

# *The Builders' Bulletin*

Congregation Habonim's Monthly Bulletin—Your Community Guide!



***INSIDE:*** A message from Rabbi Gelber -  
A roundup of last month's events -  
A spotlight on our latest B'nai Mitzvah -  
Upcoming events — and more!

# Upcoming Events in June:

## **Tot Shabbat**

Friday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> at 5:00pm  
At Habonim

## **Book Club**

Wednesday, June 7<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am  
This month's book: *People Love Dead Jews* by Dara Horn

## **Mets vs. Blue Jays with Habonim**

Sunday, June 4<sup>th</sup> at 1:40pm  
At CitiField

## **Sisterhood Shabbat at Redeemer**

Saturday, June 10<sup>th</sup> at 9:30am  
150 W 83<sup>rd</sup> St

## **Junior Congregation at Redeemer**

Shabbat, June 10<sup>th</sup> at 10:45am  
150 W 83<sup>rd</sup> St

## **Torah Tots at Habonim**

Shabbat, June 17<sup>th</sup> at 10:05am

### ***Find Out More***

For up-to-date information  
on all our upcoming events,  
visit [www.habonim.net](http://www.habonim.net)

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Lisa Gelber

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Jessica Futran

### **Cantor Emeritus**

Bruce Halev

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## Plaques

Purchase a memorial plaque in memory of a loved one to be displayed outside the Sanctuary.

## Tree of Life Leaves

Commemorate special occasions or honor someone special with a leaf displayed on our entrance wall!

## Cemetery Plots

Plots are available at Cedar Park Cemetery in Paramus, NJ. Contact the shul for more information.

## Facilities Rental

Host your party or special celebration at Habonim! We also rent our space to weekly or monthly programs when available.

## Kiddush Sponsorships

Sponsor an Oneg Shabbat for any occasion - to honor a loved one's yahrzeit, to celebrate a birthday, or just because!

## Dedicate a Prayer Book

Book plate dedications are perfect for any occasion.

Make your donation or payment online at [www.habonim.net/support.html](http://www.habonim.net/support.html)

or by check, made payable to:

Congregation Habonim  
c/o Kesef Accounting Services  
PO Box 159  
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## *Do You Have Ideas for the Bulletin?*

Please email all articles, photos and suggestions for future bulletin content to [communications@habonim.net](mailto:communications@habonim.net)



# Rabbi Gelber's Monthly Message

Sunday, May 21, 2023/1 Sivan 5783

Dear Friends,

One of the most purposeful experiences of my year has been the group work I've done with our b'nai mitzvah students. Together, we learned and practiced the varied synagogue rituals aligned with the Torah service, bringing fluidity to steps, and meaning well beyond the scope of that portion of our worship experience. We learned how to bless and how to receive blessing, reflected on how to carry the *mitzvot* and responsibilities of an "adult" Jew in community and mined one another's wisdom about the Jewish lens on everyday questions and experiences in life. The most meaningful and moving moment for me emerged as both part of and witness to a moment of deep revelation. We concluded our final session learning the practice of *hagbah/lifting the Torah* scroll high in the air to reveal several columns of script. While I could describe with detail precisely how to lift the Torah, I had never done so before. That evening, as I lifted the Torah into the

air, exposing the columns of sacred text, I felt myself in proximity to my ancestors, receiving lessons for the future.

Overcome with the joy of connecting to such a holy moment, I felt the embodied presence of Torah, rooting me as deeply as the tree of life it represents. One would think nothing could surpass a personal experience of revelation. And then, I offered the students the opportunity to lift the Torah. They all RAN to get tallit so they could lift the Torah individually. What a joy to watch each student take a moment to set themselves before the scroll and lift it into the air. What a thrill to experience the pure joy illuminating the room as they cheered one another on. What a gift to witness the students as they worked together to wrap and dress





the scroll and return it to the ark. They brought themselves, their sense of sacred responsibility, and their connection to our tradition and one another into that sanctuary to attend to the needs of the Torah. In doing so, they invited a moment of divine revelation and true hope for the leadership of our future. A holy, sacred, team of mitzvah makers, these bar and bat mitzvah students were recipients of deep Torah. I pray when they look back on their time at Habonim, they'll remember the thrill of lifting that Torah and feeling it carry them as they worked together in blessed community.

May the days ahead, and the entire month of Sivan, be ones of potential, joy, blessing, revelation, and prayers heard and perhaps even answered.

Hodesh Tov,

Rg



# *Last Month at Habonim, We ...*

## *Went All In at the Casino Night Gala!*



*By Susan I. Grant, President*

The slogan “Habonim Is All In!” is of course a reference to our Casino Night theme. But it’s more than that. It describes the dedication to our synagogue shown by our extraordinary honorees.

