



## Graduating the Congregation's Youngest Students



By Elisabeth Frankel Reed

Photo by Marc Kalter

Beth HaGan's graduating class of 2013 took to the Sanctuary *bimah* before family and friends last week to mark the completion of nursery school. Honored at the ceremony for their service to the school were former PTA president and Temple Israel Board member Joanna Eshaghoff, PTA President Amy Kalter (both parents of graduating students), Beth HaGan Director Rachel Mathless, and her assistant, Marie Contento.

"Nothing can take the place of quality teachers," said Ms. Mathless, who went on to praise the graduating class. "It's gratifying to see how beautifully they sang and progressed. We feel very happy sending them off into this next step of their lives with such self-confidence and a great sense of self-esteem."

Rabbi Howard Stecker discussed how quickly the children will climb that next set of steps, recalling how little time it seemed to take as his youngest son went from nursery school graduate to recent high school graduate. "Soak it up because the years truly go by," he advised.

"Though they have completed Beth HaGan, Temple Israel can continue to be a presence in the lives of the young graduates through the years. They can continue their Jewish education at the synagogue's Religious School, beginning with the Nitzanim program in kindergarten," said Director of Congregational Schools Rabbi Amy Roth.

As the speeches wound down, it was tempting for many to stand

and watch the graduates about to file in, but Ms. Mathless reminded everyone that, "you can all stay seated, we're not at Harvard."

"Yet!" many guests jokingly retorted.

Moments later "Pomp and Circumstance" played as the Butterflies class, comprised of Rebecca Apfelbaum, Lea Eshaghoff, Ryan Etessami, Tyler Ganjian, Brody Hakimian, Riley Herz, Adina Kalter, Aaron Kamali, Delilah Modlin, Liad Pilip, Max Pour, and Brandon Etan Reed marched to the *bimah*, escorted in by their teachers, Rebeka Ebrahimi and Ety Kalina.

Next to join in the procession were the Dolphins class: Max Avshalomov, Nathaniel Davidson, Justin Ellis, Tyler Hakimi, Bryan Haroonian, Samantha Mosaffi, Noam Mazloumi, Ella Parness, Brian Scheidt, Charlie Shapiro, Lia Tsebelis, and Mia Tsebelis, escorted by their *morot*, Connie Reichman and Hilda Drapacz.

Following them were the members of the Gazelles class: Howard Benmoha, Hailey Hakimi, Joel Hakimian, Aaron Kashani, Shiloh Kashimallak, Jada Liviem, Ethan Makhani, David Mizrahi, Ari Namdar, Mischa Nassimi, and Dylan Ohebshalom, and their teachers, Miriam Mathless and Michelle Landsman.

Once on stage, each class was ready to perform the songs they had practiced for many weeks, under the musical direction of Ruth'e Golden. Together, they stood up and sang "Bruchim Habaim" to welcome everyone, then the Butterflies performed renditions of "Oseh Shalom" and "Bashana Habba." The

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## Confronting God In the Natural World

By Eleanor Yomtobian-Askari

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Eight Religious School families, along with Rabbi Seth Adelson and his family, Director of Congregational Schools Rabbi Amy Roth and her family, and Waxman High School Director Danny Mishkin, attended a weekend retreat at Camp Ramah recently. A report on the weekend by one of the participants at the retreat, Temple Israel member Eleanor Askari, is this issue's Guest Column.

Never have I truly lived in the natural world before. I was born and raised in urban areas, never attended sleep-away camps, and only moved to the suburbs as an adult. The forest setting of the Berkshires, the rainy

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meaningful experience.*

forecast, the lockless cabin doors, and the abundance of bugs, made me nervous. The Vav Class Retreat, however, changed my mind completely. Not only did I have the opportunity to live in nature, but I also had the priceless experience of becoming one with it. The pure environment, untainted

FROM THE RABBI

## My Upcoming Adventure

By Rabbi Howard Stecker

In a few weeks, Deanna and I will be attending the Rabbinical Assembly convention in Jerusalem and I will be starting an intensive program sponsored by the Hartman Institute.

The Rabbinical Assembly will include meetings with Knesset members about religious pluralism, minority issues and international politics. Given all the media focus on threats and challenges to Israel, I signed up to attend a tour of Google headquarters in Tel Aviv for a window into Israel's high-tech accomplishments. The convention will also feature learning, sharing of programmatic ideas, and special events that include a reception at the residence of President Shimon Peres.

