Dear Friends,
The story is told of a man, a merchant, whose happy young son grew into a restless and pensive young man. The young man went through the motions of following in his father’s footsteps in the family business but was not happy. If his father was a merchant, and he was a merchant, would he someday have a son who was a merchant, too? Would the world be changed at all by their presence? Would they be happy? The father worried after his son as he travelled from town to town selling his wares, until one day he heard about a wise man – in fact, the wisest of men – who was rumored to know the true Secret of Happiness. So the merchant sent his son on the long journey to the Wisest Person. The young man travelled, wandering for forty days through the desert, finally to the hills and mountains, up to a beautiful castle on the top of a particular mountain. There the sage lived, the Wisest Person who this young man was seeking.

As it turned out, the Wisest Person did not live in thoughtful solitude as the young man had presumed but instead, when the young man entered the castle he saw bustling activity! There were people coming and going, other people in groups speaking in each corner, a small band playing upbeat tunes, tables of delicious food tended to by jolly looking chefs, and the familiar sight of humble merchants going and coming from the castle.

The young man noticed that the Wisest Person spent a good deal of time talking to each person who came before him, and he had to wait more than two hours before he himself got a turn for an audience with the sage. The sage listened with
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a great deal of patience to the young man’s story and his description of his purpose for the visit – he wanted to know the Secret of Happiness. A bit apologetically, the Wisest Person said, “I am sorry, my son, but I do not have time right now to explain to you the secret of happiness. Why don’t you take a while to stroll around the palace and come back in a few hours. While you do that, I have a favor to ask of you.”

He handed the young man a small spoon, into which he poured two drops of oil. “While you are on your stroll, carry this spoon and please do not let the oil spill.”

The young man thought this favor was a bit curious, but given that the Wisest Person had asked him to do so, he obliged. He walked all over the palace, throughout all of the corridors, up and down the many staircases, his eyes fixed closely on the spoon with every step. A few hours later he returned to the Wisest Person.

“So,” asked the Wisest Person. “Did you see the beauty of our surroundings here? Did you see the beautiful paintings that hang in the dining room? Did you see the gardens and beautiful garden mazes that have taken decades for our gardeners to create and tend? Did you notice the beautiful tomes lining the walls of my library?”

The young man’s cheeks flushed as he admitted that he had not noticed a single thing that the Wisest Person now listed. He had been solely focused on the two drops of oil that he was protecting.

“So now, my next factor for you is to go and see the wonders of my world here in the palace. After all, you can’t trust a person if you don’t know their house,” said the sage with a small smile.

Now a bit more relaxed, the young man again took the spoon and strolled through the palace, making sure to pay attention to the art and the gardens and the food and the books and the upbeat countenance of all of the people. When he returned to the Wisest Person, he recounted all he had seen with great wonder.

“Wonderful!” Said the sage. “And how are the two drops of oil that I entrusted to you?”

Again the young man’s cheeks flushed as he now looked down at the spoon, realizing that in his enthusiasm for taking in the beauty of the palace, he had spilled the oil without even noticing.

“Ah, this is the advice that I have to give to you, the wisdom you came here seeking,” said the Wisest Person. “The Secret of Happiness is to take in the wonders of the world while never forgetting the two drops of oil in the spoon. This is your challenge; this is the challenge that life gives to all of us.”

As winter comes again and we celebrate Chanukah together and enjoy time with dear ones, this is — continued on page 4
It feels like just a few days ago that I was preparing my High Holy Day newsletter article, but alas a few months have passed and we are on the cusp of another winter season in Aspen. While the old adage rings “time flies when you are having fun,” I’d simplify it to “time flies.” While many of us, myself included, found ourselves enjoying the off season elsewhere, for me, in sunny Florida, our dedicated team of clergy, staff and lay leaders continued growing our community.

The Tot Shabbat program I referenced in my last article continued through the fall months and I know directly that our young families greatly enjoyed participating in this program. Our Hebrew School continues to be a well of knowledge for our students and in just a few months we will be leading a trip of High School students to Washington, D.C. to engage in social justice hands on.

