

# HaKol The Voice of the Pelham Jewish Center

May 2021 Iyar/Sivan 5781

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## Rabbi's Message



caring community.

I am filled with warmth when I think of the many births, *b'nei mitzvah*, graduations, and weddings that I have been a part of and celebrated with you. I continue to grieve over all of the losses that we have shared together, the faces that used to be fixtures in our lives that are sadly absent and those whom I never knew personally, but left indelible stamps on the lives that they touched.

Thank you for welcoming me into your lives in times of joy and in times of grief. It is an incredible privilege to be a part of the most important and transformative moments in a person's life, whether they are full of smiles and laughter, or tears and sobs. There have also been the small and quiet moments, moments whose subtle power was only clear upon later reflection. I have felt God's presence in each of these moments.

Thank you for supporting my family and me as we have grown that family and built a life here in Pelham. It has been a blessing to know that living here, so far from our biological families, we have had a family of choice that surrounded us with love.

In *Pirkei Avot*, Ben Bag Bag teaches: "Turn it and turn it because everything is contained within it." He is referring to the Torah, and the truth that we hold tight to, that the Torah speaks to every aspect of our lives, even thousands of years

Here we are.

This is my last article for *Hakol*. Not surprisingly, I find myself reflecting on where we started. Six years ago, in my first article, I focused on the five senses and how life at the PJC touches each of them. Now, at the end of my time here, I am drawn to the intangible ways that I have experienced the PJC, how I have felt to be a part of this warm and

after it was given. But *Pirkei Avot* teaches us that Torah can also describe the life that we lead and the community that we create.

We can say with equal certainty, regarding the Pelham Jewish Center, “turn it and turn it, because everything is contained within it.” This small and vibrant community is vibrant because of its intimacy. It is powerful because it contains within it the ability to touch every aspect of our lives, so long as we are willing to turn it and enter inside. This community thrives, not because of the efforts of one individual or small group, but because each member of the community is committed to it and to the people who are a part of it.

It has been a blessing and a privilege to serve as your Rabbi for these six years. I look forward to learning about what comes next for this *kehillah kedoshah*, this sacred community. May you go from strength to strength, and continue to live lives of meaning and commitment, connected to one another, our sacred traditions, and the covenant that binds us to the Divine.

Alex

## Education Director's Message



Yehoshua ben Prachiah and Nitai HaArbeili received from them (Yossi ben Yoezer and Yossi ben Yochanan). Yehoshua said: Make for yourself a Rav (a teacher); acquire for yourself a friend; and judge every person on the positive side.

*Pirkei Avot*, 1:6

The date is June 17, 2015. At 6:00 PM, I meet the PJC's new rabbi, Alex Salzberg, for coffee in New Rochelle. We talk about the Learning Center and both of us share our vision for the future. Before leaving the meeting, I share with Rabbi Salzberg that unfortunately I will not be able to be at the PJC on July 1st to welcome him on his first day in office - since I will be having a small kidney donation surgery in Portland, Maine. I believe my new counterpart wasn't thrilled to have his first day at the PJC with a brand new office manager - Julia Coss has been just hired - and no Education Director onsite...Kindly and patiently, he wished me *Refu'ah Shlema* and I could already feel from that first meeting that I had found a *Rav* - what I didn't know then is that I also

ended up finding myself a true friend, and an inspirational role model.

That happened three weeks later, on July 11, 2015. On Shabbat morning, I came for Shabbat services at the PJC and asked to say *Birkat HaGomel* - the special blessing we say after recovering from illness or returning from a dangerous journey. Still recovering from surgery, and under a lot of painkillers, I was a little wobbly when I came down from the *bima*. Rabbi Salzberg - who was seeing me only for the second time since our coffee meeting back in June - sensed that I wasn't stable - and rushed to help me walk down the steps. I felt moved and embraced in his kindness and support, with his empathy and care. I have cherished and remembered his simple and heartfelt gesture each time since.

From then on, I have had the immense honor of sharing the leadership of the Learning Center with a partner that was wholly committed to the development and enrichment of the Jewish Educational experiences we provide for our kids. No idea was too far-fetched or too crazy - I always knew I had a partner that will walk not only the extra mile, but carry me towards it if needed - as he physically did on that Shabbat morning.

