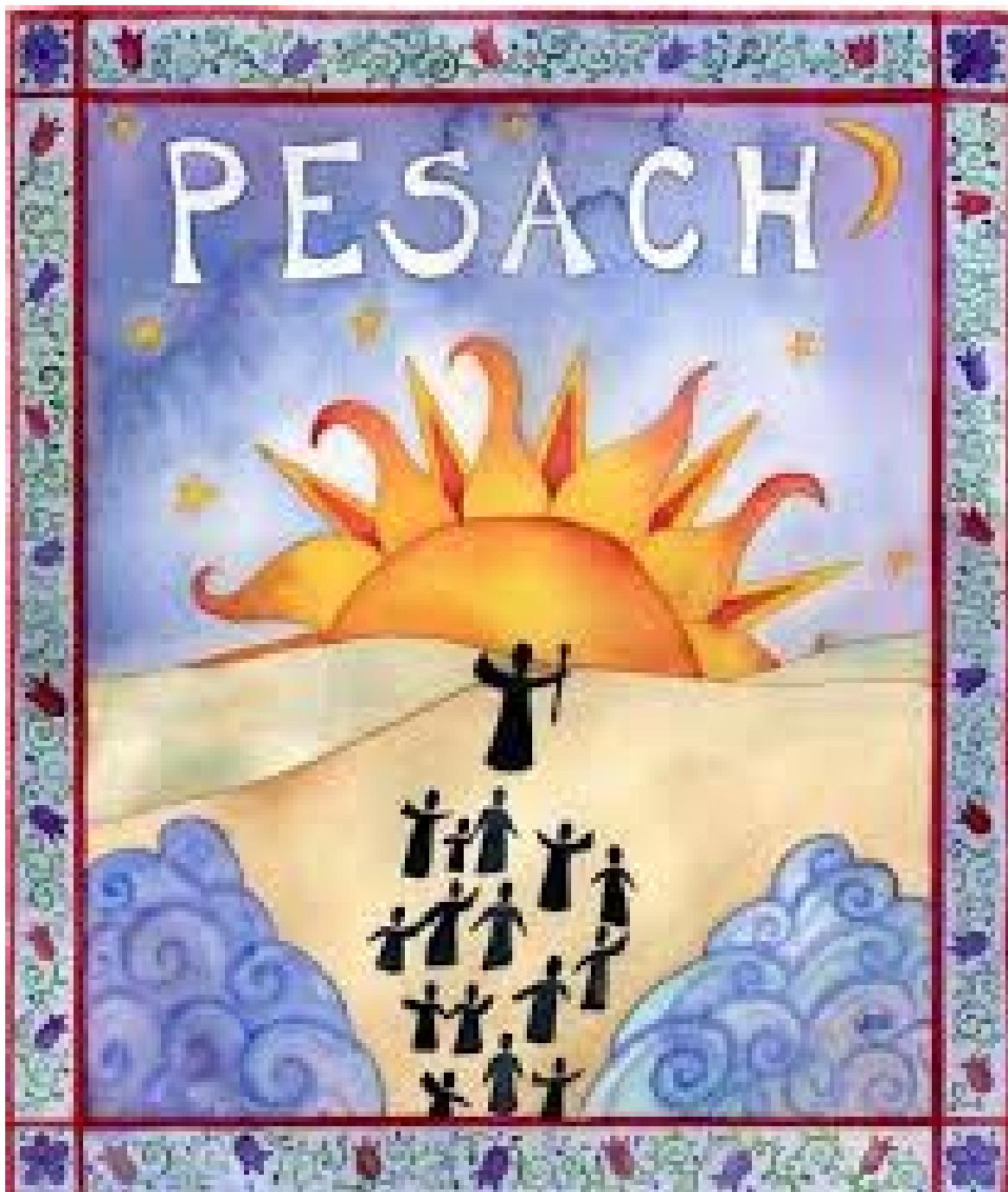


HaKol The Voice of the Pelham Jewish Center

March 2021 Adar/Nissan 5781

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Every week, more and more members of our community are receiving one of the COVID vaccines. While many more are still waiting to be declared eligible, there is a definite sense that the light at the end of the tunnel is finally approaching. We will be able to gather again someday soon.

