



THE SHOFAR שופר

United Synagogue of Hoboken

NISSAN / IYAR 5778

APRIL 2018

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL 2018

See www.hobokensynagogue.org for full Passover schedule

6 7th day Passover; services 9:30am

7 8th day Passover; services 9:30am including Yizkor memorial prayers; Passover concludes 8:10pm

8 Speaker Brunch: Abigail Pogrebin, My Jewish Year

14 LC Sleepover at Liberty Science Center

15 Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) commemoration, Bnai Jacob, Jersey City

17 Yom HaZikaron (Israel Memorial Day) commemoration

20 Young professionals Shabbat dinner in honor of Israel at 70

21 Parenting with Jewish Values 10:30:am

MAY 2018

1 Planning a Jewish Wedding 7:30pm

2 Panel discussion on the diversity of American Judaism, 7pm

4 Musical Family Shabbat service, 5:30pm

12 Parenting with Jewish Values 10:30:am

19 Learning Center Year-End Celebration

19 Shavuot Eve Torah Study

20 1st day Shavuot

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!

INSIDE: SPECIAL FEATURE



THANK YOU TO THE FABULOUS, DEDICATED AND OH-SO-HARDWORKING CASINO NIGHT COMMITTEE FOR A GREAT CASINO NIGHT



FUN AT THE PURIM SHPIELS



MITZVAH PROJECTS

AT UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF HOBOKEN



by Jeremy Morley

Rabbi Simlai taught: "The Torah begins with acts of kindness and concludes with acts of kindness." Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 14a

"Jewish tradition compels us to protect the poorest, weakest and most vulnerable among us." Rabbi Jill Jacobs

At USH we encourage our upcoming Bar and Bat Mitzvah students to take on a mitzvah project in preparation for becoming B'nai Mitzvah.

Here are some of the very cool projects that our students have worked on:

Elizabeth Lee

"I volunteered for the Special Olympics basketball clinic team. Every Saturday morning in the winter I went to the Wallace gymnasium to help children with special needs on how to play basketball and help teach them skills, for practice sessions that helped prepare them for their games.



Special Olympics

The challenge I faced was making sure the children were involved and learning the skills, so they could participate in the practice and then eventually the basketball games. I overcame the challenge by giving them good

tips and positive reinforcement to help get them to where they needed to be.

From doing my project I learned that when a child is faced with different challenges there is still an opportunity for them to do what others find less challenging. It's very rewarding to see kids take part in something new within our own community, knowing that you've made an impact on their lives and their families.

As a result of my project, I've continued to volunteer with this same program this year, and I plan on doing it for a few more years."



Matthew Neissen

"I worked with Soles4Souls. It donates shoes to impoverished people, both domestically and in over 150 other countries. I set a goal of collecting 100 pairs of shoes, and I hosted collection drives at my school and the synagogue. By the end, with the help of my community, I had collected more than 200 pairs of shoes!

The success of my drive depended upon being able to inform people of my cause. To spread awareness of the campaign, I sent out emails to parents, posted information in both the synagogue and Hoboken Charter School newsletters, and spoke during my school's morning announcements.



Not only did I have fun doing my Bar Mitzvah project, but I also learned about being grateful for what I have. I found out that for many people around the world, shoes are both crucial and rare articles of clothing. After this experience, I am now more capable of taking advantage of the position I am in to try to help disadvantaged people.

I think that my project has further helped me be a more caring person. I put in the effort to get the project started (with help from my parents and Grace), but really, it was our community that made it succeed. After putting in effort and seeing really positive results, I feel more connected to the cause of Soles4Souls and other similar organizations. It impressed me how much people can achieve when they work together and become determined to help.

Working towards your Bar Mitzvah project's goal can be an impactful experience for anyone who decides to have a project. I believe that it is important to have this sort of charitable experience as a young adult - not just in relation to a Bar Mitzvah. Still, my project made me feel more connected to my Bar Mitzvah and provided great memories of age 13."



Ethan Malekar

"For my mitzvah project, I have been supporting and giving clothes, toiletries and food to the homeless shelter every month. The homeless shelter is located at 3rd and Bloomfield Streets.



I have also helped out with this year's mitzvah day by doing chores at the Food Pantry. I enjoyed making the jars that can be made into cookies. It allowed us to show our artistic and cooking skills. I had to find time to prepare and then deliver to the homeless.