Wendy and Alan Halperin, Rachel Lenore, and Jennifer North and Marc Lessner have devoted their heart, energy and time to making Habonim a warm and thriving Jewish home for themselves, their families and our members and guests. We are inspired by and grateful for their leadership and their commitment.

Wendy and Alan Halperin, parents of Noah, Emily, Isaac and Oscar, were deeply involved in the Religious School community for many years.

Wendy, as a then-member of the Board of Trustees and long-time chair of the Religious School/Youth & Family Programming Committee, was a tireless advocate for that cohort. Wendy and Alan graciously opened up their home for delightful yearly RS cocktail parties. Most recently, they established the Erwin Greenwald Fund in memory of Wendy’s father, which is providing our post-B’nai Mitzvahs a way not only to socialize and expand their horizons but also to nurture their connections to Judaism and Habonim.

Rachel Lenore, mother of Jack, a student in our Religious School’s Gimmel class and a Nursery School alumnus, has wholeheartedly involved herself in all aspects of the



Habonim community. Rachel served on the Cantor Search Committee that ultimately recommended our own Jessica Futran. She participated in several Nursery School Parent Panels and in other capacities, sharing her excitement for our Nursery School with prospective and new families. Now she serves on the RS/Y&FP Committee and as a class parent, providing her public relations and social media expertise as well as her hamantaschen baking skills to Habonim.

Jennifer North and Marc Lessner, Nursery School parents of Abby (Red Room) and Rebecca (Early Explorers), and Emily '21, have taken key roles in leading and strengthening the community, with notable enthusiasm and success. Marc's remarkable ability to motivate and connect has

inspired significant support for the Nursery School's annual fundraisers and auctions. Jennifer, a member of the Nursery School Committee, the Finance Committee and the Board, is using her keen organizational skills and focus on understanding and achieving the end goal to help move Habonim effectively into the future.

Many thanks to the Gala Committee – Chair Jocelyn Wilk, and members Renée Edelman, Lindsey Gal, Jean Hellering, Stacey Katzen Nidus and Joseph Teig (and co-chair emerita Mindy Sickle) – for all of your hard work in bringing this year's Gala to glorious life. You have enabled our whole community and its supporters to come together joyfully on behalf of Habonim.





# *Last Month at Habonim, We ...*

## *Took a Tour of the Jewish Museum!*

*By Elisa Milkes*

On Thursday, May 11 members of Habonim participated in an evening tour of The Sassoons, an exhibition that opened this spring at the Jewish Museum. The exhibition covered four generations of the Sassoon family, who traveled from Iraq to India, China, and eventually England.



Hollie Ecker, a professional museum educator and the sibling of Sisterhood board member Deena Ecker, was the facilitator for the evening. Hollie carefully selected distinctive pieces to analyze in detail and deftly elicited comments to generate an engaging and enlightening discussion. Highlights included the Sassoon Haggadah from 1320, and an elaborately decorated Esther scroll that belonged to Reuben Sassoon. After the tour, several attendees went back through the exhibition to take a second look at the remarkable artifacts on display, while others took advantage of the Museum's invitation to attend a lecture in the auditorium that highlighted Jewish comedy.

Sisterhood of Congregation Habonim has been organizing tours of special exhibitions at the Jewish Museum since 2017 to honor the memory and legacy of Linda Goldstein (z"l), a long-time and dedicated volunteer at the Museum. Because of the generosity and commitment of her husband, Neil Goldstein, tickets to the event are always free to Habonim members. We thank Neil for his continued support of this program and look forward to next year's event.



## *Went on a Scavenger Hunt!*

Habonim families had a great time exploring the lower east side together and learning about Jewish heritage last Sunday, May 7th. Highlights included the Eldridge Street Synagogue - which includes a museum! - and a synagogue that became a Buddhist temple.

The children especially loved the donuts we grabbed along the way as we answered 18 questions about our people's history in this area!





# *Celebrating Our B'nai Mitzvah*

## *Sophie Gutman*

Sophie was called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah on May 13th, 2023. She read torah for the first time, recited the haftarah and led the congregation in prayer. She also presented a D'var Torah about the Shmita year, which obligates the people of Israel to let the land fallow from agriculture every seven years, relating the commandment to the need for all of us to take a rest in our own lives to reenergize and recharge.

Sophie is a 7th grader at the Abraham Joshua Heschel School which she attended since kindergarten. In the summer, she attends Camp Kenwood-Evergreen. She is an avid soccer and tennis player, participating in both club and school teams. She is also a black diamond skier. Most of all, she loves spending time with her family and friends.