At the same time, many of the conversations that I have had with you

have had an undercurrent of uncertainty and trepidation. You have been wary of returning to in-person gatherings, even fully vaccinated. I share in this trepidation. I have received my vaccines, but my children have not – I don't want to inadvertently bring this disease home to them. Even without that specific fear, I have spent so long physically isolated that gathering with other people is frightening, even when there is nothing to be afraid of. I believe that this feeling of fear is a result of the trauma that we have endured over the past year. We have watched so many people suffer – and have suffered ourselves – that we are afraid to return to the way things were before.

This fear is real, because the trauma is real. Perhaps it gives us an insight into the mindset of the Israelites wandering in the desert. They didn't long to return to Egypt because they doubted God. They were so accustomed to slavery that freedom frightened them. Slavery was familiar, they understood the rules and had learned to live in that world. A direct relationship with God, who could act

in the world in unpredictable ways destroyed their ability to predict what might happen next.

We have all been living this year with uncertainty about the future. And even with the vaccines, that uncertainty will continue. It will be a long journey back to normal, with many twists and turns along the way.

As we step back into the world and into our beloved PJC building, we will likely feel nervous and we will step with trepidation. But I know, thanks to the careful thought and consideration of our synagogue leadership, that we will step back into physical community with the proper precautions in place. I pray that as we take these steps, each one will increase our confidence and give us the courage to take the next step together.

This time of isolation has lasted longer than anyone expected. We have learned so much about ourselves, our community, and all that is possible using the tools of modern technology. We have come to learn all that can be done from our homes, either in private or with Zoom as a medium. It has reached the point, when I teach on Zoom, that I barely notice the computer screen and am able to focus on the faces of those learning with me. At the same time, we have also come to appreciate all that is lost when a screen does separate us.

I have come to appreciate the wisdom of our Sages when they chose to call the synagogue a *beit k'nesset* – בֵּית כְּנֹסֶת – a house of gathering. This phrase never appears in our Bible, and it would have been easy for them to use the words of Isaiah and call it a *beit t'fillah* – בֵּית תְּפִילָה – a house of prayer. But in choosing the name *beit k'nesset*, they emphasized something different. Instead of focusing on the actions that would take place in the synagogue, they emphasized the people. The synagogue is the place where we gather and create community. Ours has sat empty for too long, and we will all be stronger when we can fill the space with our prayers, our songs, our laughter, and our simple presence.

May this day come speedily and in our time.

Alex

Education Director's Message

Shalom and Hodesh Tov!

It's hard to believe, but on March 14, 2021,



we marked a whole year since we last gathered in our beautiful sacred space, the heart of our community, the PJC building.

Just as the Israelites leaving Egypt, we were rushed out in haste, leaving behind our learning materials, the bulletin boards still showing Purim motifs, our students' notebooks, teachers' notes, thinking we would be back soon.

In a haste, "*behipazon*", as it is written in the Torah, we left our beautiful Sanctuary with our learning "half-baked", our year "half-baked". We left with a thin, tasteless *matzah* - our computer screen - and no knowledge of how to conduct virtual classes or how to help students engage with each other over the wire. This *matzah*, our thin screen, continuously reminded us that we were wanderers in the desert of the Pandemic - an unknown, uncharted territory, life-threatening and frightening.

As the Israelites at the edge of the parted waters, we took a leap of faith. Like the biblical Nachshon - we marched on. We skipped one day of learning to meet as a faculty and establish a plan. We turned all the LC materials available online to all teachers. We quickly acclimated to the Zoom geography, one teacher helping another, pulling, pushing, holding hands, cheering for successes and lending a shoulder to mourn and commiserate. Together with the families and the students of the Learning Center, we started a journey in the unknown territory of virtual learning, seeking wisdom from above and beyond. We sought to empathize with students and parents, as we ourselves, were dealing with similar challenges in our homes. We tried new and creative solutions to engage students in the joy of Jewish learning even though the experience was more present in our imagination. We crafted holiday celebrations with tangible activities and hoped we could keep the same level of engagement and excitement as we would have if we were close to each other, smelling, tasting, listening, touching, creating, dancing, singing, loving together.

