



THE SHOFAR
שופר

United Synagogue of Hoboken

TEVET / SH'VAT 5777

JANUARY 2017

By Rabbi Robert Scheinberg

WHO TELLS YOUR STORY?

Adapted from Rabbi Scheinberg's remarks on Rosh HaShanah 5777.
For the full version, please see rabbischeinberg.com

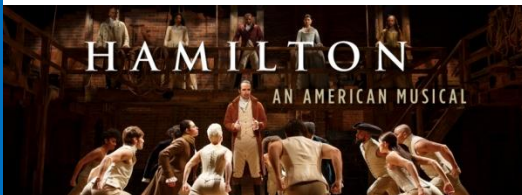


The musical *Hamilton*, about America's first Treasury Secretary, is on pace to become one of the most outstanding hits in the history of the American theater. It is cast almost entirely with actors who are African-American and Latino, people whom the founding fathers did not see as part of the story of the birth of the United States. Perhaps alluding to this, one emblematic line in *Hamilton* asserts, "You have no control who lives, who dies, who tells your story." Consider the impact of a play in which American presidents Washington, Jefferson, and Madison are all played by African-American men, when all these presidents were slaveholders, and none of them regarded African-Americans as having equal rights or abilities. Consider the impact of telling their story through musical forms like jazz, r&b, hip-hop, and rap that are associated with the African-American experience. What a remarkable

act of reclaiming and transforming the stories of the past. It is for this reason that one of the advertising lines of the show is "the story of America then, told by America now."

Actors in the show, including Daveed Diggs (who played Thomas Jefferson), have commented that being in the show transformed

their relationship with American patriotism: whereas before they had regarded the stories of the founding of the United States as stories that did not truly involve them, acting in the show has enabled them to evoke a sense of connection with these stories and these individuals. This phenomenon seems to be central to the impact of *Hamilton* - in that people who see it feel like, to some degree, they are seeing the story of themselves - as Americans, as members of minority groups, or as both. **(Continued on p. 3)**



UPCOMING EVENTS:

Fri. Jan. 6, 7pm Shabbat eve service, with performance by *Heschel Harmonizers* & Shabbat dinner

Sat Jan 6, Shabbat morning service, with performance by *Heschel Harmonizers*

Thurs. Jan 19, 7:30-9:30pm Explore Judaism course begins -7 sessions

Sat. Jan 21, 11am Shabbat Shirah - music program for families with children age 3 and under

Sun. Jan.22, 10:30am Brunch with Arlene Weintraub, author of *Heal: The Vital Role of Dogs in the Search for Cancer Cures*

Jan 27-28 Scholar-in-residence weekend with Prof. Nancy Sinkoff of Rutgers: "The Jewish Community and American Politics"

Sun. Feb. 26, 10:30am Brunch with Rita Gabis, author of *A Guest at the Shooters' Banquet: My Grandfather's SS Past*

Sat. Mar. 4, 7pm Casino Night, Elks Club

Friday night services 7pm

Saturday morning services 9:30am

See www.hobokensynagogue.org & USH Facebook page for more info on these and other upcoming events!

THE BIRTH OF THE LEARNING CENTER

BY SUSAN SCHEPT



It is 1986, our son Judah is 7 years old, our daughter, Rebecca is 3. Ken and I are members of the United Synagogue of Hoboken. We go to Shabbat services, participate in the community holiday celebrations, celebrate the holidays at home BUT, there is NO formal Jewish education at the shul. Our rabbi, Jeff Marker, the first Conservative rabbi, is hired only on a part-time basis as our synagogue budget is so constrained that we don't have enough money to hire and support a full-time rabbi. I know that I want our children to have a Jewish education. At the time, I do not harbor even a remote thought of a synagogue wide "learning center." There are so few self-identified Jewish children in our Hoboken community.

