

# ***HaKol*** The Voice of the Pelham Jewish Center

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[PJC Website](#)

[Calendar](#)

[Learning Center](#)



## In This Issue

### Leadership Messages

Rabbi Resnick

Education Director  
Ana Turkienicz

President  
David Haft

*HaKol* Editor  
Barbara Saunders-Adams

Fundraising Director

### Congregant News & Donations

Book Notes  
Barbara Saunders-Adams

Congregant Commentary  
Efrem Sigel

Food For Thought

The PJC Honors the Salzbergs

Share a *Simcha*

## Rabbi Resnick's Message



According to one ancient *midrash*, the hardest test that Avraham *Avinu* faced during his lifetime was *titlul mimakom lemakom*—wandering from place to place. Whenever I share this *midrash*—and it is one to which I often find myself returning—I am often met with mild surprise. After all, this is Avraham we’re talking about. This is a man who heard a mysterious voice saying, “*Lech lecha*—go out,” leave your father’s house along with everything and everyone you know and set out for a strange new land. And, of course, this is a man who was commanded to sacrifice his son. And yet neither of these, in the view of this ancient teaching, was as fundamentally challenging as another central aspect of Avraham’s long and illustrious career, namely that he had to move a lot.

This has always hit me rather hard, in large part because, like a lot of rabbis of my generation, moving around has been a feature of my own professional and religious journey so far, as we’ve moved from New York to Massachusetts to Chicago and now back to New York. And I’ve found myself turning this *midrash* over in my head quite a lot recently, as boxes begin to take shape in our apartment here in Chicago, as the home we’ve built here—the small ark that has seen us safely through the stormy waters of a pandemic—begins to dissolve around us. Unlike millions of migrants throughout the world, my wife, sons, and I are extravagantly blessed. We all know that our home—with our furniture, our books, our art and our many and sundry dinosaurs—will be restored to us before too long. We are traveling not towards an unknown and frightening future but towards a wonderful community, of which we already feel a part. And yet moving itself—the act, the *reality*—remains unsettling, a challenge and a test.

And just as wandering is a feature of Avraham’s life and has been a feature of

our family's life to this point, so too it was a feature of my parents' life and of my grandparents' lives and of *Jewish* life for a thousand generations. As Jews—as children of Avraham—we know deeply what it means to get a move on, to search out and find ourselves and our communities in strange lands, which is why (apart from “and God spoke to Moshe...”) the most common verse in the Torah by a very wide margin is some version of “Love the stranger, for you were a stranger,” a *mitzvah* that appears no less than thirty-six times.

It is also why, according to another midrash, it is precisely the experience of wandering that ushered in Avraham's first experience of divinity. In attempting to answer the question of why God spoke to Avraham in the first place, Rabbi Yitzchak, an ancient sage, offers the following teaching:

[This] can be understood through a parable: A person traveled from place to place. Once he saw a palace that was *doleket*. He said, is it possible that this palace has no leader? At the moment the leader of the palace peeked out at him and said, I am the master of this palace. Thus it was regarding our ancestor Abraham, who said, “Is it possible that this world has no leader? The Holy One sprang out upon him and said, “I am the master of the world.”

This is a rich and powerful midrash. And, like most powerful midrash, it is beset by a few ambiguities, the most poignant being how we are to understand the word “*doleket*,” the root of which, as some readers of Hebrew might recognize, is dalet-lamed-kuf, which is the same root as the verb “*lehadlik*,” as in “*lehadlik ner*,” as in “to light.”

On the one hand, it is possible to understand Rabbi Yitzchak's teaching in terms of religious exultation. In this vein, the great medieval commentator Rashi suggests that “*doleket*” means “full of light,” i.e. that Avraham was overcome by the magnificence of the world around him and concluded that such a glorious palace must have a glorious sovereign. On the other hand, as others have pointed out, this interpretation is something of a stretch. This is because, if Rashi's understanding is correct, *doleket* is probably not the word we would expect to find. We would expect, instead, the word “*mu'eret*—luminous.” A palace that is “*doleket*” is not, in this view, a palace of brightness; it is, instead, a palace on fire. And Avraham does not call out to God in joyful awe, but rather in horrified outrage. He does not see divine magnificence but rather divine neglect. It is not a world of brightness, but a world that is burning. The great wisdom of rabbinic Judaism is that it does not ask us to choose between these interpretations. Instead, it allows them to live together in productive tension.