A year later, upon my return from my first visit with the Cuban Jewish Community, I shared with Rabbi Salzberg how impressed I was with the youth in the Cuban community. I said I hoped we could bring our teens to Havana to experience the vibrancy of their community. That idea was picked up not only by the Rabbi, but also by Leah Leonard, who rallied our teen parents, so six months later, with one year and a half of experience as a Rabbi, we led together a challenging Teen *Tikkun Olam* Trip to Cuba. Upon our arrival to Havana, just before *Kabbalat Shabbat*, Rabbi Salzberg was asked if he could share some words of Torah during *Kabbalat Shabbat*. Although we have tried to plan together every detail of the trip, a *Dvar Torah* on that Friday night, after a day that started at JFK at 5:00 AM that morning, wasn't one of the things we had planned for. Our teens and the Cuban teens took turns leading the Friday night *Kabbalat Shabbat* service, and Rabbi Salzberg pulled out of his hat a beautiful teaching connecting the Torah portion of that week, *Parashat Yitro*, and the wondrous miracle we were experiencing all together at that moment. Among the many memorable things we experienced together on that trip, what I will personally forever remember is that it was first time I wrapped tefillin, under Rabbi Salzberg's caring guidance and support.

It's now May 2021. Six years have passed since the Salzberg family, who arrived to our community with their adorable daughter Eliza, has now shared with us two *brit milah* ceremonies of their two younger sons, Nathaniel and Matan. We have shared many beautiful and memorable moments together,

and truly become connected on many different levels. How can we even start talking about Rabbi Salzberg's caring leadership and guidance without mentioning his life partner, the one and only Clara Salzberg, a true *Eshet Chayil*, a woman of valor. Amongst her uncountable impactful actions and thoughtful weaving of the Salzberg family's close meshing within our community, I will always cherish the guidance and support she gave to Rabbi Alex, enabling him to always be at his best and serve the community selflessly. Early on, Clara took the leadership of the Tot Shabbat program, a successful and popular program she created to engage young families with children in ages 0-3 in a lovely family-oriented Shabbat experience.

Together with Rabbi Alex, Clara led a few family-oriented musical second *sedarim*, unforgettable *Purim Shpiels* of incredible creativity and poignancy, *Meshugah-Chefs*, Shabbat dinners, attending all Family programming at the LC, and on top of all, inviting our Hebrew High School Teens once a month for dinner in their home exactly at the time their little kids need to go to bed. I remember I used to ask Rabbi Alex in our weekly meetings, did you tell your wife how much you love her? To which he would always respond, Yes!

This was a family affair, and one cannot possibly imagine the many intricate details and careful planning that was done behind the scenes in order for the Salzberg family enterprise to smoothly work through the unique embroidery of our community, including bringing both sets of grandparents, aunts and uncles from afar for long weekends when our community had too many things going on. Their love, commitment, care and devotion will leave a long lasting impression in the changes and innovations they brought to our communal life. From all the exchanges I have had with both Alex and Clara, there was never one word of *lashon hara* - gossip - which at times would have been so natural in these circumstances. They naturally embody the Jewish values in their daily life, and we were all so blessed for their presence amongst us.

Especially this year, with the COVID19 pandemic, I do not know how Clara and Rabbi Alex found the strength to support our community without taking a well deserved vacation. Rabbi Salzberg was our rock, the spiritual and empathetic leader during the time we most needed it - and sailed through the seas of uncertainty and challenge without taking a week off from our online *Shabbatot* - which were so meaningful and important in maintaining the strong bonds between our members and supporting each one of us during these times.

*Modah Ani*, I say thank You, G-d, for bringing to our community this very special *neshamah*, soul, who infused our Learning Center with creativity, innovation, excitement, and above all, with authentic learning experiences - such as making sure each and every child shook the *lulav* in every *Sukkot*

celebration since 2015. Rabbi Salzberg would kneel down to speak with our youngest at eye level, and patiently explain to each and every one of our kids how to shake the lulav. We must have hundreds of pictures of our kids, year after year, shaking the lulav next to their rabbi. There was always time for the Learning Center in Rabbi Salzberg's agenda - and we have so much to thank him for. I know these are just small snippets of a big picture of his great love for Judaism, of learning and teaching. I am hoping these small anecdotes can help express how much you mean to me personally and to our LC's families and students.

I am sure that the Salzberg family's future community in Baltimore will be blessed to have them as they continue to infuse love and kindness all around.