(Continued on p. 2)

(Continued from p. 1) **Previously, a few steps** had been taken. In 1979-1980, members Myron Kaplan and Annette Hollander had privately hired a teacher to teach their kids, Eve and Amelia, who were several



Myron Kaplan

years older than Judah. No other movement in the direction of children's education ensued. So, Jean Becker and I hired a young man, Isaac Jeret, who had serendipitously advertised his expertise in Jewish education to come to our house to teach Jeff (Jean and Bob's son) and our son, Judah, Hebrew language and prayer. Isaac had aspirations of pursuing a career in the music business and wanted to teach in order to make some money.



Annette Hollander

Fast forward a year or so, Ken Katz is now the rabbi, again part-time. He, his wife, Ingrid, and their young children, Miriam and Tova, join our community. Isaac continues privately with Judah. We have a few more kids and it's time for Rebecca as well. With the help of parent volunteers, Rabbi Katz institutes a series of children's holiday programs, a Hanukkah party and a Purim carnival. (The main parent involved in putting together these celebrations was Gail Reiken Tuzman, cousin of our own Howard Olah-Reiken).

On Shabbat mornings, Marilyn Freiser, Ingrid Katz and I voluntarily do a "Tot Shabbat" for a few children, ages 3 and 4. Isaac is hired to teach the few older kids on Shabbat morning. Again, let's be perfectly clear, there exists NO FORMAL Jewish learning at USH. The holiday and Shabbat morning programs were instituted on an ad hoc basis and really did not involve much expenditure on the synagogue's part.



Rabbi Jeff Marker



Rabbi Stephanie Dickstein

However, "the times they were a-changing." Our small community seemed to be on the verge of growth. We had a new energetic rabbi, Stephanie Dickstein, who was committed to enhancing Jewish life in Hoboken to include a Jewish education for our children. However, the number of kids in the synagogue was still few. We were almost always in financial crisis mode. Could we establish a new type of Jewish after-school education program, that reflected current knowledge of how kids learn, and that would inspire ...all on a shoe-string budget?

Rabbi Stephanie Dickstein, Rabbi Isaac Jeret -- who had become so inspired that he left the music business and became a rabbi -- and I came up with a non-traditional education plan and a budget. Isaac and I also put together a grant proposal to a foundation that provided start-up funds for proposals such as ours, and we got the funding!

But our proposal to the synagogue Board of Trustees for a learning center met with extreme resistance. The treasurer felt that starting formal programs was impossible given our financial constraints. Others added to the "nay" voices stating that we had so few children that the idea seemed like a "pipe dream." The loudest voices contended that this was definitely not the time! The arguments went on until Stanley Silver, an "eminence grise" in our community and now of blessed memory, and who did not himself have children, insisted that a synagogue that did not educate its children could not call itself a synagogue. And the board then approved the plan.



Stanley Silver



Rabbi Isaac Jeret

We started with one class of just four 8-9 year olds and another of five 4-5 year olds. Isaac was principal/teacher and we hired another teacher for the younger kids. We were still plagued by financial problems for quite some time, but our membership grew, and with the generous help of the Kaplan family, who helped fund the school building twenty-five years after they had hired a teacher for Eve and Amelia, the synagogue had a place for our children.

Now, when I look around and see how the school has blossomed, how not only have the numbers grown under the visionary leadership of Grace Gurman-Chan, Rabbi Scheinberg, Rachelle Grossman and staff, but our original ideal of a Hebrew school that not only teaches the fundamentals but inspires our children to live reflective, joyful and ethical Jewish lives continues, I feel a great sense of joy and accomplishment. ☆



Susan Schept

WHO TELLS YOUR STORY? By Rabbi Scheinberg (Continued from p. 1)

There is a profound Jewish equivalent to what we might call the 'Hamilton phenomenon,' the way a story is transformed when someone is newly invited into the telling of that story.