Returning once more to the theme *oftiltul*—moving from place to place—it is, I believe, very significant that our tradition presents wandering not only as a challenge to be met but as an opportunity for spiritual growth, as an invitation to see the world in new and surprising ways and, ultimately, as an opportunity to love others, the many other travelers with whom we share the path and the open waters. The Jewish road—and the road of a human life—is not always easy to travel. It is sown with both vineyards and thorns, glories and struggles and pandemics, times of rootedness and times of feeling adrift. As we all try to move on from a period of deep suffering and enormous upheaval to a period of new hope—and as my family and I begin our own journey to Pelham—I take comfort in the fact that we are a people who has wandered ceaselessly and that throughout those wanderings we have somehow always found a shelter and illumination on the far shores.

Philissa, Jonah, Gabriel and I are so excited to discover what new lights await us at the PJC and we can't wait to walk the next leg of the journey with all of you.

*Brachot,*  
Rabbi Benjamin Resnick

*Ben*

## Education Director's Message



I always find it striking how our Torah portions' yearly reading cycle illuminates our lifecycle events. That's true for Pride month as well. On the first Shabbat in June, which is also the first Shabbat of Pride month, we read the Torah Portion from the Book of Numbers, *Parashat Shelach*. In this Torah portion, we find *B'nei Israel* about to cross into the Promised Land.

However, instead of sending the people straight into the Promised Land, G-d commands Moses to send 12 people, one from each tribe, to scout the land and its inhabitants. *B'nei Israel* stays encamped right outside of the Land of Canaan, in the desert of Pharan, waiting for 40 days for the scouts to return with their report about the Land that will become their home after leaving slavery in *Mitzrayim*.

And so, after 40 days touring the Land, the 12 scouts return and present their

report; *“They told Moshe that though the land flows with milk and honey, Eretz zavat chalav u’dvash, it is full of fierce people from enemy nations living in fortified cities”* (Numbers 13:27-28). *“All the people that we saw in the land were of great size – we saw giants there – and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them”* (Num. 12: 32-33).

The words, *“We looked like grasshoppers to ourselves”, and so we must have looked to them* is a very puzzling statement. How could the scouts possibly know what others would have thought of them? They couldn’t. The truth is that they thought of themselves as grasshoppers - they felt no pride in being the ambassadors of their tribes, the chosen leaders of their tribes - they were embarrassed to be themselves when they met people who were different from them. They judged themselves before even knowing how others would judge them. They were afraid of being “the other”, or being “awkward”, being part of a different nation, the Jewish people.

Only one scout, Caleb Ben-Yefuneh, from the tribe of Judah, came out against the norm. He came out to tell his truth, the truth of what he had seen, and spoke against all other scouts. He begged the people to keep their faith and love in G-d, and in G-d’s promise to bring them to the Promised Land (the Land flowing with milk and honey). Caleb was the voice of love and pride, not the voice of conformity and fear.

A few months ago, Neco and I, together with Aiden Levy, Rebecca and Jordan Schwarz, were involved in a project called Pride-full Passover Seder, an initiative of Mosaic of Westchester.

To those who don’t know, Mosaic of Westchester is a committee of the Westchester Jewish Council that spearheads a county-wide collaboration focused on integrating Westchester’s (LGBTQ) Jews into the fabric of Jewish life. I have been involved in Mosaic of Westchester since its inception in 2018.

For the Passover Pride-Full project, we reached out to members of the LGBTQ community in our synagogues, and interviewed them about their Passover experiences. We asked them what would make a Passover Seder more welcoming to members of the LGBTQ community. We collected around 30 different interviews. We heard from Jewish LGBTQ people from all ages and backgrounds about their experiences and hopes, their good and sometimes painful memories about Passover. Above all, we listened to their stories. Their personal accounts of the struggle to be accepted and welcomed in society, in community, and in family. The results were eye-opening and moving. We heard stories of courage, hope and resilience. We heard about the yearning for acceptance and connection. We were taken by the prophecy in their words.