Following the convention, I will be joining the fifth cohort of the Rabbinic Leadership Initiative (RLI) of the Shalom Hartman Institute, which describes itself as "a center of transformative thinking and teaching that addresses the major challenges facing the Jewish people and elevates the quality of Jewish life in Israel and around the world." The RLI, a long-standing program of the Institute, brings rabbis together

by today's mind-absorbing technologies, allowed for a very meaningful experience.

From a young age, I never observed *Shabbat* completely. I attended synagogue, but other than that and some extra hours of sleep during the day, my family and I went about our usual day-to-day lives. While I was relatively "relaxed" on a typical *Shabbat*, compared to the other days of the week, the relaxation by no means compares to the sense of complete calmness and peace that both my mind and body felt at the Vav Class Retreat. Rather than spend free time on the computer or in front of the television, my family and I were engaged both spiritually and intellectually.

While the children were taken care of, the adults enjoyed stimulating group

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from all denominations for a three-year program that includes a month each summer, a week each winter, and ongoing distance learning. By immersing rabbis in intense learning and discussion with leading Jewish thinkers, the RLI aims to transform the way that rabbis approach their communal work.

*The Hartman Institute  
is all about  
high-resolution.*

systematic, sophisticated analysis it brings to the challenges of Jewish life in Israel and North America. Guided by visionary rabbi and philosopher David Hartman, from its inception until his recent death, the Institute, named for his father, has become a beacon of courageous analysis and engagement in the Jewish world.

I have heard so much positive feedback from colleagues who participated in

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## On a New Term

By Alan Klinger

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This column is adapted from remarks made by President Alan Klinger following his election to a second term at the Congregational Meeting, held on June 3rd.

I thank you for the confidence you have placed in me and the slate of officers you have selected to help guide the synagogue for the next two years. As will be addressed shortly, these two years will be important to our future.

But first, I'd like to recognize what has been accomplished these past two years, which will serve as a foundation for the next set of steps to be taken. Working with the clergy and lay leadership, we have moved to control overhead. We realized that while we are, foremost, a synagogue and not a

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business, we needed to appreciate that costs have to be controlled and that our membership would not be well-served by letting dues skyrocket. There was a restructuring of clergy and professional staff duties, not all of which were popular, but they were important to accomplish. We now have a better handle on our expenses and I can assure you that your dollars are not spent profligately. We will continue to look for ways to effectuate savings so that we don't price ourselves out of your market.

We also worked to enhance your voice in our activities. We instituted reviews of clergy so that we could hear your opinions, what worked well and what could be improved. Again, not all thought this appropriate, but we believed in this part of best practices for not-for-profits—including religious institutions. Indeed, United Synagogue recommends that congregations perform reviews of clergy. Hopefully we did this in a professional, respectful manner—and I can say that the sentiments communicated through the process have led to positive changes for the congregation. We also sought your views of the High Holiday experience and the ReImagining of

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## IN MEMORIAM

Temple Israel extends condolences to the families of:

**TRUDY SCHWARTZ**  
mother of Dr. Madelyn Gould

**ROSELYN MILLER**  
esteemed member of Temple Israel

**IRENE WEISS**  
esteemed member of Temple Israel

**DAVID SOKOLOW**  
father of Ira Sokolow

May their memories be for a blessing.

## CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES

*Kindle the Sabbath Lights!*

Friday, June 21..... 8:12 P.M.  
Friday, June 28.....8:13 P.M.  
Friday, July 5.....8:12 P.M.

## DAILY MINYAN TIMES

Mon. & Thur.	6:45 A.M.	8:00 P.M.
Thur., July 4	8:15 A.M.	8:00 P.M.
Tues., June 25	6:45 A.M.	8:00 P.M.
Tues. & Wed.	7:00 A.M.	8:00 P.M.
Friday	7:00 A.M.	6:30 P.M.
Sat., June 22	8:45 A.M.	7:50 P.M.
Sat., June 29	8:45 A.M.	7:55 P.M.
Sat., July 6	9:00 A.M.	7:50 P.M.
Sunday	8:15 A.M.	8:00 P.M.

## Next Voice Issues, Deadlines

The next issue of *The Voice*, the summer issue, will be published in three weeks, on Thursday, July 11. The deadline for that issue is Friday, June 28.

