

HaKol The Voice of the Pelham Jewish Center

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Purim and Pesach exist in fascinating tension with one another. Thematically and theologically they are incredibly different. Purim, generally, falls during the depths of winter; Pesach always comes in the spring. Purim, ever playful, offers us the opportunity to bend the law; Pesach, meanwhile, is by far the most halakhically exacting holiday we have.

In the Purim story God is absent. Or maybe God is roasted. As careful readers have noticed throughout the generations, the palace in Shushan, with its blue wool and fine linen and golden chalices, sounds suspiciously like the Tabernacle. But seated on the divine throne is King Achashverosh, a ruler who is not wicked so much as incompetent, who does not forbid drinking at his Tabernacle (as God does in the Torah) but instead moves through life in a drunken stupor. He is uncaring about the fate of Jews, unaware that he is married to one, and willing to leave their fate entirely to chance, to a toss of Haman's *pur*. Even God is not exempt from the Purim treatment. Even God, in the *Megillah*, is the subject of parody.

Pesach, on the other hand, invites us into an extraordinarily different theological reality. In the Pesach story God does indeed notice the suffering of the people. God does indeed reach out with a strong hand and outstretched arm. The *Haggadah*, unlike the *Megillah*, imagines that God loves us passionately and is actively involved in our lives. God sends signs and wonders, portents and plagues.

The contrast is striking. And it is, I believe, no coincidence that we experience them in succession—a mark of the great, enduring wisdom of the ancient rabbis that in developing the holiday calendar they ensured that the strange, delirious revelry of Purim would precede the warm, demanding embrace of Pesach. One is the wound and the other is the salve. One is the moment of radical doubt and the other is the moment of child-like faith.

One is animated by the bracing, blessed figure of the jester, the *badchan*, the stand-up comic. She excepts Aristotle's ancient idea that the soul enters the body the first time a child laughs, that the act of laughing is the true genesis of our humanity. Yet she is a creature born of the Jewish imagination and possessed of an indelibly Jewish soul and her job on Purim is to step in front of a crowd, deep in the heart of winter—a crowd that is storm-tossed and fretful and damaged and half-frozen—and then, like a merry existentialist, conjure from the darkness the miraculous and healing balm of laughter. It is a task every bit as fearsome and as awe-inspiring as Moses stepping in front of Pharaoh and saying, "Let my people go." It is without question a kind of sacred magic.

The other is animated by the saving presence of the divine hand, a hand which we can only embrace after we have passed laughing through the dark, frozen night of the soul. Only having been thawed by laughter can we enter into another, equally enthralling reality—the reality of Pesach in which we are safe and loved and warm and released from bondage.

As all great comics know—as our ancestors knew when they dreamed up the peculiar holiday of Purim—making people laugh is serious, demanding and vitally important work. This year let's all give it our best shot.

Happy Purim!
Rabbi Benjamin Resnick

Ben

Education Director's Message



In the wake of the recent attack on the Colleyville synagogue in Texas, anti-Semitism has again become a familiar word in the news. Many among us struggle to understand how this can remain a reality in the world, after all that history has taught us.

Personally, I too, struggle to understand where this sentiment comes from. As the granddaughter of two sets of grandparents who fled Eastern Europe in the beginning of the 20th century following pogroms and discrimination, I find myself grappling with why anti-

Semitism has arisen again, and how to respond.

Luckily, here at the PJC, we have a secret sauce to offer our community; the same one that has allowed the Jewish people to survive in every generation: Learning, Knowledge and Wisdom. A people who knows its past, lives inspired by it in the present and will know how to build a better future.

Learning is what we do at the Learning Center. That's why we don't call it Hebrew School. It's an active place where good, engaging, experiential, joyful and meaningful Jewish learning takes place. What's so different about the Learning Center? Why is it not like your traditional Hebrew school?

