In many traditional Jewish homes, it is the custom for parents to give a blessing to their children every Friday night, immediately before the Kiddush. The children approach their parents, their parents put their hands over their children’s heads, and they bestow blessings on their children, using the same words with which Jews have blessed their children for centuries.

For girls, the traditional blessing is: Yesimech Elohim Ke-Sarah, Rivka, Rachel ve-Leah – “May God make you like the four Matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.” If you had to choose just a few women from our tradition as role models for Jewish girls, choosing these four matriarchs is a logical choice.

But for boys, the traditional blessing is a bit more peculiar: Yesimcha Elohim ke-Efrayim ve-chi-Menashe. May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe. Ephraim and Menashe? Now who were they again?

Not exactly household names, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In fact, Ephraim and Menashe are fairly marginal characters in the Torah. They are the two sons of Joseph, who were born in Egypt while Joseph was serving as second-in-command to Pharaoh. In the Torah reading that will be read in our synagogue (and in synagogues around the world) this month, Joseph’s father Jacob is on his deathbed, and he asks to give Ephraim and Menashe a special blessing. He places his hands on their heads, and he says: “By you will the future generations of Israel bless, saying, ‘May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe.’” (Genesis 48:20).
May God grant you the ability to live fully in two cultures at the same time, just as Ephraim and Menashe did.

May God grant you the discernment to identify and embrace the best of American culture and values, while at the same time using your Jewish values to reject those parts of American culture and values which are destructive.
Questions, Questions
by David Swirnoff, President

As you’re reading this, we’re already in 2018, so I’ll extend my hopes that your New Year was happy and healthy and safe. Over the past few months, I’ve written a number of articles talking about the things that you, both as individuals and as members of the Jewish community in Hoboken, can do for USH. So as we enter the new year, I want to focus on what USH can do for YOU, the members of our congregation and our community. The easiest way I can think to do this is to ask you some questions. So, here goes…

• What do you want to get out of your membership at USH that you don’t already?
• When was the last time you went to a program or event, other than Shabbat services? Why did you go to it? Why haven’t you gone to one since?
• What is the single best experience you’ve had at USH?
• Of the 10 people you are happiest to see or speak to on a regular basis, how many of them are because of your connection to USH? Do you value your friendship with them and do you value USH because it has facilitated those friendships?
• If you regularly visit USH, what’s the main reason? Is it for religious services? Or opportunities for education (for you or your children)? Or is it for opportunities for social events?

I’m serious about finding out the answers because it’s the answers to these questions that can help us ensure that you get what you value from your time at USH and KPS and LC. Please think about this and email me at President@hobokensynagogue.org.

Here’s hoping that the new year brings professional and personal success for you, your family and your friends.
Everyone has a story. Some have a few. Harriet Taub has lots! Here are just a few. They all have something in common. They are all about Harriet basically creating “something from nothing,” with passion, commitment, energy and determination.

**Story Number One:**

**A MOVIE FROM NOTHING**

Just out of college, Harriet and a girlfriend went on a cheap trip to the Dominican Republic. How cheap was it? So cheap that upon arrival in Santo Domingo they had nowhere to stay and were sent to the “wrong” side of the island. They found themselves in a remote place in the middle of banana plantations called Sosua. But they made something from nothing. In fact, they bumped into a great Jewish story.

The conference on refugees from Nazism held in Évian, France, in July, 1938 had been a complete failure. The only country that opened its doors to Jewish refugees was the Dominican Republic. Its dictator, Rafael Trujillo, apparently wanting a “whiter” and more economically successful population, invited Jews to move there. He provided land in remote Sosua and more than 1,000 Eastern Europe Jews accepted the invitation. They created a dairy and cheese factory, and founded a synagogue.

Harriet spent much of her vacation time learning about the story of Sosua’s history by speaking to other tourists who were visiting the remote Dominican village. She was captivated by the story and upon returning to the US began to research what these refugees had left behind in Europe, and of their integration into Dominican life. Here was a tale to tell!

And so, with the prize money she had saved from winning *The $25,000 Pyramid*, she returned to the Dominican Republic with her soon-to-be husband Harry Kafka, and they made a documentary film, *Sosúa*, about the community. A reviewer praised the film for its deft portrayal of a community that had achieved so much and yet also highlighted the community’s fragility in the face of change. The film was shown at many film festivals and led to many other interesting and unexpected opportunities for both Harriet and Harry.

**Story Number Two**

**A BUSINESS FROM NOWHERE**

When Harriet became a mom she found it hard to find cool kids’ clothing. There was only pink and blue. Having sewed since childhood (taught by her

Halloween costumes made from reused materials for Harriet’s children, Jacob and Sarah
“The more I read about Ms Taub, the more convinced I became that we got it wrong... Santa Claus is not a fat jolly guy living at the North Pole, Santa ... is actually a tall skinny Jewish woman working out of a warehouse in Long Island City, with hundreds of elves as her industrious volunteers.

