC), which Milt described as “rolling hillsides and beautiful flowers but which had little culture.” Eventually, they decided to move to HC on the outskirts of what would become Columbia. They bought an acre of land in Beaver Brook. Milt recalled: “On the day we moved into our new house, we drove into a dark, cold driveway and saw a car parked outside. I thought we didn't tell anybody we were coming. A man (Ronnie Lachman, who would later run the first butcher shop in Columbia years later, and his wife Marsha, who ran big dance programs), came out of their car with their baby daughter, Ginger. They were there to welcome new Jewish families.” That day and meeting set the stage for the Klines to welcome Judaism into their home and become pioneers for the development of a thriving Jewish community in HC.

The prominent role Milt and Judy would eventually play in the development of a Jewish community in HC may not have been predicted based on their upbringings, although there was a foundation and glimmers of the faith they would later develop. Milt was raised in a Jewish home but faced many struggles during his childhood. His father left the family when Milt was four years old and his mother died when he was eleven years old. He was raised by grandparents who could not read or write English, who immigrated from Russia to escape the pogroms. While he grew up in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood in Baltimore, in which there were three synagogues within five minutes of his home, Milt says “I can't say I was beholden to Judaism.” The Christian kids who lived nearby were the tough guys in the neighborhood. Milt recalls: “I was a little nerd. I was the sacrificial lamb. One day, there were 4–5 boys outside the playground. One of the Christian kids beat the living hell out of me. There weren't fights every day and there weren't swastikas, but we were always among segments of non-Jewish people. I remember in 3rd Grade, one of the kids from the Christian area put my head in a full nelson and told me to admit the Jews killed Jesus. In the 3rd Grade one of my teachers required us to march around a room like Christian soldiers marching off to the war with the cross of Jesus. That really bothered

me.” When Judy was ten years old, she begged her parents to go to a religious school because all of her gentile friends were going to church. She recalls: “I played with many Catholic girls. I was confirmed when I was 16 years old. It was a very beautiful service and celebration. I did not have a strong sense of Jewish identity when I was young because I grew up in a non-Jewish neighborhood. I knew we celebrated the Jewish holidays.”

In his early teens, Milt experienced trouble with his studies and as he describes, he was somewhat unruly. The saving grace came from finding a Big Brother, a man named Reuben Israelson from the Jewish Big Brother League. Reuben attended Milt’s Bar Mitzvah, taught him about classical music, and taught him to think differently. Milt says: “He encouraged me to apply myself academically and set goals. He encouraged me to get more involved in my Jewish education. He was a mentor. He took me to educational events. We attended services together.” Yet, he recalls at the time of his Bar Mitzvah, his speech wasn’t meaningful to him, though it later came to mean a great deal. He says: “One day, I went back to my old synagogue and stood where I was when I was 13 years old. It was so special. It may have taken me years and years to develop a full love and appreciation for God.”

The foundations for the faith Milt and Judy developed were essential during their arrival in HC in 1963. At that early time, there was essentially no Jewish community here. The first thing Judy did, knowing there was no Jewish worship in the county, was to sign David up for Cradle Roll at Oheb Shalom in Baltimore. When Milt left for his first day of work, Judy cried, for they had only one car and one Jewish friend in the community. Thereafter, the Lachmans introduced them to several other Jewish families with whom they could worship. Milt stated: “We were part of a nice group of Jewish people, a close-knit, growing group who together celebrated Passover and Yom Kippur. We were a very vigorous growing community of 15–20 families.” Judy recalls: “We went through the phonebook and looked for other Jewish names and rang doorbells and asked Jews to join them in services.” Milt and Judy shared Friday night Sabbath services with persons of other faiths. Milt says: “As a result, my curiosity in Judaism grew and motivated me to read more books about Judaism.”

As described by Marc Shapiro in the *Baltimore Jewish Times* on August 9, 2017: “Along with other Jewish families and Dr. Louis L. Kaplan, former president of Baltimore Hebrew College, Milt and Judy gathered a monthly Jewish study group in 1964. It would become the Jewish Council of Howard County in 1968; it exists today as the Jewish Federation of Howard County.” Joseph Petoskey from Beth El synagogue gave the group assignments each week to study Judaism. The first book he gave them was titled *Jews, God, and History*. The Jewish Federation sent them a group organizer. Jack Pessian became the first president of the Jewish Council of Howard County and Milt was a board member. Milt recalls: “We were trying to build a larger community, grow Judaism, and have a place to worship. Marsha and Ronnie Lachman obtained free publicity in the local newspaper to advertise Jewish group meetings, discuss books about Judaism such as *God in History*, and announce events for the Holy Days.”



