

The Pelham Jewish Center



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Message from the Rabbi



A story is told about a synagogue infested with mice. Despite the best efforts of everyone involved, they could not get rid of the mice. They tried live traps. They tried blocking openings to the outside. They tried traditional traps. They brought in outside experts. Nothing worked. The mice seemed to believe that the synagogue and everything in it belonged to them.

One day, the leaders of the community were talking with the rabbi and happened to mention the problem with the mice. She thought for a moment, and then she said, "Tomorrow is *Shabbat*, I promise on Sunday the mice will be gone from our *shul*, for good."

That *Shabbat* the rabbi managed to give each mouse a *bar* or *bat mitzvah*. That afternoon, the mice left the synagogue - and they were never seen in *shul* again.

This joke reflects the reality in many synagogues across the country and around the world. Children are enthusiastic and diligent students. They and their families come to all the programs, they participate in services, they volunteer to help the community. Then, after the moment when the child should transition into an even more active member of the community, they disappear, believing that their Jewish education and participation has reached its conclusion.

I have seen this phenomenon first-hand at other synagogues and am eternally grateful that this is not the dynamic at the PJC. Our teens are engaged, each in their own way. Some continue with Hebrew High School. Others continue to lead services on *Shabbat*. Many volunteer their time as *madrichim* (counselors) for the younger children at the Learning Center. Teenagers are a much more frequent sight in our community

na'amenim (counselors) for the younger children at the Learning Center. Teenagers are a much more frequent sight in our community than the mice in that apocryphal story.

Over the many dinners that I had at my home with the teens in our Hebrew High School last year, one thing that quickly became apparent was their deep engagement with the world around them. Our teens are aware of what is happening in the world, concerned about what it means for them and have a strong desire to have an impact on it.

Over this summer, Ana and I spent a lot of time thinking about how we can better meet this need for the teens in our community. We have created a program that we believe will satisfy this desire and reinforce the truth that Judaism can be a living part of our lives no matter our age.

We have partnered with Shaarei Tikvah, the Conservative congregation in Scarsdale. They have noticed a similar desire and need among their teens. Together, we are launching a program called *Gesher* (bridge). We envision *Gesher* as a bridge that connects Jewish childhood - when parents and teachers tell us what it means to be Jewish - and Jewish adulthood - when we each make our own decisions about how to be an active and committed Jew in the world. We have hired Sarah Parkes, a beloved *bar/bat mitzvah* tutor, to lead this group.

Sarah recently graduated from the University of Michigan, she has been working at schools and camps since. Her focus has been on helping everyone feel welcome and included in society, both in Jewish and non-Jewish contexts. This past summer, after leading a Birthright Israel trip, she spent time in Bologna, Italy, taking an intense course on *gelato* - its history, meaning, significance and how to make it.

The core of *Gesher* will be monthly meetings on Sundays. During these meetings there will be a chance to eat and relax. There will always be an opportunity to do acts of *tikkun olam*, the social justice work that is so meaningful for our teens. At the beginning of the year, Sarah will plan and organize everything; as the year progresses, our teens will have the chance to develop and implement their own projects, focusing on the issues that mean the most to them.

The highlight of the year will be a service trip to Puerto Rico. Much like our trip to Cuba almost three years ago, this will be a chance for our teens to immerse themselves in the community, do important work with people who are struggling, and connect to the Jewish values that we hope will inform their lives.

It is a good time to be a teen at the PJC.

If you would like more information on this program, please reach out to Ana (edudir@thepjc.org) or me (rabbi.salzberg@thepjc.org).

If you would like to support this program, please be in touch with Julia (office@thepjc.org).

Alex

Rabbi Alex Salzberg

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Education Director's Message



*"We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language.
That may be the measure of our lives"*
Toni Morrison

As *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish New Year, approaches, we start anew our yearly reflection. We take stock of what happened in our lives since last year. One year ago, in *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, we articulated our pledges into words. We've offered G-d and ourselves, with all our hearts and best intentions, our honest and well-meant vows. One year later, we ask ourselves - what happened since then? Do we even remember the words we used, the promises we made? Maybe we pledged something about being better sons and daughters, better parents, better siblings, better friends, better Jews, better human beings. To be more present, to listen, to give more of our time to others. To donate more, to be kinder, more patient and more steadfast. Where did all those words go? Where did

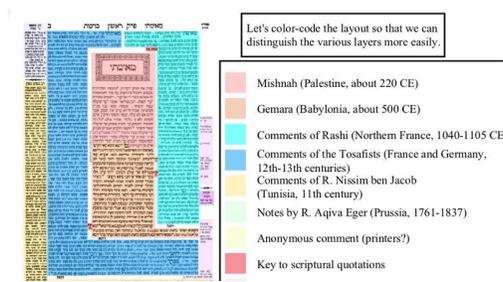
all our vows go?

