



THE SHOFAR
שׁוֹפָר

United Synagogue of Hoboken

SIVAN / TAMMUZ 5778

JUNE 2018

UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE 2018

- 1 Community musical pre-Shabbat celebration with musician Abraham Pengas, Sinatra Park 5:15pm
- 3 Israel Parade After-Party, Hoboken Viaduct, 2pm
- 8 First Friday musical shabbat service at USH, 6pm
and Shabbat in the Park at Maxwell Place Park 6pm
- 12 USH Annual Meeting 7:30pm
- 15 Young professionals shabbat dinner
- 22 Shabbat in the Park Church Sq, Park 6pm
- 24 Refugee Support dinner at The Lighthouse Jersey City 5pm

JULY 2018

- 6 Musical Family Shabbat service, 6pm
- 13 Shabbat in the Park Van Vorst Park, Jersey City 6pm

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!

By Rabbi Robert Scheinberg

What Do You Hear?

Laurel and Yanny on Israel and Gaza

Reprinted from The Times of Israel Blog, 5/23/18

The internet phenomenon of the hour is a mysterious computer voice that some people hear unmistakably saying the word “Laurel,” while other people hear the same voice saying the word(?) “Yanny.” Is the voice actually saying “Yanny” or “Laurel”?

Like so much else in the world, it depends on your prior context and what you are primed to hear — and it also depends on what audio frequencies you are hearing most strongly. Thanks to a quirk of audio processing, the higher frequencies in this audio clip incline a person to hear the voice saying “Yanny,” while the lower frequencies make a person more likely to hear “Laurel.” And a particular person’s balance of low and high frequencies will be determined by various factors, including the audio equipment one is using, the quality of one’s hearing, and one’s psychological expectations. Two people can listen to the exact same voice at the same time and hear that voice saying different words. (There is even a tool that one can use to adjust the frequencies to make it more likely that one will hear one word or the other.)

Throughout this week, my thoughts have been turned to Israel and Gaza. I realize that discussing this conflict in the same breath as an internet meme runs the risk of trivializing this weighty and tragic situation, which is the last thing I would want to do. And yet I see the ambiguous computerized voice as a powerful metaphor for different understandings of the intractable conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, including different understandings of this week’s events.

One of the characteristics of the Yanny/Laurel voice is that people who hear one of the two words are often incredulous that



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similar will, I am sure, prompt outrage. Many supporters of Israel, in Israel or throughout the world, will find it absurd that anyone could possibly and genuinely take the side of the Palestinians in this or any other dispute, when Israel so clearly holds the moral

high ground. And similarly, for many supporters of the Palestinians, the justice of that cause is so abundantly clear that anyone who supports the Israelis in this struggle is obviously operating under political and/or religious delusions.

My own perspective on this conflict does not simply split the difference. I align myself with Israel. While I have my critiques of various Israeli policy decisions, I strongly support the right of Israel to exist and to defend itself. (Ultimately, I hope and pray for a future in which everyone in the region can live in peace and security with their human rights and national rights respected — ideally in a two-state solution, as remote as that dream may seem now.) I spend significant time, in conversations and in writing, defending

Israel's actions -- including Israel's actions at the Gaza border last week. But my goals in writing this column are different. I recognize that those who disagree with me on anything I have said above are not delusional; rather, they are focusing on a different blend of frequencies from the ones I am focused on,

(continued on p. 2)

(continued from p. 1)

whether because they are getting their news from different sources from me, or they are emphasizing different aspects of the situation and de-emphasizing other aspects, or because they (like me) are primed to hear what they expect to hear.

Some would say that in an intractable conflict like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is a sign of weakness and disloyalty to even consider the perspective of the other side. (I am confident that this post will attract angry comments from both left and right, saying exactly this and proving my point.) But I side with those who say that understanding the narratives of the other is a sign of strength, not of weakness. I appreciate what I have learned from some inspiring teachers — including Rabbi Hanan Schlesinger, Antwan Saca and Ali Abu Awwad of Roots/Shorashim/Judur, as well as Yossi Klein Halevi and Imam Abdullah Antepli of the Hartman Institute. All these teachers have taught me that growing towards peace involves a confrontation with the perspectives with which we may feel primed to disagree, and a recognition of the data points that we may feel inclined to dismiss.