Where does one start describing the myriad of reasons Ms Taub is so deserving of this recognition? If you will allow me to borrow an expression that is recited at the reading of the Passover Haggadah which centers on the word ‘Dayeynu’, meaning it would have been enough.

In this case, if Materials for the Arts would have been an organization helping artistic groups by providing them with materials, it would have been meaningful and enough..... The arts make us human. So any organization that helps and promotes the arts... Dayeynu”.

But Materials for the Arts is also a force for good in the world of sustainability and recycling. Diverting thousands of tons from landfills and turning what would have been trash, to art, and therapy, and time well spent... Dayeynu. Mother Earth thanks you, we thank you.

But wait, there is more... Materials for the Arts is a force for arts education in New York City schools, thousands of children every year benefit from a free resource that vastly enriches their education and broadens their horizons. I say free, but we all know nothing in life is truly free, it is given freely, but acquired with great tenacity and perseverance by Ms. Taub and her staff, we should be so grateful. 'Dayeynu'. And Materials for the Arts doesn’t just give the materials away, it provides the needed instruction to teachers to make the act of giving even more meaningful and impactful. Dayeynu.

But of course there is more, recently Materials for the Arts launched a pair of artist in studio residencies, providing professional artists with studio space and materials, that too is enough, but she has leveraged that gift to serve her ‘constituents’ by fostering conversations and exchanges between the artists and those who come to ‘shop’ at her warehouse... ‘Dayeynu’... this coupled with Ms. Taub’s efforts to provide employment and volunteer work opportunities at this warehouse to groups that otherwise would find it very difficult to begin their work life... ‘Dayeynu’ we are grateful for all these good deeds.

Ms. Taub can wring every last drop out of the opportunities her position has provided her with. She will not let materials or opportunities go to waste. She continuously reaches for more ways to fulfill a charter she has drawn and imagined for herself and this organization. We are all very grateful to her and say together: ‘Dayeynu’.”

father Irving), Harriet decided to literally take matters into her own hands and make her own kids’ clothes! Harriet introduced black turtlenecks, animal prints and baggy pants, all made in New Jersey, and sold under Harriet’s label, Bumblewear.

Sharp, fierce and cutting edge, Harriet and Harry’s kids, Sarah and Jacob were redefining hip, and “we added what we would like to wear—natural fibers (no polyester), comfort (elastic waists), and oversized (longer lifespan/ longevity—you roll up the sleeves and the kids grow into it).” The business grew by word of mouth. “On the street, the clothes stopped people in their tracks” and “all the kids in shul were wearing Bumblewear.” Eventually they were in trade shows and in the swanky fashion racks of Fred Segal Baby in Beverly Hills and other fashion destinations.

**Story Number Three**

**ART FROM NOTHING**

Harriet is the Executive Director of Materials for the Arts, a program of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs that creates art from nothing. It’s a reuse center that redirects materials to non-profit arts organizations in New York City. Every year MFTA processes more than a million pounds of materials that otherwise would have been headed for the landfill and redirects them to schools, artists, designers, dancers, actors and musicians. The New York Times described it as "like a Kmart reimagined as Pee-wee’s Big Adventure.”

Harriet co-founded and helms the affiliated nonprofit, Friends of Materials for the Arts, which provides teacher training, arts and environmental education, and arts programming like artist residencies. In an interview with the Huffington Post, she asserted that “without question, the thing I am most proud of and they can put it on my tombstone, is that I helped start the Education Program” at Materials for the Arts.

In recognition of “her unsurpassed commitment and impact in arts and culture, education and environmental sustainability for 19 years,” Harriet won the 2017 Sloan Public Service Award, which is regarded as the “Nobel Peace Prize” of city government.
The Refugee Support Committee:

**Syrian and Eritrean Food at the Hob’art Gallery:** held its fifth dinner on Saturday, December 2nd, at the Hob’art Gallery in Hoboken. The dinner was a rousing success! We were able to enjoy delicious food cooked by Asmeret, a recent refugee from Eritrea who lives in Jersey City, as well as the Syrian Kurdish food cooked by Fadila. The gallery was able to accommodate 27 diners. Guests ate surrounded by the glorious and inspiring art of Ibou Ndoye and Liz Cohen Ndoye, whose show had just been hung in anticipation of their opening night the next weekend. (Many thanks to Liz for letting us use the gallery as a dining room!) Each of the five tables had either a refugee and a translator, or a volunteer from a local organization that supports refugees mixed in with the guests. Lively conversations took place throughout the evening. Our next dinner will be on Saturday, January 20th at the Lighthouse in Jersey City. Stay tuned for more information about that dinner, especially if you couldn’t attend last time. If you are interested in attending and/or hosting a future dinner, contact Ben Zablocki at zablocki@rutgers.edu