The following issue will be published three weeks later, on Thursday, August 1. The deadline for that issue is Friday, July 19.

The next issue will also be published three weeks later, on Thursday, August 22. The deadline for that issue is Friday, August 9.

## IN QUOTES

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** "In Quotes" calls attention to passages from Jewish prayers and writings frequently overlooked or said by rote, but profoundly written.

This issue's quote is taken from the *b'rakhot* are recited each morning. What's your favorite quote? Send it to *The Voice*, c/o the Temple Israel office.

“ Praised are You Adonai our God, who rules the universe, enabling us to distinguish day from night.  
Praised are You Adonai our God, who rules the universe, making me a Jew. ”

## UPCOMING EVENTS AT TEMPLE ISRAEL

June	23	Shalom Club 50th Anniversary Celebration	6:00 P.M.
	24	Beth HaGan Summer Program Begins	
	24	Sisterhood Board Meeting	10:00 A.M.
July	15	<i>Erev</i> Tisha B'av	
	16	Tisha B'av	

## Temple Israel Invites You to OBSERVE TISHA B'AV

Commemorating the Destruction of the First Temple (in 586 BCE), the Second Temple (in 70 CE) in Jerusalem, and the Exile of the Jewish People.

This solemn day reflects the greatest tragedies of Jewish history (including the Holocaust), but also serves as a reminder that the Jewish tradition of renewal is alive in Israel and in America. It is customary to fast from sunset until dark the following night.

### Monday Evening, July 15 - 8 P.M.

*Minhah*, Ma'ariv and the reading of *Eikhah* (the Book of Lamentations), led by Rabbi Seth Adelson and Cantor Raphael Frieder, and members of the congregation who will chant *Eikhah* and other selections.

*Please come prepared to sit on the floor and sing mournful melodies.*

### Tuesday, July 16

*Shaharit* 6:45 A.M. (without *tallit* and *tefillin*), including Torah reading and *kinot* (poems of lament)

**Minhah 1 P.M.**  
(with *tallit* and *tefillin*)  
**Ma'ariv 8 P.M.**

Fast ends at 9:08 P.M.

## B'NAI/B'NOT MITZVAH IN OUR TEMPLE ISRAEL FAMILY



**Talia Levy**

Talia Levy will be called to the Torah as a *Bat Mitzvah* this summer in Israel, as well as at Camp Ramah in New England. She is the daughter of Drs. Karen and Daniel Levy and has four sisters, Sarah, 23, Yael, 21, Maya, 17 and Hannah, 10, and a brother, Isaiah, 20. Talia is a seventh grade student at Great Neck South Middle School, where she is a member of her school's swim team. Talia currently attends the Waxman High School and Youth House.

## Congregation's Youngest Students Are Graduating

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Dolphins followed up with "Mitzvah Gedolah" and "Od Yavoh Shalom," and the Gazelles rounded it all out with "Halleluyah" and "Vzacharta Et Hashem." For the finale, all classes joined together to entertain the audience with "Avenu Shebashamayim," "Todah" and "Teffilat Haderech."

Having completed their performances, Beth HaGan's newest graduates were individually presented with diplomas and Kiddush cups, a gift from the Beth HaGan PTA. Following a flurry of photographs, everyone headed to the Blue Room to enjoy cake, cookies, fruit, and beverages.

"I want to stay in the Butterflies class, but I'm too old," said one Beth HaGan student, as the ceremonies concluded, a testament to all he learned, the fun he had, the friends he made, and his fantastic teachers.

Looking around the room at the cake smeared over many of the little graduates' faces, parents were reminded that there is still a long way to go and that this really is just the beginning. But, "Beth HaGan has certainly provided these children with a strong foundation on which to build," said one proud parent.

FROM THE WAXMAN HIGH SCHOOL

## Coming Soon to the Youth House!

By Danny Mishkin

The Waxman High School and Youth House enjoyed an engaging, rewarding, and awesome 5773, and the best is yet to come in 5774. We are looking to improve upon existing programs like the 8th grade Mitzvah Corps, which already has more than 20 students set to register, the 9th and 10th grade Chag Squad, which will continue to see our teens enhance Temple Israel holiday celebrations and, of course, our amazing Rosh Chodesh: It's a Girl Thing and Shevet Achim: The Brotherhood groups, which look to engage more young women and men in these cohesive teen communities.

We are thrilled to launch a few new initiatives for the coming year!