Jews love to reinsert ourselves into stories that are thousands of years old. And in so doing, not only is the story transformed, but so are we. The best example is the annual musical theater event called the 'Passover Seder.' We are instructed to tell the story in the first person that, "In every generation, each person should see him or herself as if he/she personally came out of Egypt." To paraphrase the Hamilton tag line: "The Seder is the story of the Jewish people then, told by the Jewish people now."

And thus each year, 21st-century Jews in New Jersey are play-acting about how we labored under Pharaoh, how we escaped into the desert. We eat the foods from long ago, we recline in our chairs, even though we are far more distant from the Israelite slaves than Daveed Diggs is from Thomas Jefferson. We step into their roles, even though we live such different lives than they did, and we have many different ideas and values than they had (including, for example, whether the world was literally created in six days, as well as the roles of women and of gays and lesbians in contemporary Jewish life). In fact, traditional Jewish texts demand that we step into their roles, and speak their words of dialogue - like it or not - because "you have no control who lives, who dies, who tells your story." And we are privileged to tell their story, because it conveys so many of the great truths that are underappreciated in our world today: that each moment is sacred; that each person is created in God's image; that God yearns for all people to be free.

In both Jewish history and general American history, one of the themes of our time is that we are inviting more and more people in to be part of the telling of our important stories. In the United States, people of Anglo-Saxon ancestry have gone from being the near-totality of the American citizenry to being just one slice of a rich and colorful mosaic, as the United States becomes ever more multi-ethnic and will soon become 'majority-minority.' My sense is that most of the Jewish community sees this development very positively, in line with the metaphor of light shining through a stained glass window that is made all the more beautiful by all the contrasts. The Torah points out over and over again that the glorious diversity of humanity is part of God's plan.



Similarly, the American Jewish community has long been overwhelmingly Ashkenazic - and while it still is, there is a growing priority to ensure that the full breadth of the American Jewish community is

invited to share in the telling of the American Jewish story – including Sefardic and Mizrahi Jews, including Jews by choice, and including non-Jews who participate actively in raising Jewish children.

Almost none of us have American ancestry that was here since colonial times or even since the lifetime of Alexander Hamilton. Most of us are descended from people who have been invited more recently to share in the telling of the American story. In our family histories, we know the experience of immigration. For some of us as individuals or as families, we know the experience of being refugees. The Torah readings for Rosh HaShanah have a poignant resonance for many of us in that they revolve around the family of Abraham and Sarah, the first family of the Jewish people, who were migrants. They arrive from present-day Iraq to the land of Canaan, but then are forced to migrate from region to region. They are at the mercies of powerful kings in Egypt and in Gerar. Their nephew gets kidnapped and it's a struggle to get him back. And when Sarah dies Abraham has to pay an exorbitant rate for a burial plot for her because, as he says, '*ger ve-toshav anochi imachem*' - 'I am regarded as a stranger and an alien in your midst.'

To put it mildly, no one invited Abraham to be one of the tellers of the Canaanite story. He is an absolute outsider. And In Abraham's experience we see some echoes of the experience of migrants and refugees today: "65 million people who have fled their homelands due to persecution – harassment, threats, abduction or torture, because of their race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation or political opinion." (HIAS). The Torah repeatedly commands 'You shall not oppress a *ger*' - a stranger, using the very word that Abraham used to describe himself, and in the book of Exodus (23:9), it continues: "For you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt." It is nothing particularly new to blame the complex challenges of a society all on the most convenient scapegoat - the immigrant. No wonder Abraham was harassed wherever he went and regarded as a threat, rather than as a person who was migrating specifically because he was being threatened. Expanding who tells our human story requires giving a voice to those who have been displaced. Inviting others in to join us in telling our story requires trust and courage, and a fine sense of empathy.

For this New Year 5777: ask yourself: who is it who tells your story? ☆



Some Reflections: by Lauren Blumenfeld, USH President

For me the winter is always the time of year that allows me to reboot and review the goals that I set for myself during the High Holidays. Now as President, I am also looking at how the Synagogue has progressed.