Wishing Alex, Clara, Eliza, Nathaniel and Matan a safe and a continued wondrous journey. My blessing to you comes from the Torah Portion for the week of May 16-22, *Parashat Naso*, when we read about the Priestly blessing,

May the Lord bless you and watch over you

ברךך יהוה וישמךך

May the Lord cause His countenance to shine to you and favor you

יאר יהוה פניו אליך ויחנוךך

May the Lord raise His countenance toward you and grant you peace

ישא יהוה פניו אליך וישם לך שלום

They shall bestow My Name upon the children of Israel, so that I will bless them

וישמו את-שמי על-בנוי ישראל ואני אברךם

Missing you already, my dear Rabbi, my friend, my partner and my confidant. Go in peace, and may peace be with you and your loving family. You leave us at the PJC with fond memories and a beautiful, long-lasting legacy.

Thank you for your love and your dedication.

Ana



## President's Message

Dear Fellow Congregants,

Much is happening at the PJC as we wind down this school season and fiscal calendar year. We will be saying goodbye to Rabbi Salzberg who has spent the past six years creating a warm and inclusive community. He and Clara will be missed. If you would like to share a memory or write a tribute to the Salzbergs, send it to [holidays@thepjc.org](mailto:holidays@thepjc.org) ASAP.

Come July 1, we will welcome Rabbi Resnick and begin a new chapter of PJC services and leadership. There is no doubt that Rabbi Resnick will bring much excitement to our community. We will all need to be open to what is new which is a value in itself.

One new feature going forward is an enhancement of religious services thanks to the generosity of several members. We will be retaining our fellow

congregant, Jack Klebanow, as a part-time Shabbat music and prayer leader. Rabbi Resnick and Jack have devised a plan to enrich our Shabbat services.

I am really looking forward to this new experience. I expect many of you who have enjoyed Jack's contributions over the past year will enjoy this new format as well. Please stay tuned.

As always, I wish all of you a blessed month.

*David*

## A Message from the Editor of *Hakol*



Dear Friends,

May is a busy month at the PJC. We honored our dynamic duo, Ana & Neco Turkiencz with our tributes, our talent and our donations. I was surprised to learn how talented members of the PJC are. Liz, thank you for a wonderful evening.

On May 16th, we will be celebrating the inauguration of the Rosenberg Torah - just in time for *Shavuot*. *Erev Shavuot* we will be studying the *Book of Ruth* together with our friends from the JPC Church in Mount Vernon. On Tuesday, the second morning of *Shavuot*, Jennie Driesen will enchant us with her beautiful rendition of the *Book of Ruth*.

According to Rabbi Jan Urbach of JTS, the Scroll of Ruth -- which we read on *Shavuot* -- is about creating a Torah of *chesed* (loving kindness). She notes that the book of Ruth is all *aggadah* (storytelling) and not *halacha* (law). The exceptional kindness of Ruth towards her mother-in-law, Naomi, and of Boaz towards Ruth describes a path of human kindness resulting in the lineage of King David. Urbach posits that the Torah of law must be tempered by *aggadah* pointing us toward the path of Righteousness (*derekh eretz*).

On *Shavuot* we will be reading from our new Rosenberg Torah scroll.

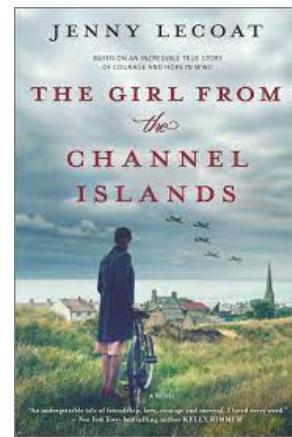
*Chag Shavuot Sameach,*

## April Book Notes

### ***The Girl From The Channel Islands***

Jenny Lecoat

Hedy Bercu, a lone refugee from Hitler's Austria, arrives at England's Channel Islands, a forsaken outpost which becomes occupied by the Nazis in 1938. Her struggle to survive after being labeled a "Jew" is beautifully described by Lecoat.



Hedy's language skills steer her into an unlikely job - translating between German and English in the Wehrmacht compound. There she is pursued by handsome, charming and sympathetic Lieutenant Kurt Neumann - a Nazi officer. Hedy's attempt to reconcile her Judaism with these unlikely scenarios as well as her friendships with the increasingly trapped and impoverished "locals" is the core of Lecoat's unforgettable story based on real events and people.

Hedy's bravery and tenacity to survive and "do the right thing" in her relationships propels this historical novel . With no means of escape, Hedy hides in plain sight, working as a translator for the Germans while silently working against them. As the war intensifies, Hedy's sense of danger is magnified. Her survival will depend not only on her courage, but on the community she has come to cherish and a man who should be her enemy.