- Youth House T.I.L.T. (Temple Israel Leadership Teens) will be a new community formed at the Youth House aimed at recognizing, rewarding, empowering, and mobilizing our best, brightest, and most dedicated teens.

We are excited to invest time, money, and effort in our leaders. Therefore, all students who meet the requirements to join T.I.L.T. will be invited to a free weekend retreat to bond with other leaders, enjoy an incredible getaway, and receive leadership training.

Besides a wonderful and fun experience, the weekend will include brainstorming of new visions for the Youth House, strategizing for achievement, and training to help all students become leaders in whatever passions they pursue.

We expect this newly formed group of

teen leaders to represent our Youth House community in public forums, reach out to friends and other teens that will help us achieve our new visions, and make sure that the Youth House always stays on the cutting edge of Jewish teen programming.

- Electives: In addition to grade level core classes from 5:30-6:15 P.M., our weekly Tuesday program will include amazing electives from 6:45-7:30 P.M. First, we are offering an "A Capella Teen Choir," a group that will learn some cool tunes and perform when ready! Second, we boast a weekly Hebrew Ulpan so students can learn Hebrew and practice for our February Trip to Israel! Finally, we are running a program called, "What Would You Do?" which will apply Jewish values to the intense scenarios seen in the show "What Would You Do?" We are looking to secure one or two more electives before the start of the school year.

- Israel: We are so excited to return to Israel February 12th-23rd. This trip is open to all 8th-12th graders. There are many factors that separate our program from that of a trip like Birthright. For starters, traveling with a group of teens from our community that potentially can become "Youth House" friends will provide a great impact on anyone's Jewish identity. Second, traveling with our incredible clergy and educational staff is an experience unto itself.

Have a great summer! Please contact me for more information about any teen programs at <dmishkin@tign.org>.

## Shabbat Up Close & Personal

A discussion-based service with Rabbi Marim D. Charry

Develop a more thorough understanding of the *Shabbat* morning service in an intimate setting.

This service meets on the first *Shabbat* of each month, July 6 & August 3 at 10:30 A.M. Blue Room

## MAZAL TOV TO . . .

- Vivian and Yuval Brash on the birth of their granddaughter.
- Toby and Gary Noren on the engagement of their son, Zachary, to Kimberly Goodman.
- Merrill and Dr. Mel Schneiderman on the engagement of their daughter, Robyn, to Gabriel Harris.
- Lori and Donald Citak on the marriage of their son, Jordan, to Vanessa Lichtenstein.

## Congregation Thanks Kiddush Sponsors

Appreciation is expressed by Temple Israel's officers and Board of Trustees to members who have generously sponsored and enhanced the Sabbath *kiddush*.

The congregational *kiddush* on May 18 was co-sponsored by Lisa and Jeffrey Goodwin in honor of the *Bar Mitzvah* of their son, Charles, and Daniella and Matthew Nili in honor of the baby naming of their daughter, Isabella Sara.

The congregational *kiddush* on May 25 was sponsored by Sheryl and Dr. Martin Fine in honor of the *Bat Mitzvah* of their daughter, Simona.

A contribution toward the *kiddush* on June 1 was made by Drs. Sharona and Robin Hakimi in honor of the *Bar Mitzvah* of their son, Aaron.

## From the Rabbi: My Upcoming Adventure

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previous cohorts of the program that I am thrilled for this opportunity. I plan to post reflections of my experience on my blog, "Torah for Our Day," so please stay tuned for updates.

In a recent sermon, I spoke about the importance of supporting Israel at the Celebrate Israel Parade and offered a critique of efforts on the right and the left to boycott the parade. I argued that the day of the parade is a time when analysis and potential protest should yield to a public affirmation of the existence and mission of Israel and the Jewish people.

Generally, however, we should pursue what Makor, a Jewish educational organization, calls a "high-resolution" approach to our nation and people. The closer we look, the deeper our understanding and, it seems, the stronger our ultimate commitment, even if we determine that certain policies and approaches need to be reconsidered.

The Hartman Institute is all about high-resolution. I look forward to immersing myself in that atmosphere and sharing my experience with our congregation.

## Alan Klinger Elected to Second Term, New Slate of Officers, Board Elected Annual Budget Also Approved at Annual Meeting

Alan Klinger was elected to a second term as Temple Israel president at the congregational meeting held on June 3, along with a new slate of vice presidents and members of the Board of Trustees.