To do this we need to look at how we have served our community. I ask myself whether we are providing meaningful experiences for all our constituents. My personal answer is that we are. Hopefully you agree.

For me, this year has been filled with significant life-changing events for which USH was there for me. For my son Eli's bar mitzvah, it was wonderful to see him excel with the support of USH. The bar mitzvah experience at USH allows parents to see their children becoming independent. Eli learned one-to-one with the rabbi about the study of torah, how to address a large audience with the help of Grace Gurman-Chan and how to read Hebrew with the help of his tutor, Rebecca Weitman - just to name just a few. It really does take a village to raise a child.

It is a really special feeling to look out from the bimah and see a composite of your lives together - professional, family, and personal. All the people that support you in your life - the ones you have a beer or coffee with to help figure out your next steps in life or just the ones to have a glass a wine and talk about politics - and this year there has been a lot to talk about!

And sadly, a few weeks later, USH was there again to support my family. It was heartwarming to have Rabbi Scheinberg lead a moving service for my mother-in law and to have Grace led mincha at the shiva. It was an experience that I was not prepared for and it was very comforting to have USH there to help. There were so many fellow members there to support us during this time in our lives. You should see and feel the warmth of the community during shiva.

This community has been with us for my family's journey. I hope USH can be there for you and your family.

As you read this please feel free to send me a note or ask me to coffee or even a glass of wine - to talk about your questions, concerns or ideas how USH can better serve you and your family in the upcoming year.

Lauren Blumenfeld

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS:

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Antonio and Joanna Perrotta
David Swirnoff and Merry Firschein in memory of Sarah Condiotti

General Fund

Jason and Cindy Altberger in memory of Bobbi Blumenfeld; mother of Mike Blumenfeld, and of Barry Buchalter; father of Jennifer Cohen
Bill Funk
Amanda Grant
Jeremy and Eriko Morley
Florence Pape
Sidney and Hannah Pollack in honor of the birth of grandson, Noah Samuel Pollack

Learning Center

Josh Youdovin
Ben and Rebecca Malinsky in memory of Randie Malinsky

Meistrich Cuiture Series

Antonio and Joanna Perrotta

Kaplan Cooperative Preschool

Antonio and Joanna Perrotta

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Kitty Bateman in honor of Sidney and Marilyn Cohen's birthdays
Mike and Lauren Blumenfeld in loving memory of Mike's mother, Roberta Blumenfeld
Ceil Chait in memory of Sara Goldblatt and Gertrude Chait
Jodie Feldman
Todd Hyman in honor of Talia Scheinberg's bat mitzvah
Ricky and Beth Mason in memory of Katherine Abruzese, mother of Beth Shira Pearlman
Antonio and Joanne Perrotta
Gary Spector and Liz Szabla in memory of Liz's mother, Irene Szabla

Yom Kippur Appeal

Sebnem Pura in memory of Sebnem's father, Taner Pura
Dianne Ackerman in honor of Rabbi Scheinberg

CONDOLENCES:

Foux family on the loss of Gregory "Garik" Lyakhovsky.

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Ben and Lisa Zablocki on the birth of their granddaughter, Isadora Jane, and to the parents, Shannon Yarbrough and Abraham Zablocki
Shir Komorovski on her bat mitzvah, and to her mother, Lovy Santos, father, Itay Komorovski and step-father, Michael Santos
KPS teacher, Emily Numa, and her husband, Andrew on the birth of their daughter, Hazel

THANK YOU FOR SPONSORING KIDDUSH:

Dec 3 Lovy and Michael Santos and Itay Komorovski and family in honor of Shir's bat mitzvah
Dec 10 Michael and Jill Katz in memory of Michael's father, Aron Katz
Dec 17 Jim and Alicia Weinstein
Dec 24 Mikhail and Sonia Foux in memory of Mikhail's grandfather, Isaac Foux
Dec 28 Ben and Lisa Zablocki in honor of the birth of their granddaughter, Isadora Jane

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Steven Altman
Sebnem Pura



"RUSS THE BUILDER"

by Jeremy Morley

Russell Kriegel is a builder. He builds at work, he builds within his home, and he builds for and with our synagogue community. When we see him today in the synagogue, he gives every appearance of being a happy and enthusiastic man, a loving husband and a proud and giving father. One would never suspect the trauma that he went through 15 years ago that still haunts him.