Any political conflict can be compared to a scatter plot full of numerous data points, with different sides in the conflict connecting the dots in different ways. In the current conflict, I note the large number of facts that are not in dispute, some of which will be emphasized by one side and some of which will be emphasized by the other side — just as those who hear “Yanny” will be focusing more on the higher frequencies and those who hear “Laurel” will be focusing more on the lower frequencies. Supporters of the Palestinians, for example, will focus on the fact that the recent protests at the Gaza border began as grassroots, non-violent protests, and the overwhelming majority of those who have participated — including some of those who have lost their lives — have not ever engaged in attempted acts of violence against Israel. And supporters of Israel will note that Hamas has encouraged and funded these protests, which have included acts of violence, including armed people trying to cross the border with the express aim, by their own admission, to commit acts of violence and even murder of Israeli civilians.

Supporters of the Palestinians will note the egregious living conditions in Gaza, with the poverty and hopelessness that has inclined so many residents towards suicidal acts. Supporters of Israel will note, however, that this zeal is also fomented by the religious and political ideology of Gaza’s Hamas leaders, who share in the responsibility for the desperation of Gaza’s residents. (This article catalogues 13 “inconvenient truths” about the Israel/Gaza conflict and is sure to include at least one detail to make every person uncomfortable.) Supporters of Palestinians will be inclined to blame the collapse of the peace

process on Israeli settlement building, while supporters of Israel may be inclined to blame this collapse on Palestinian terrorism and lack of Palestinian acceptance of the legitimacy of any Jewish presence in the Middle East.

And so it is with every aspect of this complex and painful conflict: Of the wide array of data points, each side focuses on the data points that best support its own position, and each side seeks to de-emphasize the strongest data points of the other side. This is the strategy that is usually employed by both sides when debating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

But maybe the problem is that “debate” is the frame we often use to discuss these issues. There is another way, which is to embrace dialogue rather than debate. Unlike a debating strategy, where the goal is to emphasize one’s own strongest points and ignore or discredit the strongest points of one’s opponent, the goal in a dialogue is to listen to and understand the other side.

In a dialogue, encountering and listening to the other is not a sign of disloyalty but is a sign of strength. Debaters seek to simplify the situations they discuss, while those who dialogue are comfortable to understand their complexity — and since the situations are truly complex rather than simple, those who engage in dialogue are coming to a fuller and truer understanding. Debating opponents often walk away feeling dismissed and devalued; dialogue partners ideally walk away feeling heard, their humanity affirmed.

I find it so sad when some people refuse to “normalize” their adversaries, refusing to listen to them or dialogue with them. There may be a time to use such an intellectual boycott

tactic, but hopefully only for adversaries of the very most heinous variety. I side with the interfaith activist and writer Eboo Patel: I want to exclude the smallest number of people from my potential circle of dialogue partners.

There remains a role for both debate and dialogue, and dialogue cannot solve all problems. Many people are jaded or stung by unsatisfying dialogue experiences they have had, which sometimes disinclines them from engaging in dialogue again. But those who are hoping that the Israeli/Palestinian conflict will be solved by the complete defeat and capitulation of one of the sides are mistaken. Whatever a better future for the people of the region will be, it will demand a higher level of mutual listening and mutual understanding — by Israelis and Palestinians, and by their advocates around the world. ★



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Yossi Klein Halevi

Author of *Like Dreamers: The Story of the Israeli Paratroopers Who Reunited Jerusalem and Divided a Nation*, and



Imam Abdullah Antepli

Chief Representative of Muslim Affairs at Duke University and Co-Director of the Muslim Leadership



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President's Report

David Swirnoff



A BIG THANK YOU

A complicated organization such as the United Synagogue of Hoboken, with all its many departments, programs, and events, could not exist without the helping hands of our volunteers. There are so many people, throughout the course of the year, who extend their time and skills to help our dedicated paid staff in making our synagogue run smoothly. I want to use my space this month to say Thank You to everyone who helps out.