Helping at the pantry showed me that Jews as a whole still care about the people who are in an emergency. It does not matter what religion they follow, it matters what they are in. I feel satisfied giving to the homeless. It's an enriching process."

Sam Calmas

"I raised money for brain cancer research as my Mitzvah Project. I managed a very special team with Cycle for Survival—the movement to beat rare cancers. I wanted to do something special to help my aunt and godmother Robin Schickler Carr.



Aunt Robin was being treated for glioblastoma multiforme at Memorial Sloan Kettering and I wanted to raise money to help find better treatments and a cure for all brain cancers. I love the idea that 100% of every dollar goes directly to research within six months of the event, so every gift will have an immediate impact on the lives of rare cancer patients and their families.



Cycle for Survival

seemed like a perfect opportunity to put together a team to have fun and raise money for an honorable cause. Our team name was ROCKIN' ROBIN. I was the Team Captain, Fundraising Leader and On-Site Motivator. I wrote all of the fundraising materials and website content, and I spoke at a Cycle for Survival event at a fitness club in Paramus. You can see my speech at <https://youtu.be/oPyjbYozuEM>. I wasn't old enough to actually ride the bike, so my Mom (Aunt Robin's older sister) Lauren Schickler Calmas, rode the bike in my place.

I learned that even a 13 year old can make a difference! I helped raise over \$31,000 for rare cancer research!"

7th Grade Class 2015-16

The 7th Grade Learning Center class helped to plan and facilitate monthly birthday parties at the Jubilee Center in Hoboken for 6 months for their class mitzvah project. This included planning out games, making and directing arts and crafts projects and having a fun time with the children.



Eli Blumenfeld said, "One challenge that we faced was that some of us already knew some of the kids we celebrated with at the Jubilee Center. Instead of being awkward about it with them and making them feel bad, we went in with compassion and they ended up loving the parties.

We learned how to work with one another to accomplish a common goal. We also learned how to manage

little children running around like squirrels.

The project has had a continuing impact on my thoughts; realizing that not everyone is as fortunate as me and it is crucial that Judaism encourages us to give help to the less fortunate."



Nate Kriegel

"My Bar Mitzvah project was to give money and equipment to Pitch In For Baseball (PIFB), a charity organization that gives funds and baseball equipment to kids, teams, or leagues in need. I set up donation boxes in my school, Hoboken Charter School, and at the synagogue. I also made a website through PIFB for people to donate money.



One challenge I faced while doing my Bar Mitzvah project was that the amount of equipment that was collected after the first two weeks was much less than expected. I was worried we wouldn't have a sufficient amount of equipment by the end of the drive. I overcame this challenge by writing a blurb to be put into the weekly email sent out by my school's vice principal. This meant that the parents of kids that I didn't know could read it and donate equipment.

I learned first of all, about Pitch In For Baseball, what they do, and how to help. I also learned that many kids are not as fortunate as I am to be able to play baseball every season, or at all. Kids not only in the U.S., but in countries across the world, need equipment to enjoy a baseball league of their own. I also learned the feeling of doing something good, something kind for other people, and making a small impact on the world. My small impact could inspire others and ripple into a big impact across the globe. One small impact could turn into a big impact for people everywhere, which is an important life lesson.

This project has definitely changed my thoughts. I now know how just doing little things in the world once in a while can do some big things. I now know that helping out a little bit is great thing, and can go a long way. Now I try to do more little things in my day, help out a little, because I know just how impactful lots of little things can be.

I definitely recommend Bar/Bat Mitzvah projects to coming-of-age Jews. It changes the way you think for the better, and you feel good making an impact on people's lives or the world."



President's Report

David Swirnoff



Most times when I write I'm reminding you about some program or opportunity to get involved in an aspect of communal life here at USH or I'm asking you to think about giving time or money to help support the synagogue, but this month I simply want to offer my wishes that your Passover was pleasant. I hope that if you celebrated the seder you had a wonderful time. If you are the sort of household that gives up chametz for the entire 8 days, I hope that you enjoyed your annual allotment of matzah. This has always been a particularly special holiday to me and I hope that those of you who feel strongly about it were able to embrace it fully with family and friends. Chag sameach.

PASSOVER GENERATION GAP?