Their stories remind us of Caleb Ben Yefuneh. After the scouts move the whole community against Moses and Aaron, G-d punishes all of B'nei Israel, with the exception of Caleb. Their punishment will be to wander for 40 years in the desert, 4 years for each spy, and die before they reach the Promised Land. Caleb is spared, because he had as G-d says, "*Ruach Acheret*", a different spirit, or an "otherness" of spirit.

We read in verse 24: "*But My servant Caleb, because he was imbued with a different spirit and remained loyal to Me—I will bring him into the land that he entered, and his offspring shall hold it as a possession.*"

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, in *Likutey Moharan*, explains that "*Ruach Acheret*" is a necessary attribute for all leaders. "Every leader has an element of the spirit of prophecy. Even in our time, when prophecy has ceased, a leader necessarily possesses "*a different spirit*" (Numbers 14:24), one not found among the rest of the people, by virtue of which he deserved to become a leader. And this "*different spirit*" which the leader possesses is a form of holy spirit, a spirit of prophecy."

The weekend of *Parashat Shelach* marks the beginning of Pride Month, when we recognize and celebrate the members of the LGBTQ community who, like Caleb Ben Yefuneh, have a "different spirit", *Ruach Acheret*.

Caleb as an independent leader realizes the problems around him and possesses the strength of character to dissent and be a mouthpiece of truth. In one of the interviews for our Passover Pride project, Adam Eli, a community organizer and writer, asks: "How can we be more actively inclusive, and fully embracing of Jews of color, black Jews, queer Jews, and especially trans Jews? I believe that as a queer person, it's my obligation to show up for all marginalized people. I believe that as a Jewish person, it's my obligation to show up for all marginalized people."

Caleb Ben Yefuneh was a contrarian, a prophet, who believed in the utopian idea of a Promised Land, (the one flowing with milk and honey). He spoke truth out of his heart, despite being the only one, different from the other spies. Our friends in the LGBTQ community believe in the absolute truth and utopian idea that Love is Love is Love is Love. Any love, between anyone. And G-d is love.

At many points in history, Jews are thought to be "the other". Grasshoppers. We have always found ways NOT to think of ourselves as grasshoppers, and instead, being proud of who we are. We need to acknowledge that we are all

unique and different; we cannot be fully defined by our appearances or by whom we chose to love. As Jews, we are responsible for one another. We need to embrace each other, in our uniqueness and our rainbow of colors, genders, and opinions, in the spirit of V'ahavta l'reacha kamocho - "You should love your neighbor as yourself":

We must be outspoken allies of the LGBTQ community, see and celebrate the beauty in diversity, in all colors of the rainbow. We need to ensure that all colors are seen. Make sure that everyone feels embraced and welcome in our community, in our families, in our celebrations. Only then, will we bring to reality the utopian idea of a Promised Land, one flowing with milk and honey, instead of wandering years in the desert of a dichotomy -- black and white-- in search of what is right in front of us.

Quoting from the Siddur from my beloved Congregation *Kol Haneshamah* in Jerusalem,

"Beneath our uniqueness we are all bound together by our common humanity. All of us yearn for the blessings of freedom and peace. Each of us seeks personal liberation and not to be enslaved to conventional wisdom. A heart that is able to love without fear, a spirit that cries "yes!" to the universe. Each of us strives for the inner peace that comes with finding harmony between aspirations and abilities. This is the Shabbat peace to which we aspire".



Happy Pride Month, and be proud of who you are!

# President's Message

Fellow Congregants,

As President of the Pelham Jewish Center, I feel the need to speak out. I would like to raise a voice of support for Israel in its recent conflict with Hamas in Gaza. We can all have questions about the wisdom of Israeli policies. but not about the lethal hatred towards Israel and the Jewish people by Hamas and some Palestinians.

The lead up to the conflict started weeks before the Temple Mount incident with unprovoked attacks on religious Jews in Jerusalem and Yaffa. The property dispute referenced as the trigger involved a house purchase by Jews during the Mandate period (pre-1948) and occupied by Arabs after 1948 when Jordan controlled East Jerusalem. Subsequently East Jerusalem was recovered in the 1967 War with the reconquest of East Jerusalem by Israel. Since '67 this property dispute has wound its way through the courts until it reached the Supreme Court. In most other countries under the same scenario there would be no judicial adjudication, but simple forced eviction onto the street.