First of all, a big Thank You goes to everyone, parents and former students, who volunteers at the Kaplan Preschool and the Learning Center -- during the day for classes, during evening events, and during services on Shabbat and the various chagim. Our classes don't take place without lots of help with our students and helping to chaperone at various events.

Second, a big Thank You to everyone who helps out at our many religious and spiritual programs and events. Those who read Torah and Haftarah on Shabbat and chagim, to those who help as Shabbat greeters and ushers during b'nai mitzvahs, and those who hand out and put away the siddurim after services. Thank you to everyone who sponsors a Kiddush and to those who help in the kitchen to prepare and clean up after the meal.

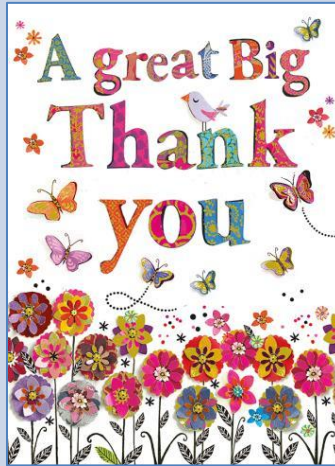
Third, a big Thank You to everyone who helps at our various programming throughout the year: movies and brunch talks and even the annual membership BBQ. Thank you to those who get dirty setting up the Sukkah in the backyard, and then taking it down again. Thank you to those who staff the USH booth at the Hoboken Arts Festival. And thank you to everyone on the fantastic team that produces our Casino Night every year, which brings in

both much-needed funds for the synagogue and local charities, as well as gives us all an opportunity to socialize and have fun.

Fourth, a big Thank You to everyone who spends time on various committees. The Chesed committee brings food and comforts those sitting shiva after a loss in the family. The cemetery committee manages the USH section at Riverside Cemetery. The Mitzvah Day committee organizes our community service day in the autumn which sees more than 100 community members coming together to volunteer at more than a dozen projects. The Refugee Committee organizes events and programs to support our area's newest residents. And to everyone who helps coordinate programming with other Jewish organizations in our area, such as Hudson Jewish, Moishe House, and Young Professionals.

Fifth, a big Thank You to all of the members of the Board of Trustees, all of whom offer guidance and financial oversight as well as manage various functions including membership, education, programming, fundraising and development and ritual.

If we ever tried to add up the number of person-hours that are spent each year to make sure that we're able to gather, learn, and pray, we'd probably all be shocked at the total. It reminds me of the booklet that's distributed during the High Holidays in the mahzorim. The one that talks about what it takes to make the chagim special. "It isn't about prayer. It isn't about fasting... It's about you." Running USH and everything it has to offer takes a lot of effort. It takes you -- each and every one of us here at the synagogue. I hope that you'll consider using your time and skills to volunteer on one of our many committees -- there is something here for you.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS

General Fund

Jason and Cindy Altberger in memory of Sheila Reimer
Alix Biel
Barry and Estelle Glasgow in memory of Bessie Auster
Pam Goldman
Timothy Schiffer

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Cantor Mark Kushner in honor of the Lavie Brit Milah
Robert and Pamela Strell in memory of Ray Kovonuk
Jake and Rachelle Stuver in honor of their daughter, Miriam's baby naming
Judson Weaver and Carol Losos in memory of Hunny Reiken

THANK YOU FOR SPONSORING KIDDUSH:

May 5 Len and Jennifer Cohen in honor of Brendan's bar mitzvah
May 12 David and Rebecca Spivak in honor of Mother's Day
May 19 Learning Center Year End Celebration
May 26 Mark and Sheera Glass in honor of Samantha's graduation

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Brendan Cohen on his bar mitzvah and to his parents Len and Jennifer Cohen
Jason Davidoff on becoming an Eagle Scout
Joanna Weintraub for being named Upper School principal at Hoboken Charter School
All of our graduates

Marilyn Freiser - A Tribute

by Jeremy Morley

Marilyn Freiser was born when the State of Israel was born. To the very day! She's quite sure that it's far more than mere coincidence.