**Collaborating with First Friends NJ/NY:** There was a good turnout at the offices of First Friends of NJ/NY in Kearny on Sunday afternoon, December 6. Many volunteers of all ages assembled packets for asylees with donated supplies: lined paper, drawing paper, stationery, greeting and holiday cards, as well as envelopes and stamps so they can keep in touch with family members. Money was collected to purchase phone cards for the detainees. Each folder included a handwritten note of friendship and reassurance to let those refugees still be detained—over 1500 in New Jersey—that they have not been forgotten. There will be another opportunity to volunteer for STAMP OUT DESPAIR in the spring. For further information, visit [firstfriendsnjny.org](http://firstfriendsnjny.org).

**Heads up:** The Committee will hold a similar event at the synagogue this spring. Please look for upcoming further information.

**English Tutoring:** There are 3 ways that volunteers can help:

1. Go to a refugee’s home weekly and work 1-on-1 (or 1-on-2).
2. Drop in flexibly at the Church World Service office in Jersey City for English conversation with refugees.
3. Teach weekly at the Church of the Latter-Day Saints in Jersey City after being trained, or play with the children while their parents are in class.

For further information about contacts and training, please contact Raziel Solow, ESL Coordinator, at razelsolow@gmail.com.

**Donations to the Refugee Support Fund:** Some congregants have asked, “How much should I donate to this fund?” The answer is simple: “Any amount you want.” Every dollar helps us to resettle refugee families and get them acclimated to life in the U.S. Remember your immigrant ancestors!

**If you have only a half hour or less:** Learn More: [Join our Facebook Group](http://facebook.com). On Facebook press the “Shortcuts/Explore” icon. Choose “Groups” & “USH Refugee Support Committee.” Advocate: [Read and share an article with family and friends (in person or on social media)](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/02/18-refugee-chefs-syria-philadelphia) - https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/in-praise-of-refugee-chefs-they-came-from-syria-but-they-represent-an-american-ideal/2017/12/06/6e7c4be-c400-11e7-aae0-cb18a8c29c66_story.html?utm_term=.670c760035a Support: [Donate to the Refugee Support Fund](http://www.hobokensynagogue.org/donate.html) (Scroll down to “Refugee Fund”).
12th Annual Casino Night
& 5th Annual Poker Classic

Join the fun ~ Hold the date!

March 3rd, 2018
Doors open at 7PM ~ Gaming starts at 7:30
at
The Elks Club
1005 Washington St, Hoboken, NJ 07030

Purchase tickets to the event & find all details at HobokenSynagogue.org

Buy tickets by MIDNIGHT Jan. 21st, 2018 & receive $200 in casino chips!

Purchase EarlyBird Tickets After That:
Jan 22nd - Feb. 11th & receive $100 casino chips
Feb. 12th - Feb. 28th & receive $60 casino chips
At the door, get $40 casino chips

50/50 Cash Raffle
Tickets are available today in the USH Office!
PLEASE help us sell tickets before the event!
Last year’s pot of cash was $4500!!!

Pok3r Players:
Seats are limited
Details coming soon
Be ready to grab your seat!

If you are interested in joining our committee, becoming a Casino Night sponsor or making a prize donation, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Please email us ... CasinoNight@hobokensynagogue.org to learn more.
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Come hear author and TV producer Peter Gethers tell how he — a culinary novice — set out to cook the ultimate meal for his elderly mother, a gourmet cook and mentor to famous chefs like Wolfgang Puck. Learn how this labor of love brought him closer to his discerning parent and member of the Ratner family, owners of the famous kosher restaurant.

Sun., Jan. 7, 2018
10:30 AM - 12:30 PM
$18 for members
$25 for nonmembers

SHABBAT WITH JEWISH MUSICIAN JOSH WARSHAWSKY

FRIDAY JAN 5, 7PM
Josh leads musical Shabbat evening service, followed by Shabbat dinner with songs and teachings ($18/$14 for members, $23/$18 for nonmembers, reserve at hobokensynagogue.org)

SATURDAY JAN 6, 10:30AM-12PM
Lunch & Learn: "PrayerSong: Sing Your Strength"

SATURDAY JAN 6, 6PM
Josh’s Learning Center classes

SATURDAY JAN 6, 7PM
Concert featuring Josh and friends: Shvatston

115 Park Avenue, Hoboken, NJ 07030
RSVP: 201-659-4000
office@hobokensynagogue.org
or online at HobokenSynagogue.org