

# Chai Mitzvah Cohort 2018-19

Chai Mitzvah was created as a way to engage adults in a Jewish journey throughout their lives. The following participants in our 2<sup>nd</sup> Chai Mitzvah cohort completed five steps to becoming a Chai Mitzvah:

Patricia Litscher

Jean Singer

Sara Wisdom

Mike Wisdom

Roger Wolkoff

**Mazel Tov!**

To cumulate their learning at Temple Beth El, our Chai Mitzvah participants have asked to receive the Priestly Benediction during a Friday night Shabbat Service.

The Priestly Benediction is an ancient benediction that was recited by the priests in the holy temple in Jerusalem. Outside of Israel the Priestly Benediction is typically performed only on major holidays. At Temple Beth El, the Priestly Benediction is offered at life cycle events.

Chai Mitzvah can be considered a life cycle event, one that happens after a Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation. A Chai Mitzvah can signify a commitment to lifelong Jewish learning.

## Study Sessions

Topic 1 (October)  
Rites of Passage

Topic 2 (November)  
Tzedakah/Philanthropy

Topic 3 (December)  
Individual & Community

Topic 4 (January)  
Interpersonal Relationships

Topic 5 (February)  
Mindfulness/Conscious Living

Topic 6 (March)  
Adding New Insights and Meaning to the Passover Seder

Topic 7 (April)  
Israel and the Jewish Spirit

Topic 8 (May)  
Gratitude: Modim Anachnu Lach

Topic 9 (June)  
Judaism and the Environment

*This cohort chose to study with the Business Ethics overlay of the Chai Mitzvah original sources.*

## Independent Study

Patricia Litscher

"I attend Torah Study almost every week. I have done this for about 2-3 years. I have learned what the Torah stated through conservative commentaries. I wanted to learn more of what the Torah says from a woman's perspective. I have begun to read "The Torah: A Woman's Commentary", "The Five Books of Miriam, A Woman's Commentary of the Torah" and "The Women's Torah Commentary, New Insights From Women Rabbis on the 54 Weekly Torah Portions." I am still finding the Torah Portions somewhat difficult and am not always able to share the women's perspective, but it is an exciting new journey to have started."

Jean Singer

"I created personal Havdalah and Shabbat box for my own use."

Sara Wisdom

"I spent time researching the history of Russian Jews which connects me to my ancestors."

Mike Wisdom

"I began working through the Talmud by using study videos available online."

Roger Wolkoff

"I started finding out more about my family history and attended Torah Study."

## Jewish Ritual

### Patricia Litscher

Being a convert with an intensive learning disability, Patricia never learned the Friday night prayers. She has worked on them for 14 years and is now using the recordings that are on the Temple website.

### Jean Singer

Jean knows that the Sh'ma is a central prayer in Judaism and has started reciting it every night at bedtime. This has provided a sense of mindfulness and has rooted her day in Judaism.

### Sara Wisdom

Sara had several mezzuzot around the house for a while. She decided that her ritual practice was to install them on the doorposts throughout her home in proper placement and reciting the prayer of installation. This has given her tangible evidence of having a Jewish home.

### Mike Wisdom

Mike has developed the habit of saying the morning prayers as evidence of living an intentional Jewish life.

### Roger Wolcoff

Roger has attended Friday night services on a regular basis for the last 6 months. He feels a sense of immersion and inclusion in the Temple Beth El community by doing this. He specifically notes how seeking comfort and rest at the end of the work week has created Jewish mindfulness in his professional and personal life.

June 21, 2019

18 Sivan 5779

Temple Beth El  
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Chai Mitzvah Instructor:  
Nicole A. Jahr, RJE  
Director of Lifelong Learning

Next Cohort begins October 2020

## Social Action

The entire cohort chose to do a social action project together. They volunteered at Second Harvest Food Bank. Some volunteers worked with food and others labeled bags. They found the experience meaningful.

In addition to this group effort, other Chai Mitzvah participants (Sara and Mike) worked with Jewish Social Services and helped make spaces ready for refugees starting new lives in Madison.

## A Gift to TBE

This cohort created and will maintain two Travelling Shabbat/Havdalah Boxes. These boxes will be available in the Temple library to check out with the purpose to facilitate Shabbat/Havdalah "on the go". From making the kiddush cups and challah covers by hand to preparing the directions and packaging – all participants donated their time, and hearts to this Chai Mitzvah learning opportunity.