As I remarked during our High Holy Day family services, these children are our future and the lessons we pass along to them, will in turn be passed down to generations to come. As we are internally working to plan the future of our congregation, one way to help sustain our work is through our L’dor Vador Circle, our congregational endowment. By planning a legacy gift to the AJC, you are able to ensure our values are imparted in perpetuity to our children, their children and beyond. To learn more about this program, please find additional information included in this newsletter.

Wishing you a wonderful winter season,

Leonard Lansburgh

Rabbi, from page 3 —

our challenge as well. May we care for those we love; may we tend this world we have been given; may we lift up those who are in need and fulfill our responsibility to make this world a better place. And may we also never forget to take in the beauty of this very special valley and this very special congregational community, of which we are each blessed to be a part.

May this Chanukah bring joy and light to you and all those you love,

Rabbi Emily E. Segal

From Our President

May this Chanukah bring joy and light to you and all those you love,
Late in the afternoon, with just a few minutes left in the work day I glanced across my desk and the latest winter Patagonia journal caught my eye. For those that also receive these paper mailings, you’re probably well aware that these “catalogs” are of mixed format. Full page, (non-glossy, because that’s more sustainable) images of distant dreamy landscapes are interspersed with well written articles and stealthily inserted product plugs. With time at the desk quickly diminishing, I flipped open to page one and the first thing I noticed was a tiny description of the image on the page, describing the snowpack as “a luftmensch high.” I nearly laughed out loud. I took note of the photographer’s last name, hmm Heath doesn’t sound Jewish, than glanced to see who authored the piece, Baker. Yeah that could be Jewish.

For those not familiar with the term, luftmensch is of Yiddish providence. Merriam-Webster defines the term as “an impractical contemplative person having no definite business or income.” Wiktionary offers a slightly kinder definition, “one more concerned with airy intellectual pursuits than practical matters like earning an income.” It is the later definition that I would say apply applies to the ski bum persona detailed in the article.

We can all easily agree that a ski bum is probably less concerned about earning an income, but is a ski bum after intellectual pursuits? Could that bottomless last run on a storm day be considered intellectual?

Living in or visiting a ski town can generally be boiled down to the pursuit of sliding on snow. While most of us tend to our daily responsibilities and don’t get 100 plus, bell-to-bell ski days, a good day on the hill can truly reinvigorate the soul. And sometimes a chairlift ride can provide for real time and real talk with loved ones. With that in mind, may our snowpack this winter be a luftmensch high and may you each enjoy at least one day of full on ski bum pursuits.

Wishing you each a great winter,

Jason Schnissel

From Our Executive Director

I was recently chatting with a Bat Mitzvah student about family and Jewish traditions. She giggled and shared that when celebrating Shabbat while her parents are blessing the challah, she and her brother race around the table to get to the “seat of choice.” She then sheepishly looked at me and asked, “Can a silly game like that be a tradition?”

The holiday season offers opportunity for both meaningful and silly traditions. Some traditions have been passed down from previous generations, embedding themselves in the fabric of the holiday. Latkes and sufganiyot (potato pancakes and jelly donuts), playing dreidel, and gift-giving have become hallmarks of the holiday of Hanukkah. Patterning the colorful candles when setting up the menorah is a tradition that my siblings and I started over 30 years ago, and one I continue to uphold now as an adult, even when it does seem silly to open a new box of candles just to retrieve the one color I need to complete my pattern. When they are older, I hope that my now 5-week old twin daughters will enjoy the holiday traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation over many years. I hope that they will enjoy our silly family traditions that began just a few decades ago. And I also hope that, together, we will create new Oster family traditions.

And what is my hope for you? I hope that as you approach this holiday season, you reflect on your own family traditions, both meaningful and silly. I hope that you spend time with friends, family and community upholding these traditions and creating new ones.

Wishing each of you a happy Hanukkah and a happy holiday season.

Warmly,

Sima Oster

From Our Education & Family Engagement Director
Dead Serious
In which we seriously talk about, well, death.

JANUARY 14: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I DIE?
(JUDAISM & THE AFTERLIFE)

JAN 21: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOMEONE I LOVE DIES?
(FUNERAL & MOURNING PRACTICES)

JAN 28: HOW TO CRAFT AN ETHICAL WILL:
LEAVING A LEGACY OF MEANING & VALUES

FEB 4: JEWISH LAW & MODERN END-OF-LIFE ISSUES

All are welcome; join for the entire series or individual sessions.
RSVP requested to Jessica@aspenjewish.org
CARBONDALE SHABBAT

Join Rabbi Segal and your AJC friends for Shabbat in Carbondale!

