

HaKol The Voice of the Pelham Jewish Center

August 2021 Elul/Tishrei 5781/5782

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Dear PJC,

Among the core themes of the Babylonian Talmud -- the crown jewel of ancient rabbinic thought -- is the irreducible importance of shared learning and spiritual exploration. As the *machzor* will remind us in just a few weeks, when it places our manifold confessions in the language of “we” rather than “I,” the Jewish endeavor -- as envisioned by our ancestors -- is one of mutuality, of deeply felt social and familial connections. Countless times the ancient

rabbis enjoin us to engage study partners, create schools for our children, establish soup kitchens for the poor and visit the sick. And countless times -- perhaps above all else -- they encourage us to find friends.

On this subject our tradition tells a great many tales, from the passionate love that David and Jonathan share, to the mutually enlightening debates of Hillel and Shammai, to the deep affection and complicated relationship between two third century sages, Rabbi Yochanan and Resh Lakish. In the midst of one beautiful *sugya* (Talmudic conversation) about the value of fellowship, Rabba bar Chana, an important sage from Babylonia, asks, “Why is it that the *Torah* is likened to fire?” Answering his own question he says, “Just as a flame cannot ignite on only a single piece of wood, so too, words of *Torah* cannot be sustained when we are alone.” Expanding on this teaching, his colleague, Rabbi Hanina, proclaims, “I’ve learned much from my teachers and even more from my friends.”

The rabbis imbued friendship with transformative power, the power to lift us from the depths, to open our eyes and hearts and minds to new ways of seeing and being -- new ways of understanding our tradition and new tunes in the ever-unfinished symphony of revelation. As Raba, another Talmudic rabbi once said in a perfect rhyming couplet, “*o hevruta, o mituta*,” “Give me friendship or give me death.”

After a year of seeing so few of my friends -- and not really making many new ones -- coming to the PJC has been (as my *bubbe* and *zeyde* might have said) a true *mechayyah*, a breath of fresh air, like stepping from a sere desert into cool running waters. Perhaps, for many of you our careful yet determined steps towards reopening have felt similar. Those of us who love the PJC are blessed with a warm and wonderful community, a community of true friendship. While the ties that bind our community have certainly been strained over the past year -- strained by distance and by isolation and by the still-present shadow of a plague -- they have not broken. *And they will not break.* While my own relationship with the PJC is still very young, already I can testify with perfect confidence that the bonds of fellowship in our *shul* run deep and hold firm. May it always be so.

I've been so grateful to meet and learn and laugh with many of you over the summer -- at *shul* on *Shabbat*, at classes and meetings, at your homes and at mine. It has been a privilege and a blessing for me and my family. And as we move towards the Holidays, I am so looking forward to deepening friendships with all of you.

Brachot,

Ben

Education Director's Message



Rabbi Yoḥanan, in Pesachim 113a:13, teaches that G-d proclaims a poor person who returns a lost object to its owners despite his poverty as one of the three kinds of exceptional and noteworthy individuals who bring goodness to the world.

A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of visiting with my family in Brazil. One morning, upon returning from a walk at the beach town of Atlantida, I noticed that I lost my wallet with my US and Brazilian ID's and some small change. I traced back my steps to look for it, to no avail. I was worried that someone

could find my ID and misuse my information.

The following day, upon returning to Porto Alegre, my cousin called me saying someone called her to say there was a Facebook post in a group page from someone at the beach town who had found my ID. Yes, I know, it's quite unbelievable.

I contacted the number listed on the Facebook post, and spoke to the angel that had found my documents: the super of a building along the main street of Atlantida. Neco and I drove the two-hour ride back, and recovered the lost wallet, intact. Moved and touched, I thanked the kind man profusely. In my heart, I am still thanking him as of now. As we learn from the *Gemara*, this is indeed an exceptional and noteworthy individual.

This whole event kept me reflecting about human nature and kindness in our world. A succession of acts of kindness from strangers allowed me to recover something I thought I had lost. All it took was a pure soul, a profound sense of empathy and goodness.