She was born to an Irish Catholic family in Northampton, Massachusetts that traces its paternal roots back to Ireland, and then to England, France and then several generations ago to colonial America in the late 1600s. Indeed, she's a genuine "DAR," a Daughter of the American Revolution. And on her mother's side, her grandfather left Ireland for Canada, found his way to Northampton and built a lumber mill on an island in the "Oxbow" of the Connecticut River.

Marilyn graduated from her home town's highly prestigious Smith College - which, even today, is women-only at the undergrad level - and then took a job in New York, first as an intern, at the fair housing and equal opportunity division of HUD, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and moved to Greenwich Village. At the end of the Sixties! On MacDougal Street no less. Now that was Culture Shock! "It was unbelievably crazy for me," she says. "I just couldn't get enough of it. Everything excited me. I went to The New School. I took art classes. I did ballet. I did everything."

Marilyn spent 42 years at HUD until her recent retirement, firm in the belief that good government can effect positive change. As the Regional Support Manager for HUD's Region 2, encompassing New York State and New Jersey, she basically oversaw the day-to-day operations for the Region's six offices. "I had so many responsibilities, it was perfect for me," she says. "Every day there was an inbox filled with a new set of random problems that needed fixing. I loved it." Many of the systems that she established are still in place today. She figured out how to install a completely new telephone system. If you call the HUD offices in New York even today you can still hear her recorded voice telling you what to do.

And it was at HUD that Marilyn met Joel, in 1970, in his infamous man-cave office. When they married, five years later, there was quite a family drama. "So much tsuris," she tells me. "My parents expected a wedding in the Irish Catholic church in Northampton. We argued. Our ultimate compromise was to have both a priest and a rabbi in the Smith College chapel. And it was perfect. My parents came. And it was magical and beautiful."

Marilyn and Joel had recently moved to Hoboken. By coincidence, they lived around the corner from the synagogue, which was then at 830 Hudson Street. Joel stopped in there to "check it out" and pretty soon he was "drafted" into leading services and taking on other responsibilities. The shul desperately needed youthful energy and assistance. Joel asked Marilyn to help and almost overnight she was swept up in a swirl of activity and volunteering.

"I knew right away that Judaism was for me," she says, "because it's about doing good things for other people. It's about living a fulfilling life with a purpose. It's a joyful religion. And I marveled at the fact that Jews are encouraged to ask questions and are not simply required to quietly accept and obey the established dogma."



Purim 1988



Wedding Day June 21, 1975



Forty Years On

She and Joel immediately took on a leadership role. She tells me, "I had to learn how to organize a model seder, how to hire a caterer. I even had to figure out what Passover was. We were flying by the seat of our pants. I did oneg shabbats every couple of weeks. We did an Israel bonds drive with breakfast. It was a total 'baptism by fire.' People in the shul thought I was Jewish because I was with Joel. No one ever asked. I was even the shul President for a year or two. I think some of them even thought I was the rebitzen!"

At that time the "Star of Israel Building," meaning the synagogue at 115 Park Avenue, was used only for the High Holidays, and the annual preparation for the services was a

huge ordeal. She explains that, "The place was a complete shambles. Absolutely filthy. We went there with mops, buckets and brooms. We cleared away the splinters in the pews and the spider webs. We called a plumber whenever a pipe burst, which happened often, and the Fire Department to help pump water out of the basement."

In 1982, Marilyn and Joel had their first child, Sarah. Towards the end of the pregnancy, an orthodox rabbi in Jersey City asked her if she had ever thought about converting. "I said sure," Marilyn explains. "It was just so natural. I had already done so many things in the synagogue. After a few sessions with the rabbi, he said, 'You're ready' and so just days before Sarah was born I was converted at a shul in Great Neck."

And then there was some more family drama. "When Sarah was born my parents (still in denial) asked when the baby would be baptized. My siblings told them that we were Jewish so there would be no baptism. But my parents wouldn't speak to me and one day I received a registered letter from my father saying that he would never see me again. I had a wound that is still with me." Eventually, about 18 months later, Marilyn, Joel and her family reconciled. Sadly, her father passed away shortly afterwards, and her mother passed away the following year.