Following his election, President Klinger addressed the congregation, reviewing successes of his first term and outlining his agenda for the next two years. Excerpts from his presentation are in his column, "From the President," on page two of this issue of The Voice.

Approved at the meeting was the congregation's annual operating budget. In addition, the clergy, school directors, and the chairs of a number of standing committees presented reports to the congregation.

Elected to a first term as vice presidents were Shahram Delafraz, Dan Goldberger, Dr. Madelyn Gould, and Dr. Zina Rutkin-Becker. Vice presidents elected to a second term are Seth Horowitz, Dr. Robert Lopatkin, and Rebecca Yousefzadeh Sassouni.

Keyvan Frouzan, Rachel Geula, Audrey Kent Itzkowitz, and Ofra Panzer were elected to a first three-year term on the Board of Trustees. Elected to a second three-year term were Rebecca Friedman-Charry, Ronald Klempner, and Miriam Kobliner.

Elected to a two year term on the Board was Gary Noren. Edie Robbins was elected to a one-year term.

Stepping down from the Board after having served two terms are Shahram Delafraz, Barbara Erlich, Dr. Madelyn Gould, Lawrence Greengrass, and Bracha Werber. Having been elected as officers, Dan Goldberger and Dr. Zina Rutkin-Becker are vacating their Board seats.

Departing as vice presidents are Dr. Parviz Khodadadian, Dr. Robert Panzer, Gary Sazer, and Steven Shepsman.



## METNY Honorees

METNY, the Metropolitan New York Region of United Synagogue, the organization of Conservative congregations, held their annual dinner at Temple Israel on June 10. Honorees included Marc Katz of Temple Israel, center, as well as Irwin Scharf, left, past president of METNY, and Rabbi Robyn Fryer Bodzin, center, of the Israel Center of Conservative Judaism, Queens. With them in the Sanctuary are United Synagogue CEO Rabbi Steven Wernick, second from left, United Synagogue International President Richard Skolnik, second from right, and Alan Reid, METNY president. United Synagogue held a Board meeting and conferences at Temple Israel throughout the weekend.

# Beth HaGan Students Display Their Artwork at School's 13th Annual Art Show



The Beth HaGan faculty was joined by Rabbi Howard Stecker, right.



Story and Photos by Marc Katz, Editor

Beth HaGan students filled the Crystal Ballroom with giant-sized works of art recently for the school's 13th annual art show. Under the guidance of their teachers, the congregation's youngest students selected children's books with Jewish themes as the basis for class art projects.

"We teach early literacy," said school Director Rachel Mathless. "Our goal is to teach the love of learning and the love of reading. Most classes selected four books as the theme to illustrate through art projects. They are very proud of their work."

Among the selections, the Ducks Class, taught by *Morah* Nathalie and *Morah* Nicole, selected "Ten Tzedakah Pennies," by Jonk Klein-Higger. It is a counting book about a little boy who wants to share ten pennies with his family.

"A Tree Is Nice," by Janice May Udry, was a selection of the Kangaroo Class, led by *Morah* Mojdeh and *Morah* Yve. After looking at the beauty of a tree, the story concludes that a tree is good to have around; a tree is nice.

The Kittens Class, taught by *Morah* Roni and *Morah* Shirley, chose "The Artist Who Painted a Blue Horse," by Eric Carle, "because it teaches us that we can draw anything or do anything in our imagination."

One of the more notable exhibits was by the Lamb Class, led by *Morah* Dinah and *Morah* Ann. They built an actual small house to illustrate "Oh Were They Ever Happy," by Peter Spier. It tells the story of children who were left alone in their home, and have a wonderful time painting it.

The Tiny Toddlers, the Teddy Bear Class, taught by *Morah* Debbie and *Morah* Lida, selected "Owl Babies," by Martin Waddell. It reassures children that "mommies always come back" to their babies.

The Bears Class selection, "A Color of His Own," by Leo Lionni, tells the story of a chameleon who goes in search of a color of his own, and finds a true friend. The book shows how chameleons adapt to every color, according to class teachers *Morah* Naz and *Morah* Tziona.

"Puppies! Puppies! Puppies!" by Susan Meyers was the selection of the Giraffes Class, taught by *Morah* Shari and *Morah* Tracey. It is a delightful rhyming book celebrating puppies and following their lives and routines, from being born, snuggling together, eating, drinking, sleeping, growing, tumbling, running, playing, moving to a new home and adopting their own families.