So, the basis for Hamas' rocket barrage on Israel was based, in their own words, on the property dispute. Certainly, upon consideration, this is not a reason to bombard Israeli cities with missiles. The lack of any logical or proportional justification reveals the real reason - murderous hatred.

In my opinion, we should not delude ourselves that somehow there are just reasons for the aggression. If the Palestinians would accept living with Jews as neighbors there would be peace tomorrow. Until that change of attitude occurs, we should keep in mind that this action is against us and our brethren in Israel.

*David*

## A Message from the Editor of *Hakol*

Dear Friends,

June is an in-between month at the PJC. Tearfully, I said goodbye to Rabbi Alex Salzberg, Clara & their beautiful, fun-loving family. I wish



for them a smooth transition to their new life in Baltimore. And I know we will keep in touch.

Services this month will be led by PJC congregants. Please lend us your voices.

In July, Rabbi Benjamin Resnick and family will join us for the next chapter in PJC history. I look forward to getting to know them. We've already scheduled a Zoom Book Group on July 25th to discuss Jane Gabin's book, "The Paris Photo". Jane Gabin is Rabbi Resnick's mother-in-law.

Philissa and Ben were perusing our library when Philissa cried out, "My mother's book!". That's how I learned of the connection to the author and educator Jane Gabin.

*HaKol* will be taking a break until the end of August. *Thechagim* (holidays) begin in early September. The August *HaKol* will provide all the details of our holiday scheduling.

Enjoy the summer!

*Barbara*

## A Message from the Fundraising Chair



In the March Hakol, I wrote of looking ahead to May, when we could embrace a new hopefulness and soak up all the love and care we had for each other over the past year. I am happy and grateful to report that in May, our community continued to support each other with gusto by participating in and attending two important events – our Annual Gala and the Dedication of the Rosenberg Torah.

On May 1st, we gathered for our virtual gala, The PJC's Got Talent, to honor Ana and Neco Turkienicz. Our musicians for the evening delivered extraordinary performances in genres ranging from Broadway musical and jazz to pop and classical. Thank you to our incredible performers: Maria Abeshouse, Ben Adler, Jon Backer, Mike Dvorkin, Amy Hersh, Sari and

Jeremy Schulman, and Lori Weber. Your memorable performances brought us so much joy and reinforced what an exceptional congregation we have.

Equally memorable were the tributes our members gave to honor Ana and Neco, a testament to how much they are cherished and admired by the PJC. Thank you Hildy and Steve Martin, Marjut Herzog, Roger Krulak, Mike Teitelbaum, Rabbi Salzberg and the Learning Center teachers and students for your moving and meaningful speeches. Finally, thank you to my co-host, Mimi Steinberg, to our musical host for the evening, the incomparable Jack Klebanow, who kept us dancing on the *bimah* between acts, and Rebecca Ploski and Filip Bukowski for their technical help.

The PJC's Got Talent Gala raised \$16,000 and if you didn't get a chance to see it live, you can view a recording on the PJC YouTube channel (start about 29 minutes in):

<https://youtu.be/64uRGDw1Xkl>

On May 16th, the PJC community came together to celebrate the completion and installation of The Rosenberg Torah. It was a beautiful Sunday afternoon on the PJC lawn and the first large gathering since COVID disrupted our lives. Approximately 60 people attended the ceremony and the joy and excitement we all felt at seeing each other in person and celebrating such a momentous event was palpable.

In keeping with the Rosenberg tradition of encouraging congregants and friends to partake in the *mitzvah* of giving, over forty PJC families donated either a letter, word, phrase, or *parshah* for our new Torah. We raised almost \$40,000. Les and Sybil Rosenberg dedicated the new Torah to the children of the PJC Learning Center.