You may know that there have been more editions of the Passover Haggadah than almost any other Jewish book besides the Bible. Many Haggadot through the generations have included some great illustrations: pictures of the ten plagues; pictures of the Israelites working as slaves in Egypt; pictures of the final seder song, *Had Gadya*, with its animals attacking each other. But it is especially the pictures of the *arba'ah banim*, Four Sons, or the Four Children, in Haggadot through the ages that are especially revelatory about the circumstances in which these Haggadot were published.

This is the section of the Haggadah where we say that there are four paradigms of children at the seder, who need to have the story of the exodus from Egypt told to them. There is the wise child, the wicked or rebellious child, the simple child, and the child who does not know how to ask.

Very often, the portrayal of these 4 sons in a Haggadah -- and especially the portrayal of the wicked child -- reflects the values of the artist and the community in which it was published. For example, throughout the early modern period in Europe, the wicked son was often depicted as a soldier, because the only Jews who would sign up voluntarily to serve in the armies of Europe, which often played a role in oppressing the Jews, would be Jews who were rebels on the margins of the community.

This illustration comes from one of the earlier Haggadot in the United States. Unlike most illustrations of the four children, this illustration has two parents and these four sons all sitting around the same seder table together. Let's take a look at it and see what we can learn about the Jewish community of that time.

It's not hard to find the father and mother. They appear to be immigrants, from the old country. They are wearing white, festive clothes for the holiday, as is the wise son, who is sitting right next to them. We quickly notice some characteristics that separate the wise son from the other sons. He's the only one wearing a kippah. He's the only one reading the Haggadah. By sitting near his parents and being dressed similarly to them, he appears to be aligned with the parents. He is looking down - not making eye contact with anyone else.

And now look at the wicked son. Not only is he smoking - but he appears to have lit his cigarette from the holiday candles. (Helpful hint: if you're going to a seder this month and you want to make a good impression, this is NOT recommended.) The wicked son is raising his finger to his parents, as if to accuse them, to deride them, per his provocative line in the Haggadah: "What does this service mean to you?!"



"Often, it is the provocative challenges of the 'wicked child' that keep Jewish tradition from growing stale and complacent."

And what about the simple child and the one who doesn't know how to ask? In terms of their clothes, and their coloring, they are aligned with the wicked son. That's who they are looking at. In fact, the wicked son is sitting at the head of the table, tilting his chair backward. He alone at the table is dynamic, in motion, while the father and mother, and the wise son, are passive and looking inward. In short, this is a family wracked by a generation gap.

I wonder what was on the mind of the artist of this famous picture. Perhaps he was trying to convey what would have been a common sentiment among early Jewish immigrants to the United States: that this is not a particularly hospitable environment for Jewish tradition. The artist appears to communicate that it's the wicked and rebellious son who is going to thrive here, and who is going to be more interesting and captivating to the next generation than the outmoded, old-fashioned traditions. The parents and wise son may be *Jews living in America* - but it's the other three sons who are truly *Americans*. It appears that the Jewish element of their ancestry is soon to be peripheral to their identities.

There is no doubt that this is what many immigrant families were like, and it is what many Jewish families may be like today. It is no surprise that Jewish tradition has often been on the defensive vis-a-vis the attractions of general American society. People who don't know much about Jewish tradition sometimes presume that everything about it is old-fashioned and out of step with American culture and progress.

But we see a welcome trend in the Jewish community of today. Traditional

Jews are more likely to be reaching out and making some effort to understand the rebellion of the child who is traditionally regarded as the 'wicked child.' Often, it is the provocative challenges of the "wicked child" that keep Jewish tradition from growing stale and complacent, and they usually reveal that that child is not actually 'wicked,' but rather simply provocative and challenging to authority, which is itself a time-honored Jewish tradition.

On the Shabbat preceding Passover, known as Shabbat Hagadol, we read a Haftarah from the book of Malachi, which concludes with a reference to Elijah the Prophet, who symbolically visits every Passover seder. According to Malachi, one of the roles of Elijah is that he will "turn the hearts of parents to their children and turn the hearts of children to their parents." This is, in fact, what ideally happens at a Passover seder, when different generations get together to share in this most important

Jewish ritual together. May your Passover seder avoid the generation gap, as those who are older and those who are younger, and those who are more traditional and those who are less traditional, make a maximal effort to understand those who are different. ☆

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If you are interested in joining our committee, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Please email us ... CasinoNight@hobokensynagogue.org to learn more.