Like *Bnei Israel* in the desert, who thought the Promised Land was right around the corner, our return kept getting farther and farther away from reach. The Israelites walked in circles in the desert for 40 years. We have been separated from our cozy Sanctuary and our beautiful classrooms for 12 months.

The Hebrew word for desert is "*Midbar*"- מִדְבָּר; interestingly, this word has the same root letters as the word "speak" - *medaber* - מְדַבֵּר - just a slight change in

the vowels, while using the same exact letters. And there's nothing in the Hebrew language, in terms of roots of words (the three main letters, in this case, מ,ב,ד) that happens by chance. G-d put the Israelites in the "midbar" - in the desert - so he could "(m)ledaber" - he could talk to them. And hopefully, they would listen to him. The people who left *Mitzrayim* (Egypt) were not a nation. They were not a cohesive community; they were slaves, descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel. Throughout the trying times the Israelites spent in the Midbar, the desert, wandering on their way to the Promised Land, they were forced to become a community, and therefore, were forced to talk - "(m)ledaber" - and listen to each other's hearts. They built strong bonds and became supportive of each other, in order to overcome the dangers and the challenges ahead of them.

Our metaphoric "midbar", our desert, forced us to "(m)ledaber", to talk more to each other. Through the flat screens of our matzah, our computer screens, we were forced to become better listeners, better communicators, and learn to be patient, non-judgmental, attentive and alert. We learned to identify small signs in each other's faces and engage in relationships. We also met to mourn losses and learned to be in silence together, all at once, honoring the pain with infinite generosity and kindness. We made time and space for G-d to speak through us in our *midbar*.

Meanwhile, in our beautiful sanctuary, the *Ner Tamid* - the eternal light, a reminder of the one the Israelites had in the desert, kept flickering on top of the Ark at the PJC, even though no one could see it. Instead, we brought with us a glimmer of that light, as we left in a haste - each one of us holding a flare from the eternal light - the *Ner Tamid* - shimmering inside our hearts. That's the secret of the eternal light - it can spark infinite flames and never be extinguished. Each one of our teachers, students, families and the whole PJC community embodied the radiance of that light, joining forces in the plight to keep our community connected, under the steady and compassionate leadership of Rabbi Salzberg.

We carried that eternal flame shining as we endured one more day, one more week, one more month into our personal and communal desert. It illuminated our path and helped us keep focused on the hope and the goodness around us. It inspired us to overcome our weaknesses and lend a hand to others in pain and in need. It shifted our focus from what we have, what we own, into what we truly are - *mensch* - people: the carriers of the light and the matzah sojourners.

Like the Israelites at the edge of the parted waters, we may soon take a deep breath. We can feel the smells of spring, listen to the chirping of the birds

returning to our rooftops and look forward to the day that our PJC tribe will meet and rejoice again. Just somewhat different. Changed.
Yehuda Amichai, one of the greatest Israeli poets, once wrote:

*"The years of my life I have broken into hours,
and the hours into minutes and seconds and fractions of seconds.
These, only these, are the stars above me that cannot be numbered.
And what is my life span?
I'm like a man gone out of Egypt:
the Red Sea parts,
I cross on dry land, two walls of water, on my right hand and on my left.
Pharaoh's army and his horsemen behind me.
Before me the desert, perhaps the Promised Land, too.
That is my life span."*

Inspired by the word of the poet, as we welcome spring, celebrate Passover and read from the *Haggadah*, we realize that this year, we all have personal and communal life stories of deliverance. *B'chol dor v'dor* - in every generation - says the *Haggadah*, one should feel as if s/he him/her self left Egypt - *Mitzrayim*, which in Hebrew means “from a narrow place”. This year, when we read that line in our Seder, each one of us will have fulfilled it. *B'chol dor vador*, in every generation, we will renew our faith in how we can help relieve and support each other and be grateful for that. We will recite the “*Shehecheyanu*” blessing with a deeper understanding and bless this sacred time by lighting the candles with our unique spark of the eternal light. Even if all of that will still be happening through the thin screens of our zoom-matzah.

On this very special Passover, our celebration of freedom and renewal, I wish each and everyone in our community and extended families, *Chag Aviv Sameach*; may each of us find the Promised Land in the eyes and in the embrace of one another, in good health and with renewed hope and strength.