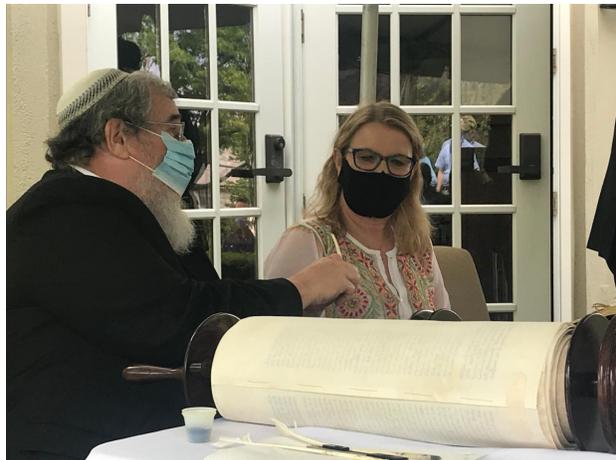
A Torah scribe in Israel penned the new Torah and it was sent, nearly complete, to the PJC in the spring. At our dedication ceremony, the scribe, Zerach Greenfield, completed the Torah with the help of PJC donors. Rabbi Salzberg chanted the Sh'ma, V'Ahavta and Etz Chaim from the new Torah and then we all circled the grounds carrying our Rosenberg Torah.

We are grateful to Les and Sybil Rosenberg for our new Torah and for the honor and opportunity to participate in its writing. Thank you also to Julia Coss for all of the work she did on this fundraiser. We are creating a book that will document the events surrounding the creation of the Rosenberg Torah as well as list of donors and plan to have it ready by the end of the summer.

I will be stepping down as Fundraising Chair at the end of June. It has been an honor to do this work and I want to thank everyone who helped raise funds for

our beloved Pelham Jewish Center these past two years.

Liz



## April Book Notes

### ***People of the Book***

Geraldine Brooks

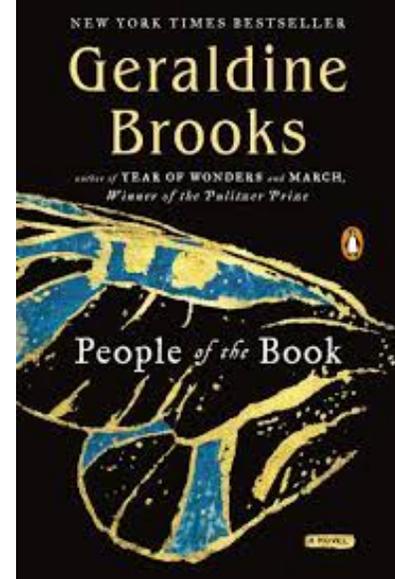
"The Book", an illuminated *Haggadah* created in Andalusia before the Spanish Inquisition, is saved by a Muslim librarian in Sarajevo, a medieval

Rabbi in Venice, a censor for Torquemada and contemporary book restorers from Australia and Israel. This 15th century codex survived The Inquisition, WWII and the Bosnian civil war. Based on real events, *People of the Book* is a novel dedicated to the idea that diverse cultures influence and enrich one another and will recognize and preserve artistic endeavors.

Unlike most 500 year-old Jewish books, the stunning hand-painted illuminations of this codex call to mind Christian illustrations and Iranian miniature portraits. Thus, negating the idea that ancient Jewish art eschewed graven images.

The mysterious origins of the Sarajevo *Haggadah* intrigue the young Australian book restorer, Hanna Heath. She follows the clues embedded in the manuscript - a butterfly wing, a wine stain, salt crystals and a cat's hair to unravel the mystery of the creation of this ancient text. Hanna discovers how the book crossed continents and exchanged hands by disparate peoples who attempted to safeguard its beauty from the flames of hatred. Traveling between the past and the present, the characters created by Geraldine Brooks will draw you into their lives and times.

*Barbara*



## Congregant Commentary

The Times Prints a Photo Gallery of Children Killed in Gaza:  
How to Understand This Outrageous Editorial Decision  
by Efrem Sigel

Between 2014 and 2020, U.S. drone and missile strikes and ground operations took the lives of between 910 and 2,200 civilians, including as many as 454 children. These estimates, compiled by the Bureau of Independent Journalism, are especially noteworthy given the New York Times' outrageous decision (May 28) to print a gallery of photos of 64 children killed in the recent war in Gaza, under the headline, "They Were Only Children."

Yes, the Times has occasionally covered civilian deaths from American drone strikes, and no, it has never devoted 42 square inches of its front page to photos of children who perished in these actions. Unlike the American strikes,

few of which occurred during ongoing hostilities, the actions of the Israeli Defense Forces were taken in the course of a raging battle initiated by Hamas, which fired 4,300 rockets aimed at killing as many children and adults in Israel as possible.