PIERRE KAHN AND THE JEWS OF ALSACE

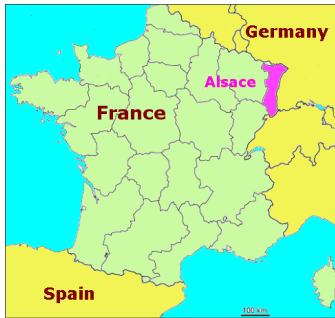
by Jeremy Morley

Genealogy Through the Mappa

Infant boys were wrapped with a long ribbon of cloth to keep them from moving during the *bris*. After the ceremony the child's mother or another woman would take the circumcision cloth, cut it into strips and sew them together into one long piece. She would decorate it with the boy's Hebrew name, the father's name and a prayer that the child be raised in the ways of Torah, marry a Jewish woman and do good deeds; brightly colored images of animals, birds and Zodiac signs were added.

Three years later at the boy's *upsherin* (first haircut), the boy would bring the decorated cloth -- known in Alsace as a *mappa* and in Germany as a *wimpel* (Hebrew for cloth) to the synagogue. At the end of the Torah reading he would wrap his *mappa* around the scroll, as his first religious act in the community, and present it to the synagogue. The *mappa* would often be used again to bind the Torah at the boy's bar mitzvah.

Pierre-Alexandre Kahn hails from Strasbourg, in Alsace, France, the region in which his family has lived for many generations. Pierre opened my eyes to the special history of the Jews in Alsace.



The New York Times describes the area for tourists: "Nestled along France's border with Germany, Strasbourg has been fawned over and fought over for centuries by the two nations, ping-ponging back and forth before returning to France at the end of World War II. The result is a fetching Franco-Teutonic core of cobbled traffic-free lanes, canals, half-timbered houses and spires where you can fill both your belly (with copious rustic Alsatian dishes) and your brain (with impressive art museums)." Jewish life, however, was far more complicated.

His father's family came from Benfeld, a small town just south of Strasbourg. The Jewish presence there dates back to the Roman Empire. During the Middle Ages the community was lively and active.

However, a disaster occurred in 1349 that is still well-remembered to this day. The Black Death pandemic was sweeping across Europe. Rumors spread that the Jews were responsible and that they had contaminated the wells from which their non-Jewish neighbors drew their drinking water. An official meeting in Benfeld decided not to take action against the Jews. But a few days later a dissident mob marched from Benfeld to Strasbourg demanding the expulsion of the Jews. The mayor of Strasbourg tried to protect the Jewish population, but on St. Valentine's Day the mob took over at Strasbourg Cathedral. Some Jews who converted and underwent baptism were saved. Some others escaped. But about 2,000 Jews were barricaded in the Jewish cemetery and burned alive. Following this, the town council passed an ordinance forbidding Jews from entering Strasbourg for 200 years.



The massacre of the Jews of Strasbourg by Eugène Beyer (detail)

The Strasbourg massacre was one of a string of pogroms that took place during this period across Western Europe – 30 alone in Alsace. It was only after the St. Valentine's Day massacre, with the Jews gone, that the plague arrived in Strasbourg, killing an estimated 16,000 residents.

Some surviving Jews lived in small villages throughout Alsace. But only in the mid-19th century were Jews able to settle and build synagogues again in Strasbourg, Benfeld and nearby Erstein, where Pierre's mother's family are from.

Pierre's family history can be traced back to about 1500. This is because of the tradition of the *mappa*, after a boy's circumcision (see sidebar), which provided the child's name and date of birth, and the names of his parents. Pierre's *mappa* was used at his bar mitzvah to bind the Torah scroll. He was raised in Jewish and secular schools in Strasbourg and his bar mitzvah was at the Benfeld synagogue, which was built in 1846.

Pierre's paternal grandfather, Pierre Kahn, was a tanner and then served as an officer in the French Army. He was captured by the Germans and was a prisoner of war in Germany in tolerable conditions. He survived because he spoke both French and German and acted as a liaison between the French POWs and the Germans.

Pierre's paternal grandmother, Marcelle Kahn (Marter), was in or near Strasbourg when the Gestapo arrived. She was forced to watch while every other member of her family who remained in that area was shot and killed. She was then thrown into the street. She never spoke about what happened.