Happy Spring,
Happy new Jewish month of Nissan,

Ana

President's Message

Fellow Congregants,

Though it felt endless, we have finished the process of interviewing and evaluating the rabbinic candidates. Whichever one we choose and chooses us will be excellent in their own unique way. We have nothing but good choices. *Yashar Koach* to all those who served on the Search Committee. The hours involved, the careful crafting of the process and the commitment were beyond anything we could have expected from a small volunteer group. Hats off to them all.

Speaking of endless, the year of living COVID is coming to an end. Many members are now vaccinated and better treatments are being developed as we speak. The CDC now says people who are vaccinated can come together in interior spaces but it is not totally clear what spaces they mean. We are hopeful that we can start limited services in the sanctuary after Pesach, but this is tentative at present. Also, after a year of fear of congregating it will be an emotional transition to seeing one another again face to face. We'll need to start with baby steps.

These seem like good challenges and I'm sure the community can manage them with determination and fortitude. If anyone has thoughts on how these challenges can be handled please feel free to contact me.

We all can look forward to hopefully getting to know our new rabbi and growing with him or her.

David

A Message from the Editor of *Hakol*



Dear Friends,

Passover is fast approaching. It's a time of questioning. The Israelites cried out to God *questioning* their suffering. *Pesach* is a celebration of our liberation from slavery through God's intervention. It's a time of renewal and reaffirmation of the blessings of freedom and free will. It is my favorite Jewish holiday.

Judaism is a religion that values questions. Jews should not be afraid that their questions will punch a hole in the wisdom that has been passed down from generation to

generation. Their questions will add to it.

בכל דור ודור חיב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו יצא מצרים

We question ourselves too. The *Haggadah* tells us that - In each generation a person must view oneself as if s/he personally left Egypt - a narrow, confining place. This teaches us that a person should embody the experience of being ill-treated and *not* act this way towards others. As Hillel says, "What is hateful to you, do not do unto your fellow. That is the entire Torah ...".

The *Haggadah*, quoting from the Torah in *Genesis* 46:27, tells us that, "seventy people went down to Egypt." However, there are only sixty-nine people listed in the *Genesis* text. So, who is number seventy? The answer, according to one commentator, Mark Gerson, is revealed in the command to regard *ourselves* as having been in the *Exodus*. *Each of us is the seventieth individual!*

The opportunity to question is an essential part of the freedom celebrated on the *Seder* night. So is education of the next generations. "And you shall tell your son (child) on that day, saying: It is because of this which the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt." (*Pesachim* 116b). The *Haggadah* teaches us that children learn through different ways of questioning. Each child goes about questioning in his or her individual style. This implies that we should first find a child's strengths and teach to them.

Our Talmudic literature is in the form of questions and dialogue. Not the questioning of an inferior to a superior, but rather, the give and take interaction between equals with opposing views and sometimes, even against God. An essential characteristic of free people is that they notice the world around them, make distinctions and search for meaningful patterns.

Ultimately, questions can help one become part of the story. Questioning allows you to put your own "spin" on the celebration, thus making it more joyous and meaningful.

Chag Pesach Sameach, (Have a healthy, happy and meaningful Passover)

Barbara

Fundraising Chair Liz Tzetzko



I am heartened by the longer days, warmer weather and increasing availability of vaccines, as all bring us closer to a day when we can again gather together at the PJC. As Rabbi Deborah Megdal so movingly reminded us on *Kabbalat Shabbat*, the fourth verse of *L'kha Dodi* begins “Arise and shake off the dust of the earth” as we spring forward and embrace a new hopefulness. We can also, as Rabbi

Megdal said “soak up all the love and care we have all had for each other” over this past difficult year I am grateful for the work that so many people did to bring us together: the many lively book group and women’s group discussions; the entertaining and enlightening Israeli movies picked by Mimi Steinberg and the Sunday night conversations around them; the Honey Grams and *Mishloach Manot* that Marjut Herzog so lovingly assembled and which delivered joy to all of us; and the beautiful services led by Jack Klebanow each week.