She has been attending services at Habonim for many years and served this past year as a junior ambassador during the high holidays. To help mark her Bat Mitzvah, she became a volunteer at the Stephen Wise food pantry and also organized a clothes drive for asylum seekers.





## *Ellie Merdinger*

On Sunday May 21, 2023, Ellie Merdinger celebrated her Bat Mitzvah. Ellie joined the Habonim community back in 2012, as a two year old in the Yellow Room of Habonim's Nursery School. Ellie is currently a 7th grader at West End Secondary School (WESS).

Ellie loves being active, energetic and is a New Yorker at heart! She loves spending time with her family and friends. She is an avid soccer player with the Manhattan Soccer Club. She has enjoyed playing violin from a young age. Most notably, Ellie is known for her creativity in the kitchen. She has been influenced and inspired by the many great cooks and bakers in the family, and spends hours testing out new recipes and preparing delicious and beautiful baked goods and treats. For her Bat Mitzvah project, Ellie wants to share her love for baking and will donate her baked goods to an organization called Bake4Sake which supports the homeless community in hopes of giving them some sweetness in life.



Ellie's Bat Mitzvah service was a beautiful celebration of Rosh Chodesh - marking the start of the new month and the new moon. Rosh Chodesh Sivan signifies the day in which the Jewish people arrived and camped before Mount Sinai in preparation to receive the Torah. As part of her service, Ellie chanted the beautiful Hallel Psalms (meaning "praise") with her grandparents and our clergy. In her Dvar Torah, she spoke about the symbolism of the Rosh Chodesh holiday being a Women's holiday - and the meaningful connection as she becomes a Bat Mitzvah and enters adulthood. She also spoke about the importance and meaning of sacrifices in her Torah portion - sharing that we sacrifice in life for a reason, and these sacrifices bring us greater opportunities.

Ellie was very grateful to be surrounded by her family, her camp, school, soccer and Habonim friends, and our Habonim community to celebrate this important milestone in her life. She is looking forward to playing an active role in our Jewish community and hopes you will join her in her future Habonim Baking Zooms!



Photos by Brett Deutsch, [www.deutschphoto.com](http://www.deutschphoto.com)

**June 1**

Mindy Sickle  
Lenore Raphael

**June 4**

Ross Weiner  
Mrs Daniella Kahane

**June 5**

Rory Marks

**June 6**

Dr Josselyn Kravitz

**June 7**

Frances Hamermesh

**June 8**

Wendy Halperin

**June 9**

Michael Malbin  
Susan Willis  
Rachel Lenore  
Mark Dunetz  
Lewis Brown

**June 11**

Edwin Rusgo

**June 12**

Jennifer North

**June 13**

Bob Newman  
Julie Schuster  
Ariela Rosenberg

**June 15**

Matthew Merdinger

**June 16**

Evan Kraut  
Antony Konidaris

**June 18**

Lia Ronnen

**June 19**

Akiko Moss  
Barbara Linton

**June 21**

Charles Salomon  
Robert Schlaff  
Carol Teig

**June 22**

Lisa Goldstein

**June 23**

Michael Dolfman  
David Singer

**June 24**

Gary Sokolow  
Randy Goldstein  
Irene Jacobsohn

**June 26**

Marvin Lowenthal

**June 27**

Ruth Murphy

**June 29**

Susan Malbin

**June 30**

Daniel Klingenstein  
Mrs Jessica Feinstein



# Welcome, Baby!

Mazal Tov to Mollie Fox and Jason Parsont  
on the birth of

**Raphael Spivak Parsont!**



## June 4

Lewis & Candice Brown

## June 9

Mrs Jennifer & Max Esh

## June 13

Jeff & Rachel Levine

## June 14

Michael & Susan Malbin

## June 15

Hubert & Frances Brandt

## June 20

Alan & Alison Rubenfeld  
Michael & Judy Barbarino

## June 24

Zachary & Beth Bornstein  
Brian King and Susan Grant

## June 27

Jamie & Irene Jacobsohn

## June 29

Eileen Murad Frank & David Frank

# ***Thank you for your support!***

*from the Habonim Board of Trustees & Office Staff*

In the following pages, we would like to acknowledge and thank our generous donors from May 1<sup>st</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup>. *Todah rabah*—thank you—for keeping Habonim alive and thriving from generation to generation!

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*In honor of Tina Lobel and Jennifer North*

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*We strive to acknowledge all of our generous donors. If you think there has been an oversight, please contact our office at*

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