Why does the *Gemara* tell of someone who returns a lost object as an "exceptional" individual? The actions of this kind man helped me recover not only my wallet, but also increased my faith in humankind and in the power of kindness, love and care in this world. I knew that I needed an exceptional stroke of luck to recover my lost wallet. At that moment, I had little faith that this could happen. Actually, my thoughts were focusing on possible evildoers and how to move forward. All it took was one extraordinary act of kindness for me to strengthen my belief in "human-kind" in this world. Which means that this man's kindness went beyond the actual object he returned - it brought forth a vision of "*Olam Haba*" - the world to come; a just world where all people would be kind to each other, care about each other, as in the verse, "*V'ahavta L'reacha kamocho*" - You shall love your neighbor as yourself, the most important rule in the whole Torah. That's how acts of kindness can help make the world a better place - because each act of kindness goes beyond the act itself - into an awareness of what's possible, of how to bring people together and strengthen our hope in becoming better. It's like throwing a rock in a lake and creating waves that go beyond the act itself.

It so happens that in the Jewish calendar, the day when my ID's were returned to me was also the First day of the Jewish month of *ELUL*, the month before *Tishrei*, when *Rosh Hashanah* occurs. *ELUL* is a period of preparation for the High Holy Days. It is traditionally believed that the month of *ELUL* is a time of mercy, forgiveness, and grace.

One *midrash* about the name of the month ELUL looks at it as an acronym. Each Hebrew letter of the word ELUL represents a word from the famous verse: "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine - *Ani Ledodi Vedodi Li.*" (Song of Songs, 6:3): These words have come to represent the relationship between G-d and the people of Israel as well as between each of us.

"*Ani Ledodi Vedodi Li*" was the motivation behind the act of kindness that restored my lost object to me. I am hoping that this motto will also be our motivation to continue to make the Learning Center a vibrant place where meaningful Jewish learning experiences can take place and where our children and their families can learn Judaism by doing. Where we come together as a community to overcome the challenges of present time, modeling acts of kindness for our children and learning from them how to repair the world.

Together with Rabbi Resnick and the Learning Center Committee, we have put in place an engaging program for students from pre-K through High School, full of opportunities to learn and do Jewishly, to show kindness and care for each other.

Our weekday program is combined with an exciting weekend Family Education program that takes place on one Friday, one Saturday and one Sunday per month. We see the weekday Learning Center program and the Family Education program as one integral Jewish Educational Model, which aims to bring family members further on in their individual Jewish Journeys, as well as allow for families to forge new and long lasting friendships.

We are continuing the beautiful work that has been done in our Early Childhood Program by *Morah* Jerusha - *Nitzanim & Gan* (Pre-K & K), *Morah* Elise - *Kitah Alef* (1st Grade) and hired *Morah* Penny for *Kitah Bet* (2nd Grade). Students in *Kitot Gimmel* through *Vav* will start a new Pilot model, called *Lomdim B'Yachad* -- learning together. They will learn in small and multi-age groups, choosing their learning topics from a menu of options. Our goal is to empower students to feel proud of their Jewish heritage and strengthen their kindness and leadership skills, so that each one is a leader in their own unique way. Our *B'nei Mitzvah* students prepare for their personal *B'nei Mitzvah* at various levels, learning Jewish values, and traditions while strengthening the notion of Jewish peoplehood and responsibility. They will have many opportunities to take on leadership roles, and grow to become proud young Jewish adults, who can contribute to the betterment of the world around them.

Our Hebrew High School is a hub for our teens to discuss and debate, as well as to extend the possibilities for *Tikkun Olam*, with our *Gesher* Teen program. Our teens volunteer their time as class counselors, *madrichim*,

engaging with our younger children as Jewish role models and “older” siblings. They bring a priceless contribution to our holistic vision of Jewish education, kindness and community building.

As we did in the past year, we will continue to follow the CDC guidelines in order to provide a safe and healthy environment for students and families to learn, including mask requirements and social distancing, maximizing outdoor spaces for learning, and requiring our educators to be vaccinated.

We are blessed to have the detail-oriented hard work of Julia Coss as our Office Manager, and the professional and tireless support of Adam Bukowski, who has worked incessantly to ensure the LC is a welcoming, kind and safe environment for all to learn and grow.

I am truly excited for this new year at the Learning Center, and honored to work together with the inspiration and guidance of Rabbi Resnick, as well as our Education Committee -- kindly chaired by Michael Teitelbaum -- always seeking the best opportunities to make Jewish learning an unforgettably sweet and meaningful Jewish experience.