I can think of no better way for our community to now shake off the dust of the past year than with two important celebrations we will hold in May. First, our *virtual* annual gala on May 1st, The PJC’s Got Talent, will feature performances by the following accomplished members and teachers of our shul: Maria and Adam Abeshouse, Jon Backer, Mike Dvorkin, Amy Hersh, Jack Klebanow, Sari and Jeremy Schulman, and Lori Weber.

I am thrilled that we are honoring Ana and Neco Turkienicz this year. Ana and Neco have been essential in making the PCJ the warm sanctuary we love and a place where our children are inspired to learn about and connect with their Jewish heritage. Ana started at the PJC in 2006 as the *Vav* class teacher and became Education Director in 2007. I was fortunate to be the Learning Center Chair for three years and see up close Ana’s devotion to educating our children and her creative spirit in doing so. Our daughter, Rebecca, started in *Nitzanim* and is now a *Madricha*; her Jewish identity is indelible, thanks in great part to Ana and the Learning Center. Neco’s mark on the PJC is significant as well. I will never forget the beauty of our High Holiday services in the middle of COVID, a feat I’m sure many of us never imagined. Rabbi Salzberg and our Religious Practices committee did a brilliant job putting the services together, but it was Neco whose expertise delivered the gift of a seamless and unforgettable service. Neco has also been a constant presence at each of the PJC Players productions, spending hours of his time filming each show for posterity and the PJC YouTube channel.

I hope you will join us on May 1st to celebrate Ana and Neco and enjoy the music of our talented members and teachers. We will be sending out a link

before Passover to both RSVP and to contribute to an online tribute journal for Ana and Neco.

The second major event in May will be the celebration for the completion of the Rosenberg Torah. Fortunately, we were able to mark the beginning of the Torah in the fall of 2019, but unfortunately, the final celebration has been delayed due to COVID. But on Sunday, May 16th, we'll finally be able to gather outside to honor our new Torah. There is still time to sponsor a portion of the Torah; please look for information in upcoming weekly announcements

Liz

March Book Notes

The Tunnel

A.B. Yehoshua

The Tunnel, the latest book by the prolific Israeli author, A.B. Yehoshua, is darkly playful.

It is the story of a seventy-something retired, road engineer, Zvi Luria, who notices that he is having difficulty remembering first names.



He goes to the *gan* (pre-school) to pick up his grandson and almost takes home the wrong boy. His wife, Dina, brings him to a neurologist who discovers a tiny dark spot on his brain, a precursor of dementia. The doctor's advice is quintessentially Israeli -- to keep living and keep his mind active. And, to continue being intimate with his wife. No self-pity. Dina asks Zvi, "Does it matter what day it is as long as there is love every day?." This is a testimony to a loving 38 year marriage.

However, Zvi Luria envisions the dark spot on his brain as a tunnel ending in his loss of self. Concerned that he will forget the code to operate his car, Luria has the digits tattooed on his arm. He is preoccupied with his impending, but not imminent decline rather than living his life. His wife, Dina, a prominent pediatrician, encourages him to befriend the young engineer who replaced Zvi in his former job at Israel Roads. Luria becomes an unpaid consultant advising the engineer on how to build a tunnel for the army in the Negev. Along the way, Zvi Luria has several hilarious escapades. When Zvi becomes lost in his own

neighborhood, he asks to be shown the way to Rabin Square to reorient himself. This hearkens back to the unsuccessful 1990's Peace Accords.

When Zvi was in charge of the projects at Israel Roads, he refused to acknowledge the private lives of his coworkers. He couldn't allow himself to get wrapped up in others' personal problems. Now, retired with a failing memory, Zvi cannot separate himself from the lives of those he meets. Non-familial relationships take on an importance he never felt before.

The hill where the army road will be built morphs into *a tunnel* to protect a stateless Palestinian family living on the Nabatean hilltop. In contrast, while Luria was the top Israeli road engineer, many Palestinian homes were bulldozed for the sake of a new interchange. Zvi didn't give the destruction a second thought. Now, protecting a stateless Palestinian family by building a "tunnel" through the hillside becomes a symbol of Zvi Luria's newfound conscience and independence.

"The Tunnel" is not only a physical entity. It symbolizes the darkness engendered by Luria's dementia and possibly the "tunnel vision" of Israeli society.