Lecoat vividly recreates a time and place that has been forgotten. Her story is a riveting page turner.

*Barbara*

## Letter From Richard & Marijane Funess

Fellow Congregants,

Having read a past week's *HaKol* entry by Rabbi Salzberg, I found myself in that frame of mind which I call "sad-happy." The happiness emanated from the Hillel reference the Rabbi made which stated "do not separate yourselves from the community." And as the Rabbi said, this must work in *both* directions -- each of us should maintain *our* connection and the community as a whole should make space for every member to participate. The Zoom services were unique in that they filled the bill for the community at large to stay connected, but the in-person element was missing. The hybrid service which the Rabbi mentioned for an upcoming week's service is a breath of fresh-er air and should help us get back on track.

As for the "sad" part of sad-happy, while I will always feel connected to the PJC, the physical connection is coming to a close as Marijane and I are moving west to Tucson, Arizona in May. Looking back, many of our friendships over the past 26 years here in Pelham were first formed at the PJC. The honor of having my three children *Bar and B'nei mitzvah-ed* in the Sanctuary will always remain a highlight of our time in Pelham.

For me, the people, their faces, their silent nods of welcome while chanting opening Psalms of the Shabbat morning service as I walked down the left aisle to sit in my favorite spot (aisle chair, fourth row from front) cannot be forgotten. It was much more than just being a part of and sharing a religious service on a Saturday morning. It was experiencing a feeling of warmth from all the people in the Sanctuary whether I knew them well or not. It was a unique kind of closeness I will miss. We may not be physically here for the celebration of *Shavuot*, but the profound spiritual connection which Rabbi Salzberg mentioned will still be in play.

Best to All,  
Richard and Marijane Funess

## Thank You From The Lees

To Our Beloved PJC Community,

Thank you all for supporting us through Darren & Izak's bout with COVID. All the calls and texts showing your love and concern, the errands you ran for us, the delicious meals you cooked for us and delivered - kept us afloat during a scary time. We never felt alone (or hungry) and we will always be grateful.

Love the Lees,  
Darren, Claudia & Izak

## Food for Thought



Bundled together like sheaves of grain in the field, Boaz & Ruth share a blanket; Ruth lies at his feet symbolizing betrothal.

14th Century Illustration from the Wenzel Bible. Photo Austrian National Library, Vienna.

## 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 Liz Tzeto for a terrific Gala
- **Mazel Tov** to all our talented PJC performers
- **Mazel Tov** to Les & Sybil Rosenberg for inaugurating our new Torah
- **Thank you** Rabbi Salzberg for keeping our community together despite the restrictions of COVID; your kindness will be sorely missed

*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.](#)

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### Donations to the PJC from...

- Barry Erner & Melissa Dreyfus-Erner, with well wishes to Darren Lee for a full recovery to good health
- Leah & John Leonard and Family, in support of the PJC Learning Center, in loving honor of Ana & Neco Turkienicz
- David & Jeanne Radvany, in memory of Romina Levy's mother, Pauline Bonello
- Judy Shampanier & Michael Bowen, in memory of Romina Levy's mother, Pauline Bonello
- Ana & Neco Turkienicz, in memory of Romina Levy's mother, Pauline Bonello

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

- Donald & Marie Amoruso, the special section *Abraham & Melchizedek*, in honor of their dear friends -- Les & Sybil Rosenberg
- Liam Cepler, the letter *Yud*, in honor of his sister, Scarlett
- Scarlett Cepler, the letter *Gimmel*, in honor of her brother, Liam
- Julia Coss, in honor of two very special friends, Les & Sybil Rosenberg
- Elise Goldenberg, in honor of the PJC Learning Center
- Alfred & Shelley Klein, the special section *The Burning Bush*, in memory of their son -- Robert Klein
- Dan Kushnick & Janice Goldklang, in honor of their children -- Romy, Bennett & Julian
- David Ploski & Liz Tzeto, verse *Noach*, in memory of David's parents -- Walter & Pauline Ploski -- and in honor Rebecca's *Bat Mitzvah*
- Rabbi Alex & Clara Salzberg, *parashah Pinchas*, in honor of the PJC & Judaism's ability to grow to meet the needs of the Jewish people
- Ana & Neco Turkienicz, the word *Miriam*, in honor of Ana's mother -- Maria Nestrovsky Folberg

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!

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