A few days ago, one of our teachers -- Emily Herzfeld -- told me, “*Ana, I have worked in several Hebrew schools around us. I never saw such joy of learning and engagement as I see here at the PJC. The kids really enjoy coming here, and so do the teachers and madrichim (teacher's aides), as well.*”

So, I invite you to "taste" the Learning Center -- come with me as a fly-on-the-wall for one afternoon. Please follow me as we quickly fly around the PJC/LC and discover what is taking place on a typical afternoon.

Let's first fly into the PJC Library, where *Morah* Lori Weber is teaching *Shirah Chadashah*, "a new song". The students are sitting around the library table, surrounded by our rich collection of Jewish literature, and are learning a song in Hebrew and English, called *Sanctuary*, based on a verse of this week's *Torah* portion. The song goes like this:

Hebrew:

Ve'asu li mikdash veshachanti betocham. וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם.

Va'anachnu nevarech yah me'atah ve'ad olam, וְאֲנַחְנוּ נְבָרְךָ יְיָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם,

English:

Oh Lord prepare me, to be your Sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true
And in thanksgiving, I'll be a living Sanctuary for you.

The kids discuss what it means to be a "Living Sanctuary", and then sing the song with *Morah* Lori, accompanied by her guitar. We can stay a little bit, close our eyes and enjoy the sound of their voices, albeit behind masks, as they join together in song.

Nearby, in the kitchen, *Morah* Linda Rosenblatt -- together with *Madrich* Justin Cohen -- is teaching the students about the history of the Jewish Community in India. This is *Bubby's Klitchen*, where students learn the history and traditions of different Jewish communities around the world through their cuisine. The kids will later peel, cut, chop and mix vegetables to make "split-pea soup", a traditional recipe from the Jews of Cochin, India. We spot Ethan Teitelbaum as he pulls apart the garlic cloves, and Liam Cepler and Zachary Glick learning to chop an onion. For centuries, Jews adapted their traditions to their new geographical locations, always creating new ways to incorporate the old with the new, to create healthy, joyful and meaningful Jewish lives across the world and across time. Food was meant not only to feed their bodies, but also their souls, allowing for our traditions to flow through all five senses and creating vibrant community life. We would love to stay here, but it's time for us to fly to our next stop.

We arrive at our next station -- *Morah* Elise Goldenberg's *Kitah Alef* class, which meets in the back of our Sanctuary. We find these young students busy working as they write down the words *Al Netilat Yadayim*, the blessing for washing hands, on a towel. *Kitah Alef* students have recently studied a unit about *Shabbat*. They created and decorated all the different components for *Shabbat*. *Morah* Elise asks them, "What have we created so far for our *Shabbat* set?", and the kids respond, "We created candlesticks, we painted a *Kiddush* Cup...". And now, *Morah* Elise introduces the towel for *Netilat Yadayim*. She writes the words in large print on the board. We are mesmerized by the precision with which each of these 1st grade students writes the Hebrew letters on the towel, how engaged they are in their activity. Their *madrich* (teacher aide), Aiden Sinha, is helping the students follow the model on the board and write on their towels. We can pause a little bit just to reflect on the impact that our young *madrich*, a teenager, has on the students of the class. Judaism is about the gentle and loving transmission from generation to generation.

We fly upstairs, where we find *Morah* Sonia Levin and *madrichah* Eliana Herzog with a group of children learning to read and write in Hebrew using an iPad app, *Eyal*. We see students who have just joined us a few weeks ago and are already able to read quite a lot of words. Each student in this group comes from a different family background. They are of different ages, hopes and dreams. Nevertheless, they are all reading in Hebrew. They are engaged in a quest to acquire one more letter, one more sound. This ancient language is slowly making its way into their hearts, becoming a reality, connecting with a tradition that expands across centuries of Hebrew language reading, writing, praying, singing and thinking.

We move quickly to the next room. The door is closed. We open it quietly, trying to disguise ourselves as a fly-on-the-wall. This is the *Nitzanim-Gan* class, our pre-K group. *Morah* Jerusha and *madrichah* Becca Ploski are teaching the students about *Havdalah*. The room is dark. *Morah* Jerusha lights the *Havdalah* candle. The atmosphere is magical, mysterious and soothing. The children are sitting on the floor, around the *Havdalah* candle. They seem transfixed, looking at the flame, while *Morah* Jerusha tells them about the meaning of *Havdalah*, the end of *Shabbat*. We leave quickly, not to disrupt too much of the magical ambience.