Barbara

Marjut's Prayer

A Prayer For Those Awaiting Vaccination
adapted from a " Dreaming Up 5781" Facebook group post

*Merciful One, Holy One,
Please join me in prayer,
Comfort me as I call out to You,
As I shed tears,
As I mark this year of chaos and sadness.*

*Waiting to get a vaccine.
Waiting for the site to refresh
Rejoicing as my loved ones and friends get their vaccine.
Weeping for those still getting sick every day.*

*Every shot, each day,
Blesses us, Moves our town, our state, our nation,
One step closer,*

*Yet, with each additional day,
I still feel like the end
Is so so so far away.*

*I pray for all the scientists, volunteers and workers
Who have taken on the holy task
of bringing the vaccine to me.*

*So, God, help me to be patient,
To keep joy and hope in my heart,
As I wait for my turn
To receive this blessed medical agent.
To say Shehekianu,
at the moment of receiving this miracle into my body.*

*So I pray
and I wait to see dear ones
and hug those I love
And to always serve as Your agent
Of Divine Love.*

PJC Library Acquisitions

**Here is a listing of new and noteworthy titles
in the PJC Library:**

Fiction

The Tunnel - A.B. Yehoshua
How to Make a Life - Florence Reiss Kraut
One Night With Lilith - Martin Golan

Non-Fiction

My Country, My Life - Ehud Barak
Letters From Cuba - Ruth Behar
Spies of No Country - Matti Friedman
The Bible with Revealed Sources - R.L. Friedman
Morality: Restoring the Common Good in Divided Times
- Rabbi Jonathan Sacks
A State At Any Cost - Tom Segev

Food for Thought

A POEM FOR THE SEDER

BY YEHUDA AMICHAI

Meditations for the Seder night: what is different, we asked

What makes this night different from all other nights,

*Most of us grew up and we don't ask anymore, while some
continue to ask questions throughout their lives, like when they ask*

How are you? or What time is it? and move on

*without hearing the answer. What is different, every night,
like an alarm clock whose tick-tock calms us and puts us to sleep*

What has changed, everything will change. Change is God.

Meditations for Seder night: the Torah spoke of four sons

*One who is wise, one who is wicked, one who is simple, and one
who does not know how to ask. But it doesn't tell us
about the one who is good or the one who loves.*

*This is the question that has no answer and if there were an answer
I would not want to know it. I who passed all the sons
in different combinations, I lived my life, the moon shone
on me though I had no need for it and the sun went its way and the
Passover holidays passed without answer. What has changed,*

*Change is God
and death is God's prophet.*

Yehuda Amichai, from "Gods Change, Prayers Remain Forever"
translated by Rabbis Rena Blumenthal and Barbara Penzner

Share a *Simcha*

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**.

- **Mazel Tov** to PMHS freshman, **Isaac Lief**, the 1st Place Champion in the Congressional Debate
- **Mazel Tov** to the **2021 PJC Rabbinic Search Committee** for their tireless efforts on our behalf

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...

- Spencer & Ronnie Barback, in support of the Midnight Run Social Action Project
- Alfred & Shelley Klein, in memory of Shelley's father, Herbert Taub
- David & Jeanne Radvany, in memory of Jerry Levy's father, Harold Levy
- David & Jeanne Radvany, in memory of Glyn Morgan's mother, Edith Morgan
- David & Jeanne Radvany, in memory of Dan Rubock's father, Samuel Rubock
- Doris-Patt Smith, in honor of Jack Klebanow, for his leadership of *Shabbat* services
- Doris-Patt Smith, in memory of Kate Lauzar's father, Robert Alfred
- Peter & Suzanne Wies and family, in memory of the *Yahrzeit* of Peter's mother, Ruth Wies
- Neil & Beth Yelsey, in memory of Jerry Levy's father, Harold Levy

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

- Barry Erner & Melissa Dreyfus-Erner, *Matanot L'evyonim*
- Kate Lauzar, in honor of Rabbi Alex Salzberg
- Stanley & Mindell Patchen, in honor of Martin Druckerman's birthday
- Morris Stampfer, in memory of his parents, Rabbi Theodore & Pauline Stampfer

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!