L'Shanah Tovah u'metukah -- May this be a happy and sweet New Year with much health, love and kindness, and may we all help each other find what we thought we've lost.

Ana

President's Message

Fellow Congregants,

In spite of the continuing COVID problem, we are moving ahead and looking ahead. The High Holidays this year will be outdoors in a tent with open sides – very much as it was 20 years ago before we renovated and enlarged our sanctuary. But, unlike last year, we expect to have Avinoam Segal and Havi back with us. The service will be streamed for those who cannot attend in person. Avinoam will also be giving us an update of what is happening in Israel.

Those who have not been to *Shabbat* service will be surprised and pleased when they return. Our services' musical level has been raised to the roof. Rabbi Resnick and Jack Klebanow, our new *b'aal tefillah* have created, and are

still creating, a musical spiritual experience. They have managed to do this without losing the participatory character of our *shul*.

Added to this will be the participation of Lori Weber, who is attending the cantorial school of The Academy of Jewish Religion. She will be interning with the PJC under the mentorship of Rabbi Resnick. We can expect her to participate at various times at *Kabbalat Shabbat*, reading *Torah*, chanting *Haftarah* and occasionally speaking from the *bimah*.

So we have much to look forward to in this coming year. Wishing all of you a sweet and full New Year.

David

A Message from the Editor of *Hakol*



Friends,

As I contemplate the start of the new year, 5782, I look forward to new beginnings. Sam and I are moving to New Paltz to be closer to our family and hiking trails. I will remain a member of the PJC, continue as Communications Chair, Librarian, and -- hopefully with the help of an assistant to shelve books -- serve as the PJC Book Group Coordinator. I will be only an hour and a half away, and plan to return for a couple of *Shabbatot* a month. It won't be the same

easy access, but there will still be ample opportunity to be part of our intimate PJC community.

Wishing all of you a peaceful, joyous and healthy new year.

שנה טובה ומתוקה

Barbara

A Message from Avinoam & Havi

Dear Pelham Jewish Center Family,



For 17 years, my family and I have been celebrating the *Yamim Nora'im* (*High Holidays*) with Pelham Jewish Center congregants. Together, we have been on this annual journey with you from *Rosh Hashanah* through *Yom Kippur*. The PJC has become our home away from home.

Sadly, the pandemic kept us from being in your midst last year. We were limited to joining our voices via streaming. Havi and I were with you in spirit – but it was not the same.

This *Rosh Hashanah*, Havi and I are happy to announce that as long as we are all healthy and not in a lockdown, we will again be with you in person on the PJC lawn. While Nadav is remaining in Israel (he graduated from High school and started a gap-year program before starting army service next year), Havi, Amit, Alma, Yali and I are all planning to arrive at the home of Bob and Sandra Goldman on Sunday, September 5th. We are excited to be leading services with Rabbi Resnick on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. And, for those interested in Israel, I will be giving my usual talk on the *State of the State* on Saturday, September 11th.

Seventeen years ago we prayed outside in the tent – it was special and beautiful even when it started to rain. We are very excited that we will create wonderful *ruach* in the tent together once again. Looking forward to creating strong spiritual feelings to carry us into the New Year.

We cannot wait to see all of you! We send you a warm invitation to join us in the tent.

Elad-Avinoam and Havi Segal

Cantorial Internship

We are pleased to announce that the PJC will be hosting a cantorial internship for **Lori Weber**. You may already know Lori as a member of the Learning Center staff, *Kabbalat Shabbat*



service leader and from her rousing rendition of *What a Wonderful World* in English and Hebrew at the last PJC "Got Talent" Gala. Mentored by Rabbi Resnick, she will devote several hours per week between the High Holidays and *Pesach* to enriching the PJC's musical experience and strengthen its clerical presence, in keeping with our vision of "inspiration" to "nurture our religious and spiritual lives and seek to deepen our Jewish journeys."

We are excited that our small *shul* has this rare opportunity to engage a cantorial student in our midst and to take advantage of her contributions in such potential areas as Adult education, Learning Center and Friday night programming, *Torah/Haftarah* reading, *trope* teaching, pulpit duties, *chagim* and life cycle rituals.

As her email address denotes (singwithlori@gmail.com), Lori looks forward to literally singing with you and listening to your ideas on how she can raise the PJC's *ruach* to another level.