Next door, we find *Kitah Bet* -- our second graders. *Morah* Madison Cohen, together with *madrich* Ben Sasson, help the students enact a play about receiving the Ten Commandments. One of the students, Rena Ilkowitz, is standing on a chair -- she is G-d, on the mountain! Rena recites the 10 Commandments from a worksheet she has in her binder, full of beautiful illustrations she's made beforehand. The other kids surround her, role playing the actions of the Israelites as they receive the Ten Commandments. The students are fully engaged in another magical moment of experiential learning. We fly to the room next door, where *Morah* Amy Kessler is teaching Israel with the *Israel Link* program. The students are "meeting" online other kids from Israel and learning about their lives.

We fly back to the library, where we meet Rabbi Resnick teaching the *B'not Mitzvah* girls about the weekly *Torah* portion. They are all sitting around the library table, and since these are easily embarrassed teenagers, we decide to leave quickly so as not to interrupt their conversation.

It's the end of the afternoon. *Kabbalat Shabbat* is about to start. All students start entering the Sanctuary, from the littlest *Nitzanim* kids (4 years old) up to our *B'not Mitzvah* (age12). We can smell of the Indian split-pea soup coming out from the kitchen. *Morah* Lori sings *Shalom Aleichem*, inviting the *Shabbat* angels to join in and stay with us. The children sit in a circle on the floor of the Sanctuary. It feels like a big, warm and close family. We can see how the students come in, look for their siblings already sitting, and join them -- with a hug or a caring touch. In the center, a table with candles, cups with grape juice, challah rolls and a bowl for hand washing. The students now are all singing *Shalom Aleichem* with *Morah* Lori. We are all together here, to welcome *Shabbat* on a Thursday evening -- but for the sake of Jewish education, that feels very special. Rabbi Ben invites Sofi Schneider, who recently had her 11th birthday, to light the *Shabbat* candles. The kids all join Sofi, as she covers her eyes and chants the blessing. Then, they sing *Happy Birthday* in English and in Hebrew. Now it's the turn of our *Kitah Alef* students, who have just learned a whole unit about *Shabbat*, to come and chant *Kiddush* for *Shabbat*. *Kitah Bet* follows, with

Netilat Yadayim (hand washing) and *Hamotzi*, the blessing over the challah. *Morah* Lori sings the children's blessing, and all the teachers spread their hands over the children, blessing them with G-d's love, safety and protection.

Rabbi Resnick writes on the board the Hebrew words: "וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ", the same text that the kids learned earlier with *Morah* Lori, and asks the students, "What does it mean to be a "Living Sanctuary"? Many students raise their hands. The younger ones suggest that we should build a Sanctuary with "concrete" materials, like bricks and wood, with a strong roof, etc. The older ones, such as Caleb Owen-Michaane, suggest: "It means that wherever we are, we are bringing G-d with us." Scarlett Cepler says, "A living Sanctuary means it's a place of hope." Then, when it's about five minutes to 6:00 p.m., just about dismissal time, Gary Schwartz, a 6 year old, raises his hand to ask, "What is G-d?"

Rabbi Resnick is thrilled. But someone reminds him, by pointing to the clock, we will have to table the discussion for another time! We need to get these kids back to their families. It's dark, cold and rainy outside... but inside our living Sanctuary, there's so much light, love, wisdom and enthusiasm. Finally, now comes the cherry on top -- the children sanitize their hands and receive the grape juice and the challah, which they will enjoy on their way home. Let us not forget, we are still in COVID mode. There is no eating indoors. But, that doesn't affect the enthusiasm and the joy of knowing -- *Shabbat* is here, it's special and we will be bringing that special feeling into our families.