Pierre's maternal grandfather, Mathieu Singer, was a merchant who bought and sold domesticated livestock. This had been the family business for some generations. During the war, he joined the *maquis* (French resistance), moving south through France as the Germans advanced. His group was very active, using guerilla tactics such as destroying train lines with explosives. He got as far south as Pau in the southwest of France near the border with Spain and was hidden there by a Catholic family. Although he used a fake name (Mathieu Signalé) to sound Basque (from Southwestern France), they knew that he was both Jewish and in the resistance.



He survived the war and later he caused Yad Vashem to list his Catholic saviors as righteous gentiles. After the war, he started a real estate business in Erstein and led groups of French farmers to Israel to promote Israel and exchange farming techniques.



Pierre's father, Michael Kahn

Pierre's maternal grandmother, Nicole Singer (Behr), fled with her parents and siblings to Grenoble in southeastern France when the war was declared and as anti-Semitic laws were being passed in France. They were hidden during the war and they survived. She could speak English and as increasing numbers of British soldiers were parachuting into the area as the war progressed, she acted as an information resource for them. After the war, while her brother and some other family members remained in Grenoble, she returned to Erstein.

Pierre's grandparents spoke French, but they also spoke Judeo-Alsatian, which is a peripheral form of Western Yiddish that brings French and German together with Hebrew.

There is a special Jewish culinary tradition in Alsace. Pot-au-feu Jewish style. Shavuot cheese tart. His grandmother taught them how to make her special matzoh balls. His grandfather made Pickelfleisch and took Pierre fishing to catch carp for Carp a la Juive. French cuisine influenced Jewish cooking in Alsace tremendously, but it was a two-way process since Jewish

cooking as well as ingredients imported by Jewish merchants left many influences on traditional Alsatian cooking.

Pierre's parents still live in Strasbourg. His father, Michael Kahn, is a franchise consultant and President of the Federation of European Franchise Networks and Partnerships. His mother, Brigitte Kahn, was President of WIZO in Strasbourg, then Vice-President of WIZO France for many years and then created – and now runs – a superb international foundation, *Regards d'Enfants*, whose purpose is to raise awareness and educate young European citizens of all nationalities, social, cultural and religious backgrounds and beliefs about the values of human rights and mutual respect.

Pierre came to Hoboken in 2003 to attend Stevens for a year – and never left. Perhaps absence really does make the heart grow fonder because his romance with Aurelie, his then girlfriend in Paris, bloomed while they were in different countries and they married in the main Strasbourg synagogue in 2005. They have two adorable children, Elsa and Lauren. Aurelie works at the United Nations, while Pierre works in I.T. for a major French bank. Pierre and Aurelie first lived in Union City but they returned to Hoboken in order to be able to provide their family with the same kind of Jewish experience that they each had growing up in Jewish families in France. They are thrilled with the synagogue and delighted that their children are learning about their Jewish heritage so beautifully at the Learning Center.

What struck me as I chatted with Pierre was how the Jewish life that he and his parents, grandparents and ancestors going back hundreds of years experienced in the Rhine Valley on what is now the Franco-German border – with all of its specific and unique tragedies, joys and traditions – parallels so closely the lives of Ashkenazi Jews throughout Europe. I find it amazing that the Jewish culture and belief system in which he was raised, and the stories and traditions that he heard and learned from his family, are so similar at their essential core to the culture, belief system, stories and traditions in which I was raised in England and in which so many of our members were likewise raised, whether in America or elsewhere. I was also pleased that my interview with Pierre confirmed yet again the theory that being raised as a modern Jew is a great way to create a

mensh. It's certainly true in his case. ☆



Pierre's mother, Brigitte Kahn



Mamy Nicole (Singer, maternal grandmother) teaching Elsa in Strasbourg how to make Matzeknepfles. (Pierre's mother and wife Aurelie are behind)



Pierre with Elsa & Lauren

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KPS parents, Holly Flanders and Aresio Souza on the birth of their son, Hudson and to his brother Parker

CONDOLENCES TO:

Barbara Malach Kalman on the loss of her father, Monte Malach; and to her husband, Jeffrey
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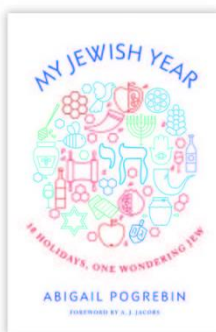


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humorous tale of observance, ritual,
fast, and festival
experienced over
a single year, in
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