*Morah* Cheryl and *Morah* Elizabeth, in the Seals Class, selected "Bagels from Benny," by Aubrey Davis. It tells the story of Benny, who loves to help out at his grandpa's bakery. Customers love grandpa's crusty bagels with the soft insides. One day, grandpa explains to Benny that God should be thanked for the wonderful bagels, not him. The book asks, "How do you thank God?"

The largest exhibit, in the center of the ballroom, was by the Tigers Class, taught by *Morah* Cheryl and *Morah* Helen. They illustrated "Feivels Flying Horses," by Heidi Smith Hyde. It tells the story of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe who were craftsmen. They made their living by carving wood and making synagogue Arks. They found work at Brooklyn's Coney Island Carousel after they came to America, creating beautiful carved and bejeweled carousel horses. The class made paper horses connected to the Crystal Ballroom chandelier, featuring their faces, rather than the faces of the horses.

Another large exhibit was by the Butterfly Class, led by *Morah* Rebeka and *Morah* Ety. They built a tree house, based on the story "Froggy Builds a Treehouse," by Jonathan London. "The Butterflies have enjoyed reading Froggy books all year long," the teachers said. "We thought it would be fitting to choose one for the Fair."

An imaginary dragon moves into a boy's perfect sandcastle in "When a Dragon Moves In," by Jodi Moore, the project of the Dolphins Class, led by *Morah* Connie and *Morah* Hilda.

"Sammy Spider's First Trip to Israel," by Sylvia Rouss, allowed the Gazelles Class, taught by *Morah* Miriam and *Morah* Michelle, to join Sammy and his human friend, Joshua, as they experience the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and sensations of the land of Israel.



## D'VAR TORAH

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Mattot Mas'ey Saturday, July 6

With the double portion Mattot- Mase, the Book of Numbers concludes. The *sedrot* deal with a variety of laws and occurrences revolving around the conquest of the Promised Land. The "cities of refuge" expresses the Biblical theological postulate that the divine presence cannot abide in a land so polluted by murder; the offense leads to pollution of earth and abandonment by God of His sanctuary and people. Thus, homicide and asylum are mentioned here, as issues and institutions regaining attention on the eve of entering the Promised Land. Asylum was necessary because of the prevalence of blood vengeance in the ancient Near East. The narrative of the *sedrot* is preoccupied with the final events preceding the entering of the Promised Land. The Israelites have to defeat the Midianite foes, slaying the Midianite men, as well as those women implicated in the apostasy at Baal-peor. Spoils are divided and Trans-Jordan is occupied. This is problematic because the Tribes of Gad and Reuben wish to settle there, rather than passing the national goal of occupying and settling in the Promised Land. Moses accepts a compromise: in return for the privilege of settling in Trans-Jordan, they will serve as shock troops for the forthcoming conquest. Finally, Israel turns its attention to the conquest and apportionment of Canaan. The Divine instructions to Moses are clear and logically sequential: conquest and apportionment of the land, definition of precise boundaries, designation of chieftains, the appropriation of 45 towns for the Levites, and six Levitical towns as cities of refuge. As religious functionaries, the Levites always received special dispensation, in this case receiving no permanent property, but permanent residences and pasturage for their livestock, via towns and their surrounding fields.

### Please Note:

The Temple Israel office will be **CLOSED** Thursday through Sunday, July 4-7.

The office will be **OPEN** on Fridays until 4 P.M. throughout the summer.

## From the President: On Starting a New Term

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our Religious School through surveys (for many of us, the introduction to Survey Monkey). There, too, your views have influenced the decisions we need to make.

You heard from our school leaders about the improvements in our programs to make for a more rewarding experience for our students. We also sought to expand the range of our adult education offerings to attract more people to our activities. Our new Israeli film series drew more people to the synagogue than the "regulars." Our recent *Shavuot* speaker, NYU Professor Jonathan Haidt, produced an overflow crowd to hear why people gravitate to extreme positions and how we can learn to bridge these gaps. We need to continue to experiment with new programs and speakers to enhance our relevance to the membership.