Despite the growing interest in developing the Jewish community, at that time there were insufficient funds to build a synagogue in HC. Regardless, the building of a separate synagogue was not the original vision of James W. Rouse, who, as summarized by Jimmy Stamp in *Smithsonian Magazine* on April 23, 2014, had a dream of developing a "balanced, planned community" in HC. Marc Shapiro recalls Rouse "advocated constructing interfaith centers in lieu of standalone churches

[or houses of worship]" even though there was skepticism about the idea." Rouse would not allow a separate, permanent Temple for the Jewish community and required they partake in the interfaith housing and religious centers. Marc Shapiro adds: "According to Phyllis S. Kuritzky's 1986 thesis on Columbia's interfaith program, the first rabbis of Columbia were somewhat reluctant. Many saw looming problems with overcrowding and spiritual differences." Eventually, the Jewish Council of HC concluded their worship would need to be included in the interfaith plan. In fact, involvement of the Jewish community was essential to the concept of inclusion of all faiths. Milt states: "One could not live in Columbia if they were not in the spirit of living next to someone of another race, ethnicity, or religion. We were all intertwined at the Interfaith Center."

Other families who developed the first Jewish community in HC included Harold (Hank) Preiser, Henry and Jean Honick, Siegfried and Jessica Rowe, Harriet and Marty Chaitovitz, Hannah and George Baker, Marcia and Jerry Skopp, and Henry Lillienfield. They were all very active in getting events planned. Milt conveyed a very important

player in those early days was Louis Zawatsky, who had the number two position of Social Security and Medicare and was very demonstrative and effective. Zawatsky invited the group to Beth Jacob in Baltimore to their men's club to find mentors to show them how to develop a Jewish community. Milt recalls: "Those people were very instrumental in getting everything going. We met these people at community services at the interfaith center. I was 29 years old and didn't know how to build a community."

Despite the obstacles, the Jewish community continued growing. They started a Sunday morning brotherhood meeting. At one point, there was discussion of obtaining land in Oakland Mills to build a Temple that would be separate from the interfaith center. Milt says: "My feeling was that the non-Jewish part of Howard County did not want Jews. Those people were not in agreement with the vision of Columbia." That dream did not materialize at that time. Around 1967–1968, they brought in a student rabbi from Philadelphia. The first service was packed, wall to wall. While the rabbi was innovative (e.g., dance routines), the practices were not universally supported. This led to the founding of the first Temple in HC, Beth Shalom, housed within the Interfaith Center. Milt and Judy joined, and Milt was the first Vice President. Others at Beth Shalom included Larry Greenwald, Art Brodie, and Ed Hankin. There, they held several services with one or two different rabbis and cantors. Yet, there were philosophical differences between the leaders and the rabbi.



In 1970, a new Reform congregation of fifty people began in Columbia, MD. That group would become Temple Isaiah (TI), which like Beth Shalom, initially operated within the Interfaith Center. Our services were led by Rabbi Richard Sternberger of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Rabbi Sternberger worked with and subsequently turned the congregation over to Rabbi Stephen Fuchs, who Milt describes as “prolific, and endearing, and who worked great with young people.” Milt and Judy joined TI in 1974, at which time they were pleased to find a growing and thriving congregation. Milt recalls: “We were happy there with our children receiving their Jewish education at TI. We had a portable Ark. On Sunday it would be converted for church services. It was a cohesive congregation. We had a brotherhood that grew and changed as the Jewish community grew. It was a supportive community. It was a good feeling.”

Around that time, as Marc Shapiro notes, the Jewish community expressed concerns about the limited space in the Interfaith Center and challenges with the coordination and logistics of working with the other houses of worship. Milt notes at that time there were thousands of Jews in HC without a place to pray.

Time passed, and in 1986, Rabbi Mark Panoff was hired as the second full-time rabbi of Temple Isaiah, whose vision led to the construction of TI. Rabbi Panoff was followed by Rabbi Axler, who Milt describes as “one of the most wonderful individuals.” The Klines were among the initial members of TI and remain involved with the Temple until this day. Their children became Bar and Bat Mitzvah at TI. Milt became a member of the Men’s Club and Milt and Judy have been involved with the Renaissance Group.

Over the decades, Milt and Judy raised two children, David, and Lisa, and have six grandchildren, all of whom respect Judaism. Additionally, Milt discovered about 125 relatives through Ancestry. Milt says: “We have strong Jewish relationships. I think they all respect and love me, which is most important. Almost every conversation finishes with love with all of my grandchildren. I’m proud of what they’ve all accomplished in various fields and their devotion to religious life. They all have good feelings toward us, and we feel so good about that.”



Milt’s highlights also include achieving his adult Bar Mitzvah at TI, which was attended by his children, grandchildren, and all of their wonderful friends. He says: “That was one of the biggest days of my life. How many people have friends from elementary, junior, and senior high school, and sports teams they played on, attend their adult Bar

Mitzvah? Rachel (Petroff Kessler) was absolutely remarkable. I practiced with her. I was overwhelmed by the synagogue.” The other major highlight was Judy and him renewing their wedding vows with Rabbi Panoff, at which time they had been married for 50 years (now married for 65 years). Milt was so excited he was ready to smash the glass before he was supposed to.