Site of the Destroyed Station

At 8:46am on September 11, 2001 he was in a local elevator inside Tower One at the World Trade Center going to his office on the 72nd floor, a little later than his usual arrival time. When American Airlines Flight 11 smashed into the building he was immediately knocked to the floor. He knew he had to leave immediately. He had been through the previous terror attack in 1993. Then, Russell had waited too long to leave after a massive bomb had exploded in the underground garage causing smoke to flood into the stairways of both towers. He had eventually escaped through the terrible smoke but he had suffered severe shock. Now again he faced a similar but far more extreme danger, and now he did not hesitate. He ran for his life down those very same stairs and he was safe, at least physically. But he was traumatized. In the days that followed he was utterly grief-stricken by the shocking, enormous and senseless loss of life, the wanton destruction all around him and the utter madness of it all.

Russell was saved spiritually because he had the support of many people, especially his beloved wife, Marni, but also because he was a builder and he had important work to do. And so he got right back to work, building a family, and a train station, and a community and a life to be very proud of. Marni was newly pregnant with their first child, but Russell wondered, "What kind of a world am I bringing this child into?" and then he got to work to build a better world. He reflects on the support that he received through his Jewish faith and from the USH community. "Having a faith and a community helped me to survive relatively intact," he says, with a ready smile.

Russell is an architect. For his entire career after graduating from Cornell he has worked as an architect for the public good at the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, where he is now Assistant Chief Architect.



The Station Russell Built

After the attacks and subsequent clean-up effort, almost nothing remained of the PATH World Trade Center Terminal, except for part of one concourse and an escalator bank. The Port Authority told Russell, despite his nearly paralyzing grief, to "take the weekend off, but we need you." Russell took charge as the principal architect responsible for designing a temporary terminal, to be built at the same location as the destroyed facility, in order to restore train service to the site as quickly as possible. It was a daunting and unprecedented task, a complex \$320 million project that had to be done at a highly accelerated pace, in the middle of a construction site that had been the world's largest crime scene, in order to relieve the transportation bottlenecks that were depressing the entire region.



Their goal was to restore PATH service within just 18 months after the 9 month clean-up effort by the city. They decided to build a long concourse one level below the street, partially utilizing remaining structure, so as to retain the original location of the station's escalators, and their adjacency to the platforms, which connected the PATH to several subway lines, which allowed the entrance stairs to be oriented perpendicular to Church Street at the eastern edge of the site. The design and the construction strategies were so successful that the station was up and running one month early. Indeed, it was the first public space to open within the site since the restoration of the Church Street sidewalk and viewing wall was built after the terrorist attacks.

Russell has received many awards for his work on the World Trade Center station, as well as on many other projects, including the TWA Flight Center Restoration at JFK Airport, and the design of the Jamaica Station Airtrain Terminal. He likes to say that "architects are the antithesis of terrorists; they destroy, we build."

(Continued on p. 6)

United Jewish Appeal of Hoboken

United Jewish Appeal of Hoboken (UJA), as a part of Jewish Federations of North America, helps to build and strengthen the Jewish community locally, in Israel and in 60 countries worldwide. Our donations to UJA say that we, as a community, will address critical, often life-threatening issues: everything from domestic abuse to public health problems, to hunger and disaster relief, and more.

While Hoboken's Jewish community is thriving, others are struggling. It is those communities that need our help. A gift to UJA allows Jewish people in other communities to begin to experience the growth and joy we have seen in our own. A portion of our gifts remain right here in our community; a portion goes to strengthen Jewish communities around the world.