Hamas alone bears the responsibility for the tragic and utterly preventable deaths of children in Gaza, some of them victims of Hamas' own rockets. No one disputes that Hamas deliberately embedded its command centers, tunnels, munitions, rocket launchers and fighters under civilian dwellings, while aiming its own rockets at civilians living in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Sderot and elsewhere.

Yet rather than credit the Israeli military's explanations for why it targeted specific buildings, The Times contents itself with the vague acknowledgement that Hamas' tunnels run "underneath civilian neighborhoods." And in describing the trauma of children growing up in Gaza under threat of violence, it has the gall to attribute much of that trauma to "four major Israeli offensives" without explaining that each was a defensive operation in response to Hamas attacks on Israeli soldiers and civilians. (As for how many children were actually killed by Hamas rockets, The Times acknowledged that two "may have been killed" in this way — ignoring a detailed accounting of deaths compiled by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Information Center in Israel, which reveals that the deaths of at least eight children were the result of rockets fired by Hamas or other groups that landed in Gaza.)

Neither is there a mention by the Times of how Israel warns civilians in advance of a strike — is there another army in the world that does this? Nor has the paper seen fit to print similar photo galleries of dozens or hundreds of children killed in, among others, a Taliban bombing of a girls' school in Afghanistan, killings and kidnappings of school children in Nigeria, or the aftermath of a siege in Beslan, Russia in which 250 students and parents died. How strange, and yet strangely predictable, that only the military actions of the Jewish State of Israel, in justified self-defense, merit such an inflammatory — and yes, reprehensible — front-page display.

Children's lives are precious, and there is no excuse for using the tragic death of any child, Palestinian or Israeli, as grist for an article that reads more like Hamas propaganda than even-handed journalism. In the aftermath of the latest Gaza war, The Times' coverage of worldwide attacks on Jews ought by rights to have included a wrenching look at the indefensible editorial decisions made in its own newsroom.

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Efrem Sigel is the author of two published novels, scores of short stories and

## Food for Thought

### Outing at Some Beautiful Place

With a Jewish girl  
who has American hope  
in her eyes and whose nostrils are still  
very sensitive to anti-Semitism.

"Where did you get those eyes?"  
Eyes like those one does not receive at birth --  
so much color, so much sadness.

She wore the coat of a soldier, discharged  
or dead -- in victory or defeat --  
in some worn-out war.

"On a bonfire of burned letters  
it is impossible to cook even one cup of coffee."

After that to continue walking  
to some beautiful, hidden place  
at which a wise and experienced field commander  
would have put his mortars.

"In summer, after you, this hill  
gets covered by a soft thought."

-- Yehuda Amichai

## The PJC Honors the Salzbergs



## 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 Les & Sybil Rosenberg on the occasions of Sybil's 78th Birthday and the Rosenberg's 56th Wedding Anniversary
- ***Mazel Tov*** to Marty Druckerman on becoming a **Great-Grandfather**

*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...

- David & Jeanne Radvany, in memory of Enid Serebransky, mother of Joel Serebransky
- Neil & Beth Yelsey, in memory of Pauline Bonello, mother of Romina Levy
- Neil & Beth Yelsey, in memory of Enid Serebransky, mother of Joel Serebransky

### Donations to the Rosenberg Torah Fund from...

- Michael & Michelle Dvorkin, the verse *Chayei Sara*
- Michael & Michelle Dvorkin, the verse *Lech Lecha*
- Adam & Jennifer Gerber, verse *Genesis 12:3*, in honor of the Salzberg Family
- Adam & Jennifer Gerber, the word *Bereshit*, in honor of Adam's & Max's shared *parashah*, read in 1981 and 2018
- Adam & Jennifer Gerber, the letter *Alef*, in honor of Ava and the joy she receives at the "big yellow house"
- David Haft & Jacqueline Schachter, the section *Justice, Justice Shall You Pursue*, in memory of David's grandfather, Nathan Haft
- Marshall & Naomi Jaffe
- Howard Meyerson & Emily Glickman, *parashah Shemot*, in memory of Howard's parents, Morris & Helen Meyerson
- Joel & Shelli Goldberg Peck, a verse in honor of continued learning
- Jason & Carla Rosenberg, in honor of Les & Sybil Rosenberg
- Jason & Heather Rosenberg, in honor of Les & Sybil Rosenberg

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!