Lori is pursuing her cantorial degree from the Academy for Jewish Religion and is being advised by Rabbi Jeffrey Segelman, Director of Field Placements and Rabbi Emeritus at Westchester Jewish Center.

Let's all welcome her in this new and exciting role with a **בְּרָכָה**
יְהִי צִלְחָהּ –*blessing and success.*

Jeremy

Condolences

THE PELHAM JEWISH CENTER LEARNING CENTER
MOURNS THE LOSS OF

LES ROSENBERG (Z"l),

A STRONG BELIEVER IN JEWISH
EDUCATION, PEOPLEHOOD AND CONTINUITY
WE OFFER OUR DEEPEST CONDOLENCES
TO HIS DEAR WIFE, SYBIL ROSENBERG.

MAY YOU NEVER KNOW SORROW AGAIN
AND MAY YOU BE COMFORTED AMONGST THE MOURNERS
OF TZION V'YERUSHALAYIM
MAY HIS MEMORY BE A BLESSING TO ALL THOSE WHOSE
LIVES WERE TOUCHED BY HIS KINDNESS.

יהי זכרו ברוך



Book Notes

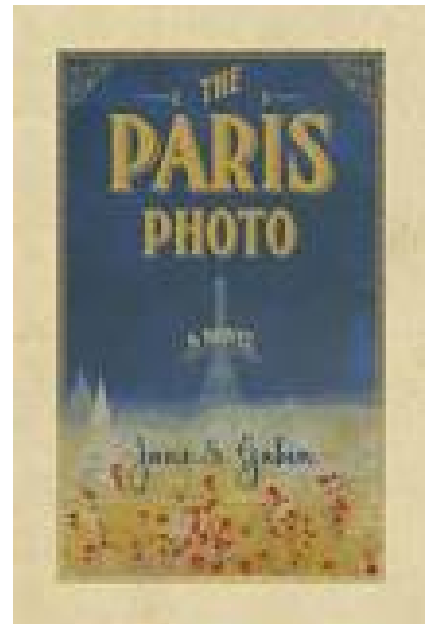
The Paris Photo

Jane S. Gabin

Jane Gabin's novel, *The Paris Photo*, was inspired by a photo she found in her father's papers after he died. The photo showed her Dad in his American army uniform with a family -- three women and a young boy -- she did not recognize. Her curiosity was piqued.

Jane was determined to find the boy in the photo. He was the only person likely to be alive more than sixty years after the photo was taken. Gabin's search took her to the online Paris phone book where she found a number of names that fit the description of the boy, named Guy Daval in the book. Only one caller knew her father's name and rank, Georges, a spry, quick-witted elderly man with a wry smile who both laughed and cried upon hearing that Jane was Sergeant Al's daughter. At the time, Jane knew very little French and Georges didn't speak English. Jane took the Rosetta Stone course in French - a feat for an adult - so she could communicate with Georges.

The book is written from two perspectives. The first half is written from the point of view of her soldier father as she imagines him in 1940's war-torn Paris. The second half is written from the perspective of the daughter as she



navigates Paris with Guy trying to recreate her father's experience in his role as surrogate father and family friend. The adult Georges is reluctant to speak about the past, but the daughter is persistent.

Meticulously researched, *The Paris Photo* captures the feeling of being in Paris under the Vichy occupation and during the period of liberation. The second half gives you a sense of Paris in the present. *The Paris Photo* touches on the trauma of anti-Semitism on past and future generations.

The story is compelling, encouraging you to uncover the relationships among the people in the Paris photo along with the author.

Barbara

Food for Thought

In the Beginning

Fellow humans, to whom a year is a long time,
A century a venerable goal.
Struggling for your bread,
Tired, fretful; tricked, sick lost:
Listen and may it be mockery and consolation.
Twenty billion years before now,
Brilliant, soaring in space and time,
There was a ball of flame, solitary, eternal,
Our common father and our executioner.
It exploded and every change began.
Even now the thin echo of this one reverse catastrophe
Resounds from the farthest reaches.
From that one spasm everything was born:
The same abyss that enfolds and challenges us,
The same time that spawns and defeats us,
Everything that anyone ever thought,
The eyes of every woman we have loved,
Suns by the thousands
And this hand that writes.

-- Primo Levi

23th August 1970

Translated from the Italian

by Ruth Feldman and Brian Swann

What's New Jewishly?

Why Study Torah?