Marilyn has never stopped teaching our children, especially after their second child, Laura, was born. She explained to me: "Sue and Ken Schept came to shul with their children. And Harriet Taub and Harry Kafka with their daughter Sarah. And we were there with our kids. And so the sanctuary was noisy. So we started a playgroup in the basement at 830 Hudson. There was no budget, so we brought in chairs and tables. We created a library of books. And it all grew from there. And I've never stopped because I just love it."



Casino night 2016



March 2013

years. She explains that, "I love the choir. I had always been in musical theater, and I love music. Our Friday night services are just filled with music and it takes away the pressures of the week. Usually I go for songs that are upbeat and joyful, like the Josh Warshawsky songs that we've been doing recently, but for Yom HaShoah we performed songs that were mournful, and it was so very moving."

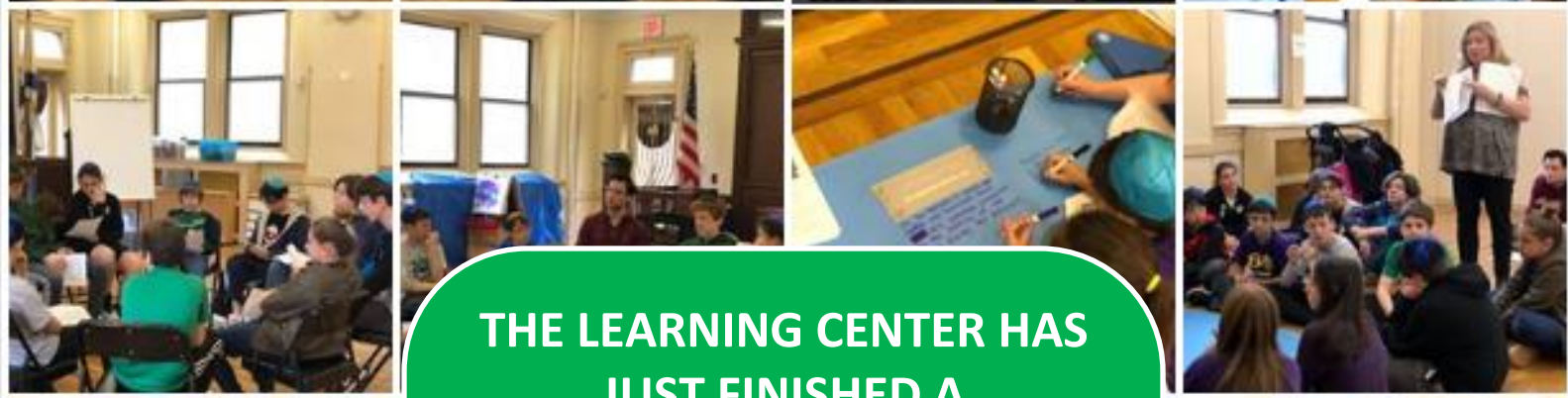
And while Marilyn is unbelievably active in the synagogue she somehow has found time and energy for so much more. I ran out of time in getting to the bottom of everything else but I did find out that she is incredibly active in the Friends of the Hoboken Public Library and has been President at least three times, that she is the Facility Manager of the Hudson School, with which she and Joel have been active since the school was first formed, and that she traveled through the United States as the executive responsible for HUD's disaster assistance programs, to handle the aftermath of tornadoes in Indiana, floods in Missouri, mudslides in Arizona and hurricanes in Puerto Rico. Phew! And we didn't get close to finishing because she had to run to shul for choir practice.

So Marilyn, this is a tribute to you, and an expression of gratitude and love to you, for having contributed so much, for having been such an amazing leader and a true backbone of the synagogue community, and for continuing to enrich our children with your unbounded energy, your deep wisdom and your generous spirit.

You repeatedly insisted that you do not want to toot your own horn. But while you will not do it, it must still be done. Thank You!