**Donations can be sent to UJA of Hoboken, c/o Jewish Federation of Northern NJ
50 Eisenhower Drive,
Paramus, NJ 07652**

(Continued from p. 5) **Closer to home**, Russell has been a key builder of our USH community and, together with his family, he is an active and always enthusiastic participant in USH events. He has served as a Board Member for the past 17 years. He is the head of the building committee responsible for maintenance, design and construction issues and was the design chair for the Annex Committee and for the restoration of the Star of Israel building. Russell has also served for more than 25 years as the Campaign Co-chair of the United Jewish Appeal of Hoboken (which explains why he has asked me to include the accompanying solicitation in this article).

Russell is also a long-time member of the USH Choir. He credits his mother, Lillian Kriegel, for his love of singing. She was petite but had a beautiful "booming" soprano voice, and she and her sisters sang, danced and performed funny skits in the Catskills "borscht belt." His grandparents wrote much of the music and the primarily-Yiddish lyrics under the stage name of *The Dobkin Sisters*.



The Dobkin Sisters

And at home Russell's truest loves are his wife and three gorgeous children, Addie, age 14, Nathan who is 12 and Coby who is 9. Russell credits Marni, whom he married in 1990, with opening his mind and heart to the Jewish religion. He had never before been exposed to Jewish religious observance; his parents were culturally Jewish anti-religious atheists and he had attended an Ethical Culture school. But Marni "expressed her Judaism in a very nonjudgmental way. She just showed me the beauty of Judaism and her love of Israel," Russell says, obviously and delightfully enamored by his wife all these years later.



Russ and Children

And so -- hats off to you Russell, such a key and stalwart member of the USH community, and a true builder in so many different ways. ☆

Scholarship Available for Jewish Camp Experience for Children and Teens

An anonymous USH member has generously established the **USH Jewish Camp Experience Scholarship Fund** to encourage synagogue youth to attend Jewish sleepaway camps and other summer experiences (such as USY on Wheels) for the summer 2017 season. All USH children and teens (preferably under the age of 14) who will be returning campers are eligible to apply for this need-based scholarship.

The goal of this program is to enable USH families to send their children to Jewish sleepaway summer programs who otherwise might not be able to afford these summer experiences. In your application, please include a paragraph about your family's financial situation and why you fit into this category. The amount of each scholarship will be based on each family's financial need; no award will be greater than \$1,000. **The deadline for applying for the scholarship is January 31, 2017**; awards will be announced no later than February 20, 2017.

For eligible Jewish summer camps, see the Foundation for Jewish Camp list: <http://www.jewishcamp.org/find-camp-2> The application can be found at: bit.ly/ushcampscholarship If you have any questions about the scholarship, or if your child or your family meets the requirements to apply, please contact Rabbi Scheinberg at 201-659-4000.

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Please contact
Jeremy Morley
with story ideas.
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Sun. Jan 22, 2017 10:30am
Brunch with author Arlene Weintraub

Heal

THE VITAL ROLE OF DOGS IN THE
SEARCH FOR CANCER CURES

Arlene Weintraub

"Engaging and emotional, *Heal* is an important book for scientists, animal lovers, and anyone interested in the vibrant science-humanity interface." —BURNING GLASS, author of *How to Live*, *How to Die*, and *How to Survive*, co-author of *Zoology*



Drawn from extensive research, on-the-ground reporting, and personal experience, this book by a USH member and award-winning science writer explores the fascinating role dogs are playing in the search for cures for cancer. Learn how veterinarians and oncologists are working together to discover new treatments — cutting-edge therapies designed to help both dogs and people suffering from cancer. Weintraub, who lost her sister to gastric cancer, also writes about the emerging science behind the remarkable ability of dogs to sniff out early stage cancer and the efforts underway to translate that talent into diagnostic devices for early detection of the disease.

\$25 per person/\$18 for members

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