(In the 21st Century)

(As appeared in *My Jewish Learning* July 12, 2021)

By Jewish standards, the question “Why study Torah” is a very new one. For a couple of millennia, studying Torah was just a given for male Jews. Of course you’d learn it — or at least read it in bite-sized chunks every Shabbat in synagogue, in a never-ending cycle where not only was the yearly reading finished and then immediately begun again on the *Simchat Torah* festival, but each week’s chunk was trailed on Shabbat afternoon with a little preview of the following week’s portion.

But this is the 21st century, and just because something has been done for millennia by millions of our forebears isn’t reason enough for us to do it any more. So what might be the reasons now?

We’ll need to do a bit of defining first. After all, there are two key words in this question which are not as obvious as they might look – Torah and study.

The word Torah means a multiplicity of things, which in itself might be a cause to study it at least a bit. After all, even if you choose to reject Torah as an important part of your Jewishness, it makes sense to know what it is you are rejecting, if only in outline.

At its simplest, Torah is the text of the first five books of the (Jewish) Bible. But Torah for Jews always meant something more than that. Together with the plain text comes a wealth of commentary, tradition, extensions and challenges which are known as the Oral Torah and can be found in the great rabbinic texts – the *Talmud*, the *Midrash* and the still unfolding library of commentary and quest from a vast variety of viewpoints.

Now, study. Many sincere Christians who read the Bible regularly simply sit and contemplate the text. Frequently, such Bible study involves clarification and the addition of information from the historical record that outline the

customs of the time or set the narrative in context. In terms of the Jewish Bible, they will pick out those bits that seem most telling for them – a rich story or an important teaching.

But, that's not the Jewish way. Go into any synagogue of any stripe and look at the Bibles that are used to follow the Torah reading during the service. Pretty well invariably, it will have the Hebrew text, translated into the vernacular as literally as possible, accompanied by a whole host of commentary.

Jews do not read the text bald. The act of reading involves the act of study. Every text of Torah is an invitation to wonder and argument. Torah is never simply obvious. The fundamentalist way is, "If that's what it says, then that's what it means." The Jewish approach has always been, "If that's what it says, then what does it mean?" Each reading demands an explanation.

This is what is meant by study. By all means, use your own intellectual resources. After all, the Torah belongs to every Jew. But let us also be honest about our own limitations. Do not think that everything you can think is everything that can be thought. The thoughtful Jew, the humble scholar, can stand on the shoulders of giants and use their thinking too.

So, study in this sense involves exploration, challenge, questioning, entering into a conversation with the voices of the our past and our global present. In the end, that's the how of Torah study. Now to the why.

To be simply utilitarian about it, the mind training involved in teasing out a text, checking the authenticity of our understanding of the translation, and digging as deeply as possible into the implications and consequences of each line has been shown to be of massive intellectual and educational value to students through the ages.

It is not as a result of genetics that Jews have regularly shown themselves to be successful scholars. It's nurture, not nature. The tradition of Torah study has built up a tradition of questioning and clarifying which is simply an incomparably rich skill to cultivate. It won't necessarily get you a job, but it might well get you ahead.

But studying Torah gives much more than that. The first book is a magnificently complex record of (often disastrous) human relations. A close study of Genesis will tell you everything you need to know about family dynamics and how to get them wrong. It stretches and challenges our understanding of human responsibility and the order of the world. It goes over and over how spouses might behave toward each other and how siblings,

parents and children can mess up – and sometimes come right too.

The remaining four books of the Torah are a close study in how to organize a society. It is not for nothing that the founding fathers of America as well as the early British parliamentarians who challenged the concept of the divine right of kings looked to the “Old” Testament, not the “New,” to find guidance for how a society should be organized.

The demand for Jews to care for the stranger – the most repeated injunction in the whole Torah — has not yet been fully grasped in all its implications by us, let alone the rest of humanity. The laws of inheritance, damages, social responsibility, warfare, property, inclusion, environmental care – you name it, it can be found in the Torah and the commentaries that arise therefrom.