It won't be easy. The demographics of Great Neck are changing. Our numbers are not what they were 20 years ago and this is not the fault of the clergy or your lay leadership. Communities change. But we can't just wring our hands about these developments. We remain one of the largest and strongest Conservative synagogues in the region. Most others would give their figurative right arm for the resources we have, including the talent of our clergy, our schools and the range of programming we offer. But we also can't rest on our laurels; we need to recognize that the concept of the synagogue as a center for Jewish life is evolving.

We need to re-think our mission in the community. Just because we've operated one way for decades doesn't mean that it's right for today. A core aspect of our function is our religious services. Are they in line with what today's congregants want? In that vein, are we satisfied with the number of people who regularly attend? While the quality of the service is, of course, important, if we're not reaching sufficient numbers of people, are there things we can do to expand our reach? After all, our maxim is "tradition and change." We have to be willing to consider new ways of conducting services while not abandoning those parts of our tradition that are of significant import (or, of course, those aspects that the clergy teach are required). We have a group considering these questions and will be having people visit other synagogues to see what is working well there. Perhaps changes will be made; perhaps not, but we will explore possibilities.

Today's synagogue extends beyond a place for religious services. People are looking for myriad ways to connect. One aspect we're contemplating is the growth of JCC-like activity. We want this to be a place for families. We're looking at new ways to utilize the building to allow for different uses, ones that will bring people together. New uses tend to require investment of funds to make it happen. We have a group looking at development goals and expect to present more to you on this over the next several months.

We also need to be able to tackle hard issues. We need to recognize that some

*We have to be willing to consider new ways of conducting services while not abandoning those parts of our tradition that are of significant import.*

people think us impersonal, that there's no room for them here. Those here tonight know that's not true, but we have to take steps to convey that to others. Face it; we're not inexpensive. We need to show people there's value for them to be here to retain them as members.

We also need to recognize the issues facing Jewish families today. A very complicated one is the proper bounds of outreach to interfaith families. It would be easy to turn away from something so controversial, but I don't believe that would be a service to our members, to our synagogue, or to the Jewish people. That doesn't mean we have decided to change practices at Temple Israel; what might work on the Upper West Side might not be appropriate here, and of course the clergy will have a large say in such matters. But your Board of Trustees has brought in speakers to address them, and clergy and lay leaders will be participating in discussions on the topic. It will be treated as the important issue it is.

Finally, we need to be engaged more broadly to share our views of Judaism with others, and hopefully to influence their agendas. To that end, we're moving to strengthen connections to organizations like United Jewish Appeal, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, and Mercaz, and more locally, with Friends of the IDF and, SHAI. These ties will strengthen our bonds to Israel and the Jewish people and, after all, isn't that really our ultimate goal.

## Guest Column: Confronting God In the Natural World

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discussions regarding spirituality. These discussions opened new doors and I was able to know the people I see daily on a deeper level. This forum of experiences, values, opinions, and ideas connected me to our community in a new way. Perhaps the most moving experience of the retreat was our praying, *tefillah* in the gazebo. While chanting the words of God, Rabbi Adelson stopped intermittently and told us to close our eyes and pay attention to the world around us.

I began to sense and value things that I encounter everyday: the birds chirping, the sound of branches blowing in the wind, the gentle touch of a breeze passing my cheek. I was able to take a step back and simply appreciate. It was one of those "living in the present moments" that we all strive to have more frequently in our busy lives. I felt the true presence of God while praying during these moments and wondered how much stronger my prayers feel and how much more connected I am to God while outdoors. I was one with God's world, and because of that I felt an incredible state of relief and awe.

The connection I threaded with nature and our community reaffirmed for me that we are all in it together. We are connected to each other (all of nature, and not only humans) beyond what we allow ourselves to realize on a daily basis. We share a common force that surrounds each of us all the time. To experience it, we simply have to take the



Religious School Vav class families spent a weekend in together at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires, along with Rabbi Seth Adelson, Director of Congregational Schools Rabbi Amy Roth, and Waxman High School Director Danny Mishkin.

time to step out of our hectic lives and recognize it in the moment.

I would like to thank Temple of Israel of Great Neck for giving me another priceless experience. Many of the sweetest memories of my life are associated with

our Temple. From the *Bat Mitzvah* of my daughters to my own *Bat Mitzvah*, to performing in the annual play, and of course to introducing me to a wonderful community of individuals that I have had the pleasure of meeting.