Being Jewish means the world to Milt and Judy. They worked effortlessly to find other Jews to help build the Jewish community in HC. Judy calls TI a “family.” She adds: “It’s the people that we’ve known for many years. We’re very comfortable. Some of the congregants are people we’ve known since our kids were very young. It’s a comfortable place to go and worship according to our tradition. We’ve watched the changes in the temple and in the building. The fact that we’ve been with one congregation for all these years, it’s a comfort zone. It’s like going home. We’ve been blessed with outstanding rabbis. We just feel so lucky.”

Milt and Judy Kline, among many others, were instrumental and played a prominent role building a Jewish community in HC and being willing to be a part of something different. Instantly, but even more so over time, they became essential members of the Jewish community. That they endured is a testimony to their resilience, faith, and commitment to their community and Judaism. We are all the beneficiaries of the wonderful Jewish community they helped create in HC and, especially, in TI. Sadly, Judy and Milt are the only ones that remain among the original group of Jewish settlers.

Modestly, Milt says: “People talk about us being pioneers. We didn’t come here to be pioneers.” Perhaps they did not intend to be pioneers, but that is how we all will remember them. ■

Temple Isaiah on the Rhine

by Denny Rapport

Well, that might be an overstatement. But it is true that due to a lovely coincidence, seven Temple Isaiah members ended up on the same river cruise along the Rhine, going from Amsterdam, Holland to Basel, Switzerland in early October.

Margie and I, and our longtime friend Bev Fallik, had made plans to take this cruise several months ago. Imagine our surprise when at our first dinner aboard the Uniworld ship River Empress, Michael Baum came to our table, having recognized Margie from across the room. Michael and Sara Baum were also on this cruise with Marge and Arthur Gold, and another couple, friends of the Golds from New York.

This particular cruise featured a Jewish heritage excursion of nearly every city we visited. We saw the Jewish Museum and Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam, along with the Anne Frank House. In Cologne we visited the Jewish Quarter. In Frankfurt we explored that city's Jewish heritage with a visit to the Jewish Museum, built around the Rothschild mansion. In Speyer, we explored the old synagogue and mikvah, which is a UNESCO world heritage site. Finally, there was a tour of Jewry in the Alsace region in Strasbourg.

The history of antisemitism in Europe is a tragic one. The story of state- and church-sponsored antisemitism was openly told on the tours that we took, along with the many contributions that Jews made in these areas. This history was made even more poignant by the horrific attack by Hamas on Israel on October 7. Soon after October 7, we saw Israeli flags flying from government buildings.

It was a wonderful trip all in all, made all the more enjoyable by unexpectedly sharing it with friends from Temple Isaiah. ■



TOP: Aboard the River Empress.



LEFT: City hall in Speyer, Germany, with the Ukrainian and Israeli flags being displayed.

RIGHT: A government building in Basel, Switzerland.



Bits & Pieces

Welcome

New and Returning Members!

Brandon & Robin Arnold
Calista and Maxwell

Jason & Leigh Cohen
Jordan and Kara

Jonathan & Bianca Harris
Amelia

Joshua & Melissa Krohn
Mara

Grischa Metlay & Lindsay Decker
Max Metlay and Jesse Metlay

Alon Nager & Anna Nys
Aila Nager and Isaac Nager

Craig & Leigh Rende
Kai Kaufman

...continued from page 3

from wounds of every kind, and ready to celebrate the goodness of life and service together. Keep an eye out for further details.

In ways great and small, each of us are able to serve others — those we know, and those who will remain strangers to us. Let us never be deterred in these efforts by the enormity of need or the sense that our actions might not change the world entire. Rabbi Tarfon in Pirkei Avot (2:16) taught long ago: “It is not up to you to complete the whole task; but neither are you excused from doing your part.” ■

Rabbi Craig Axler

Who's Who @ Temple Isaiah



Name: Michelle Ostroff

Family: Len, Children: Sydney and Jonah

Hometown: North Woodmere, NY

Something You Might Not Know About Me: : My first career was in Broadway theater and show management when I lived in NYC.

Position at Temple Isaiah: Executive Vice President

I've Been a Member Here Since: June 2011

People Can Come to Me if They Need: Chocolate Chip Banana Bread...and also to think through new ideas for engaging Temple members.

Why I love being at TI: I love the Friday night service — being with community, feeling the warmth of Shabbat, and hearing the beautiful music created by Rabbi Axler and Cantor Droller. It's a calming end to my hectic weeks. ■



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TIPS Update

We were thrilled to welcome almost 100 Grandparents and Special Friends to TIPS on November 17! Our annual Grandparents/Special Friends Day was a huge hit, with family members joining their preschoolers for the morning. Our guests enjoyed being a part of circle time, listened to stories, created crafts with their preschooler, and celebrated Shabbat in the classroom with candles, grape juice, and challah! Then everyone gathered in the Sanctuary for Shabbat B'Yachad (Shabbat all together) with Rabbi Axler and Morah Rachel. There was a raucous celebration as we sang Shabbat songs, welcomed a dinosaur for Shabbat, and even did the Horah! It was a joyous morning, and we are so thankful to all of our guests for joining us at Temple Isaiah Preschool! ■



Photo courtesy of Ricky Lasser, of Lasser Media.