After all that, oddly, the text finds time to digress too. The strange fable of the talking donkey comes out of nowhere and yet gives the Jews our eternal identity as the “people which dwells alone.” We see God himself challenged by a bunch of women and realizes that they’re right and he’ll have to rethink things. We find the apparently unnecessary injunction to “choose life” (doesn’t everyone anyway?) until we reflect on the daily news and find it isn’t so at all. The Torah asks us to consider miracles — what they are, if they exist, and how they work. It warns us not to trust miracle-makers, and yet 21st century folk are still easily misled. It describes a world in which virtue is not the sole province of the Jews or even of Jewish leaders. The good are sometimes Jewish and sometimes not. And certainly it offers a world where Jews are often backsliding and of poor quality. Even Moses fails a final test. Yet, despite all of this it continues to play an optimistic and upbeat tune.

This essay can only scratch the surface of what there is in Torah which might compel us to study it. But in the end, it boils down to this: Why would you choose to be an ignorant Jew? Surely you owe yourself – and the friends you can study it with – a better fate than that.

Clive Lawton is the co-founder of Limmud and it’s senior consultant. He works worldwide both within and without the Jewish community on issues of educational and community development, diversity management and organizational growth. He is currently also CEO of the Commonwealth Jewish Council.

Share a *Simcha*

"Share a *Simcha*" allows congregants to share their news with our PJC community. Please submit news about family members -- engagements, births, job updates, kid achievements, community acknowledgements and any other milestones -- to our Communications Director, **Barbara Saunders-Adams**.

- ***B'ruchim HaBa'im* to Rabbi Resnick & Family**

- **Mazel Tov to Jack Klebanow on our *Ba'al Tefillah***
- **Mazel Tov to Lori Weber on her Cantorial Internship**
- ***B'ruchim HaBa'im* to Avinoam, Havi & Family**

Simcha is a regular *HaKol* feature, so keep your news and updates coming!

Tributes & Donations



Did you know you can make tributes and donations online? [Click here to learn more.](#)

Donations to the PJC from...

- Martin & Meryl Druckerman, in memory of Jerry Levy's father, Harold Levy
- Martin & Meryl Druckerman, in memory of Romina Levy's mother, Pauline Bonello
- Adam & Jennifer Gerber, in support of the Rabbi's Farewell Gift
- Arnold & Judith Glick, in memory of Roselle Glick's father, Laurence Weingart
- Robert & Sandra Goldman, in support of our new *Ba'al Tefillah* Program
- Steven & Hildy Martin, in memory of Marcelo Nacht's mother, Beatriz Nacht
- Marc & Elaine Prager, in support of our new *Ba'al Tefillah* Program
- David & Jeanne Radvany, in memory of Marcelo Nacht's mother, Beatriz Nacht
- David & Jeanne Radvany, in support of the Rabbi's Farewell Gift
- Rabbi Alex Salzberg, in honor of Eliana & Marjut Herzog, for their support and care following his hand injury in June
- Rabbi Alex Salzberg, in honor of Dr. Darren Smith, for his medical attention following his hand injury in June
- Mark Singer, in support of our new *Ba'al Tefillah* Program
- Ariel Spira-Cohen & Victor Birutti, in support of the Rabbi's Farewell Gift
- Ana & Neco Turkienicz, in memory of Marcelo Nacht's mother, Beatriz Nacht
- Ana & Neco Turkienicz, in memory of Leslie (Les) Rosenberg
- Ana & Neco Turkienicz, in honor of the birth of Ziva Alma Peck, granddaughter of Joel & Shelli Peck
- Ana & Neco Turkienicz, in honor of the engagements of Andrea Prigot's & Haig Hovaness's sons -- Ben Hovaness to Caitlyn Irwin, and Danny Hovaness to Kriti Adhikari
- Ana & Neco Turkienicz, in honor of the engagement of Jack Klebanow's son -- Jesse -- to Amy Swerling
- Ana & Neco Turkienicz, in honor of the engagement of Ed & Paula Geller's daughter -- Heather -- to Mark DeBernardo
- Neil & Beth Yelsey, in memory of Roselle Glick's father, Laurence Weingart
- Neil & Beth Yelsey, in memory of Marcelo Nacht's mother, Beatriz Nacht

At any time, if you wish to pay by check, please make it payable to "**The Pelham Jewish**

Center" and mail it to our bookkeeping firm at: The Pelham Jewish Center, P.O. Box 418, Montvale, NJ 07645.

All donations to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund, at any time throughout the year, should be made payable to "**The Pelham Jewish Center -- Rabbi's Discretionary Fund**" and mailed directly to Julia Coss at the PJC office. Thank you!