The little fly, who has just completed a full afternoon flying from room to room --listening to the songs, looking at the sights, smelling the smells of Bubby's kitchen -- is now overflowing with awe and pride. We feel hopeful. We will persist and endure, doing what we have always done, for generations and centuries. We will pass on our traditions, our love for Judaism and our joy of learning. We will celebrate inquiry, wisdom and questioning. We will be inclusive, open and continue building relationships, friendships, to keep our communities alive.

Like the cold, dark and rainy evening outside, anti-Jewish sentiment will always be here. And, we will continue to be here, building a living Sanctuary for you. We will respond with the sacred tools and tunes that were passed onto us by our ancestors, and the love of learning. We will persist, honoring our past, engaging with our present and building a better future.

Wishing each and everyone much health and love,

Ana



President's Message

Fellow Congregants,

Spring is coming and the signs are good that it will be a period of exceptional new growth. It is clear to me that the Omicron variant is now a spent force, and most Americans are vaccinated and/or have natural immunity. The masking mandate has now been allowed to lapse as of 2/10 and we are planning to alter our mask rules shortly. This will give us the opportunity to come together and celebrate Purim with joy and exuberance. It will also be a time to return to in-person services and experience the beautiful musical contribution that Jack Klebanow and Lori Weber make to our service.

Currently, we are working to make the *shleach zimrot* (song leader) into a permanent part of our synagogue program (That means making it part of our annual budget). If you have not attended an in-person service, I urge you to come and experience how beautiful it can be.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge the loss of one of our dear congregant's, Marty Druckerman. He and Meryl have been a fixture at our Shabbat *Shokkarit* service and his absence will be quite painful.

In the upcoming month we will have a speaker from the Afghani refugee community, Purim, an "Almost First Friday" Shabbat dinner and exploration of interest in an Israel trip for the summer of 2023.

There is much to look forward to!

David

A Message from the Editor of *HaKol*



Friends,

The streets of New Paltz are covered with ice. I rely on Zoom to keep us connected. I eagerly await joining the *chevruta* discussion on *Shir HaShirim* on Tuesday afternoons and *Chug Nechama* on Wednesdays. I also look forward to our monthly Women's Group and Book Group discussions. And, I'm a regular at Saturday morning Zoom *Shabbat* services -- enjoying seeing your faces and hearing your voices. My connection to the PJC helps sustain me. It's an important part of who I am. It keeps me grounded.

This winter, 5782, we are blessed with two months of the joyous season of *Adar* -- *Adar* I in February and *Adar* II in March. But, how do we understand our two months of *Adar* this year? Is it simply a clever correction in our calendar, ensuring that our holidays fall in their proper seasons? Perhaps. I would suggest, however, that we have never needed two months of *Adar* as much as we do right now.

Our lives have been upended for two years as we have managed living in a global pandemic. Plans were made and canceled; things opened and then closed; hope arose and then dashed. The muscle of our optimism has been tested and we need some training to bring it back. Together, we can push forward.

Have a joyous Purim!

Barbara

Meet The Temes Family

Meet the Temes family - Laura, Sam and their five-year-old twins, Hannah & Max. The family moved to Pelham in 2019 and began looking for a synagogue nearby. Their neighbors, Alec Cecil and Diane Zultowsky, spoke highly



of the Pelham Jewish Center.

The Temes' were searching for a religious school for their twins and a warm Jewish community for themselves. They visited the PJC and talked with Ana. Ana spoke of the amazing things happening at the Learning Center and the family was hooked.

Laura says that the LC is her children's favorite after school activity. Hannah and Max went to the library and took out, *The Children's Jewish Bible*. Laura and Sam had not revisited Bible stories since their early teens and were pleasantly surprised at how excited the children were about reading the stories together. The Temes family also had fun joining the PJC for Hanukkah and for a LC cooking class.

Laura says that the LC is her

Sam works in technology. Laura has an MBA and works in finance. They enjoy cooking, skiing and riding bikes as a family in their free time.

When asked if there is something special about being Jewish they want to pass down to Max & Hannah, Laura replied, "What is most important are the Jewish values of kindness and helping others, as well as being part of a warm and welcoming community". Laura and Sam believe they found the right place - the PJC.