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Receiving an *aliyah* on the first day of Shavuot  
Jeffrey Zahler

*In honor of:*

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Phyllis and Jack Polensky

The graduation of Jaymee Nusbaum, granddaughter of Shirley and Edward Goldfeder, from Binghamton University, Cum Laude  
The birth of Dylan Fiona Withrow, granddaughter of Hon. Ronni Birnbaum and Dr. Wally Kopelowitz  
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Joyce and Burton Weston

The graduation of Allison Lopatkin, daughter of Hon. Susan and Dr. Robert Lopatkin, from the University of Rochester

The graduation of Alyssa Greengrass, daughter of Nancy and Lawrence Greengrass, from The Mason Gross School of Arts at Rutgers University  
The engagement of Eric Shepsman, son of Debra and Steven Shepsman, to Vanessa del Aguila

Dr. Lois and Gary Sazer

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Helen Wrobel and Tal Eyal and family

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*In memory of:*

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Arlene Paul Caitung

# From Generation to Generation



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Lisa and Jeffrey Goodwin

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## Temple Israel Gratefully Acknowledges The Following Contributions

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The marriage of Ariel Taitz, son of Emily and Isaac Taitz, to Lauren Clark  
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## D'var Torah

By Rabbi Marim D. Charry

### Balak

Saturday, June 22

In this portion, Balak, King of Moab, becomes alarmed at the victory of the Israelites over the Amorites. Fearing that the Israelites are too powerful to defeat in battle, Balak sends messengers to the renowned prophet Balaam in Mestopotamia to summon him to Moab in order to curse the Israelites. At first God instructs Balaam that he is not to go. Balak, however, sends a second set of messengers to plead with Balaam, and God agrees that the prophet can go to Moab on the clear understanding that he will only speak as God commands him. Once in Moab, Balaam blesses the Israelites three different times instead of cursing them. Balak is furious and sends the prophet home, but Balaam first prophesies the destruction of Moab and the neighboring countries. The future of Israel now seems bright, indeed, but the promise is immediately dashed when the people are enticed to participate in the idolatrous cult of Baal-peor. The unique relationship with God is still not firmly enough established.

### Pinehas

Saturday, June 29

We read that Pinhas, the grandson of Aaron, is rewarded for his zeal in dealing summarily with the idolatry of Baal-peor by having the priesthood become the possession of his descendants for all time, in this portion. We now turn to the preparations for the conquest of the Promised Land. Moses takes a census of the generation born in the wilderness to determine the number of fighting men and the number of families who would share in the division of the land. God gives Moses instructions for apportioning the land, and we learn of a decision affirming the right of daughters to inherit property when there are no sons. Moses is told to ascend the mountain to prepare to die and to designate Joshua as his successor. The reading concludes with a calendar of the festivals of the year and the public sacrifices that are to be offered daily and on every *Shabbat* and festival after the Israelites have entered the land. Maintaining this calendar is to be a means of tying together God, the land, and the People of Israel.

—Continued on page 8

## SABBATH SERVICES

Friday, June 21

Evening Service 6:30 P.M.

•

Saturday, June 22

Morning Service 8:45 A.M.

Weekly Portion: *Balak*; Numbers 22:2 – 25:9

*Haftarah*: Micah 5:6 – 6:8

Sabbath Service Officers: Eleanor Askari and Rebecca Sassouni

Junior Congregation 10:30 A.M.

Toddler Service 11:00 A.M.

*Minhah* and *Ma'ariv* 7:50 P.M.

•

Friday, June 28

Evening Service 6:30 P.M.

•

Saturday, June 29

Morning Service 8:45 A.M.

Weekly Portion: *Pinehas*; Numbers 25:10 – 30:1

*Haftarah*: Jeremiah 1:1 – 2:3

Sabbath Service Officers:

Pargol Khadavi and Dr. Michael Ziegelbaum

Junior Congregation 10:30 A.M.

Toddler Service 11:00 A.M.

*Minhah* and *Ma'ariv* 7:55 P.M.

•

Friday, July 5

Evening Service 6:30 P.M.

•

Saturday, July 6

Morning Service 8:45 A.M.

Weekly Portion: *Mattot Mas'ey*; Numbers 30:2 – 36:13

*Haftarah*: Jeremiah 2:4 – 28; 3:4; 4:1-2

*Shabbat* Up Close and Personal 10:30 A.M.

Junior Congregation 10:30 A.M.

Toddler Service 11:00 A.M.

*Minhah* and *Ma'ariv* 7:50 P.M.