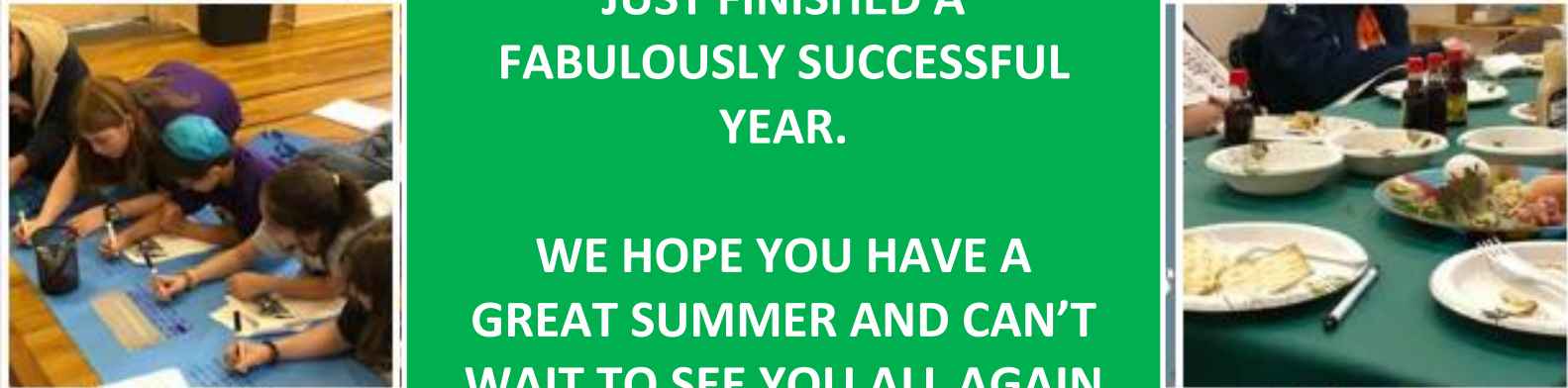


Purim Shpiel 2016



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First Fridays... a new Shabbat evening experience at USH



Welcome Shabbat with
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Scheinberg, Adam
Laden, and other
musicians!

**Fri June 1: special community-wide kabbalat shabbat at Sinatra
Park, 5:30pm (regular 7pm service WILL take place)**

**Fri June 8: "First Fridays" at USH at 6pm
(regular 7pm service will NOT take place)**

Also: meeting at 6pm on Fri July 6

**United Synagogue of Hoboken, 115 Park Avenue
Free; RSVP office@hobokensynagogue.org**



PosterMyWall.com

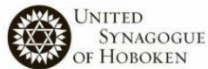


REHEARSING FOR FIRST FRIDAY

**"EVERYONE
HAS A
STORY"**

WHAT'S YOURS?

Please send your articles and
story ideas for the Shofar to
Jeremy:
shofar@hobokensynagogue.org



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**REFER A NEW FRIEND TO
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We'd love your help to spread the word about our dynamic
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If so, please share their information below, and we will follow
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you will receive a \$100 credit towards your child's 2018-2019 tuition.

Please fill in the contact information below and our
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our office via email, mail or drop off. Thank you for the referral!

my name: _____

FRIEND'S NAME

PHONE NUMBER

EMAIL ADDRESS

SHABBAT IN THE PARK

Join us for song, prayer and friends
to welcome Shabbat!

**Bring a Picnic Dinner (Kosher or Vegetarian, Please!)
and We'll Provide the Challah and Grape Juice!**

Free and open to the community, special activities for families with
children 5 and under. RSVP appreciated

FRIDAYS AT 6 PM

•WEATHER PERMITTING•

(Please note: regularly scheduled service takes
place at the synagogue at 7pm as usual.)

2018 Dates & Locations*

- May 18 Church Sq. Park - Ice Cream Party! (5th btw Park & Willow)
- Jun 8 Maxwell Place Park (11th and the river)
- Jun 22 Church Sq. Park
- Jul 13 Van Vorst Park (Montgomery
btw Jersey & Barrow in Jersey City)
- Sept 7 USH - Pizza Party! (115 Park Ave)
(5:30pm start time)

*Starts at 6pm unless otherwise noted



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To RSVP or for more information please
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After Party**

Sunday, June 3

2:00 - 5:00 pm

Hoboken Viaduct

14th Street, Hoboken

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jfnj.org/afterparty



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