5:30 Tot Shabbat | 6:00 Services | Potluck

JAN 24 | FEB 28 | APR 17 | JUNE 5

TU BISH'VAT

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9 | 4:00PM | ASPEN CHAPEL

Après SEDER

A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY & SENSORY EXPERIENCE INCLUDING WINE TASTING & FOOD PAIRING

THE ISRAEL TRIP

Led by Rabbis Emily & Scott Segal
March 24 - April 3 2020!
Limited space available.
NEW FOR 2020!

HOLIDAY TOT SERIES

For ages 0-5

4:30 | Activity
5:30 | Dinner

Tu BiSh’vat
February 14

Purim
March 6

Passover
April 3

Yom Ha’atzmaut
May 1

The AJC presents

2020 Purim Shpiel

Friday, March 13

5:30 | Pizza
6:00 | Shpiel

Yom Ha’atzmaut
May 1

service 8:30AM followed by breakfast Aspen Chapel Gallery throughout the winter season
L'dor Vador Circle

L’dor Vador means “from generation to generation.” These are the words we sing as we pass the Torah from grandparents, to parents, to our young people as they become b’nei mitzvah. These words speak to our desire to pass along our values and our sacred tradition to each generation. These are the words we use to honor the treasured members of our community who have shared their intention to leave the Aspen Jewish Congregation a legacy gift.

We invite you to join the Aspen Jewish Congregation’s L’dor Vador Circle as a meaningful way to convey your values to future generations, ensuring that we continue to add link after link to the unbroken chain of our Jewish community, while also protecting your assets. Every legacy gift, regardless of the amount, is greatly valued and will be treated with great care and custody.

4 Simple Ways to Create a Jewish Legacy

1. Make a gift through a bequest in a will, trust or estate plan.
2. Add (or change) a beneficiary designation on an IRA, pension fund, or life insurance policy. Your legacy commitment can be expressed as a specific dollar or percentage amount.
3. Give an outright cash gift to the endowment.
4. Increase your current income while making a gift through a Charitable Gift Annuity or Charitable Remainder Trust.

How do I get started?

First, reflect on and discuss your Jewish passions with your loved ones, and then with your personal financial advisor or attorney. When you are ready, contact Jason Schnissel and sign a Declaration of Intent.
OUR MISSION

We are an open and inclusive community committed to building relationships and enriching lives in Aspen, the Roaring Fork Valley and beyond. We bring Jewish tradition and learning to life in harmony with the natural beauty of our valley.

OUR CORE VALUES

These are the values that inspire us as we pursue our mission.

1. Kesher Kadosh - Sacred Connection
Channeling the “small-town” feel of the valley into our spiritual life. Making participation inviting and accessible to all. Cultivating a sense of belonging, where it’s safe to be ourselves and share our stories.

2. Yir’at Kavod - Reverence
Expanding our capacity for awe and humility. Cherishing our mountain surroundings. Reflecting deeply on God. Enriching life’s passages through Jewish ritual and music.

3. Chochmah - Wisdom
Teaching Judaism for all ages to help guide our lives. Nurturing our children’s Jewish identity and leadership. Engaging with the valley’s wealth of intellectual and cultural offerings.

4. Chesed - Caring
Being present for those who are suffering, ill, or in need. Providing the “family” support that many don’t have nearby.

5. Tzedek u’Mishpat - Righteousness & Justice
Fostering a commitment to the mitzvot of Tzedakah (obligation of giving) and Tikkun Olam (repairing the world). Organizing and volunteering to make change for the good of our communities.

6. K’lal Yisrael - The Whole Jewish People
Connecting to the Jewish people around the world. Building relationships between our valley and Israel.

7. Or La-Goyim - A Light to the Nations
Living our Jewish Values publicly within our communities for the benefit of all. Promoting interfaith understanding and cooperation.

8. Tikvah - Hope
Instilling an ancient faith that our lives matter. Honoring our past by leaving a legacy for future generations in the Roaring Fork Valley and beyond.