Barbara

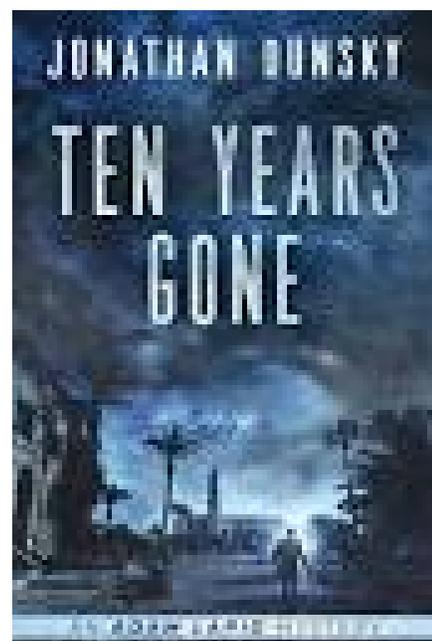
Book Notes

Ten Years Gone by Jonathan Dunsky

Israel, 1949, a nascent nation with dusty streets still in the throes of the *Shoah* and its terrible consequences.

Private detective Adam Lapid knows how it feels to lose everything. His entire family perished in Auschwitz. Adam barely survives. He spends his nights haunted by nightmares and his days solving cases the police won't handle.

Hired to find a missing boy, Adam thinks the case is hopeless. But, having lost his own children, he can't turn down a holocaust survivor searching for her only child.



Lapid meets a host of eccentric characters, but no one is as he or she first seems. His close friend, Greta, an elderly pub owner, is his only solace as he sits in her establishment playing chess with himself and consuming free food. The case of the missing boy consumes Detective Lapid.

Along the way the reader learns about the rogue organization *Irgun* and their fight to save the *maapilim*, holocaust survivors immigrating to Israel. The setting is rich with familiar places. The twists of plot are many and surprising. *Ten Years Gone* is a hard book to put down.

The author, Jonathan Dunsky, will join our Book Group from Israel via Zoom on Sunday, February 27th at 11:00 am to discuss his mystery.

Barbara

Food for Thought

Winter Syntax

Billy Collins

A sentence starts out like a lone traveler
heading into a blizzard at midnight,
tilting into the wind, one arm shielding his face,
the tails of his thin coat flapping behind him.

There are easier ways of making sense,
the connoisseurship of gesture, for example.
You hold a girl's face in your hand like a vase.
You lift a gun from the glove compartment
and toss it out the window into the desert heat.
These cool moments are blazing with silence.

The full moon makes sense. When a cloud crosses it
it becomes as eloquent as a bicycle leaning
outside a drugstore or a dog who sleeps all afternoon
in a corner of the couch.

Bare branches in winter are a form of writing.
The unclothed body is autobiography.
Every lake is a vowel, every island a noun.

But the traveler persists in his misery,
struggling all night through the deepening snow,
leaving a faint alphabet of bootprints
on the white hills and the white floors of valleys,

a message for field mice and passing crows.

At dawn he will spot the vine of smoke
rising from your chimney, and when he stands
before you shivering, draped in sparkling frost,
a smile will appear in the beard of icicles,
and the man will express a complete thought.

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**.

. **Wishing Andrea Rothberg Yom Huledet Sameach!**

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...

- Alice Bloom, in memory of Paul Goldiner, husband of Mary Goldiner
- Jeremy & Jennie Driesen, in honor of Les Rosenberg's legacy gift to the PJC
- The Robert Goelet Foundation, in support of our Learning Center Program
- Barry & Jill Goldenberg, in memory of Paul Goldiner
- Patricia Levinson, in memory of Paul Goldiner

Donations to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund from...

- Eleanor Einzig & Dan Perkis, in memory of the *Yahrzeit* of Ellie's mother, Charlotte

Zipser

- Morris Stampfer, in memory of Samuel Krulak, father of Roger Krulak

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!