Luckily, the Jewish calendar provides us, year in and year out, with the possibility of renewal, to make it right. And the Hebrew language, the language of the *Torah*, allows us to expound on the meaning of our traditions, helping us to magnify and deepen our Jewish practice. For example, the name of this holiday: the word "*Shanah*" comes from the three-letter Hebrew root: *shin, nun, hey* - "*shane*"- which also means: change. On *Rosh Hashanah*, we have an opportunity to change, to look back at our previous year and engage in soul searching (certainly one of our least favorite scavenger hunts). With some hard work, and honest reflection, we may arrive at the Ten Days of Atonement with a laundry list of things we wish to atone for. A list of changes we would like to lead in our lives. The word "*Rosh*" has the same Hebrew root as the word "*Reshit*"- meaning first, beginning; therefore, *Rosh Hashanah* can be seen as the opportunity to lead change, to start change. In our own personal way. All in our own words, our own language. Language can create worlds and can destroy them as well. Language can give us a second chance or chastise our existence. And especially this year, we are witnessing how words and the misuse of language are creating a whole new reality around us, in America and in the world.

We are surrounded by *TMI*- too much information; we struggle to filter what comes into our daily news feed, our inbox, or twitter accounts. Being the "People of the Book", the ones who believe in the power of language, the power of words, we must be cautious when taking in the vast amount of words thrown at us and at our children from different media outlets. Especially since our children need to learn from us that words have power. How can we teach them the power of language if they themselves are drowning under the overload of information they are bombarded with every day (and night)? It seems that with increasing possibilities of expression, comes increased responsibility; the need to exercise prudence, due diligence and vigilance when writing, recording, talking, texting, and forwarding stories we aren't sure are true or not. We are witnessing a time when words are thrown out as if they had zero value. As if they were powerless. But we know better. Let's fulfill our mission on this Earth and be the guardians of language; the guardians of words and how they are being used. Let's make sure that our words promote *Tikkun Olam* (world healing) and not its destruction, or the destruction of others.

I believe that for some reason we, the Jewish People, have been commanded to keep our Sacred Book intact. As we are taught in *Pirkei Avot*, The Ethic of our Fathers, 1:1: "*Be cautious in rendering a decision, rear many students, and build a fence to protect the Torah.*" We are commanded to keep the *Torah* pristine, so its words and text will remain true throughout the ages. The fact that the *Torah* was protected and unchanged for millennia is the reason why our sages could exchange opinions and add commentaries about it throughout the times. They were able to ponder and question every letter, word and verse written in our sacred texts. Because our ancestors looked at those words with reverence, we can continue grappling with the text and capture conversations from the point they left open, across places and time. And that comes with responsibility. The responsibility of honoring words and being guardians of language. Not only our language, the Hebrew language, which we have preserved for thousands of years. Any language. Any words.

This past summer, thanks to the kindness and generosity of members in our community, I was fortunate to spend three weeks living in Jerusalem, volunteering and studying *Torah* and *Talmud* at the Conservative *Yeshiva*. I am so thankful for having been gifted with this opportunity. This was a real treat, one that I hope each and every one in our community will be able to experience some time in their life. What fascinated me more than anything else in this learning experience was the fact that in the *Talmud*, the debates were recorded with much care and respect; they were written around the original verse from the *Torah* that initially sparked the debate-and the exchange of opinions and exploration of meaning continued throughout the centuries. Questions asked by rabbis hundreds of years before sometimes remained unanswered for a long time, until another group of sages was born, in a different period and country. They would look at those words with a new perspective, sometimes rephrase the question, look at it from a different viewpoint, ingrained in the socio-political context they were living at that specific time, and then try to answer, albeit sometimes only a fraction of it. The conversation would be recorded and remain open, until years later, when a new generation of sages would give their best to try to resolve the same issue from their perspective. The different layers and opinions are all recorded on the same page of *Talmud* - a legacy of pluralism and respectful discourse to be imitated and to serve as a legacy to us and our future generations.



At times, I had tears in my eyes - yes, you know me - even a page of *Talmud* can make me cry, as I reflect on the state of discourse in our time. And I know you know what I mean. The cardinal question is: Are we able to rescue our ability to treat words and opinions with the same respect and reverence, of our ancestors? Can we? Do we still believe this is our legacy, as Jews, parents, siblings, friends, human beings on this earth - to emphasize how much words are the measure of our lives - so that our lives will have meaning even after we pass from this world into the other one - where we will be asked if we did all we could to keep human dignity sacred and intact? This and every year, as we renew our vows to G-d and to ourselves, let's make an intentional effort in line with our Jewish tradition-- and be the guardians of language. We have a responsibility, and it's on us - "*Aleinu*", as our final prayer says.

"Language is the measure of our lives."

Thank you, Toni Morrison, for reminding us of that. May your memory be a blessing.



Wishing each and every one at the PJC community,

- * A year of new promises and renewed vows.
- * A year of meaningful words and thoughtful actions.
- * A year of fruitful discourse and profound grappling with words of *Torah*.
- * A year of joy of learning and healthy living.

Shanah Tovah U'Metukah,

Ana

Ana Turkienicz
Education Director

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President's Message



The summer months can get a little sleepy at the PJC, with less going on, people away or out enjoying the weather. Attendance is a little lighter, the atmosphere becomes a little more casual along with the attire, and the house starts to feel a little more "homey". All the more so this summer, with Rabbi Salzberg out on paternity leave for much of it leaving the mice to play. Occasionally a question came up during services about this or that and someone (never me) came up with an answer. Some of us even ventured out from our regular seat a few times, it was nuts. Many members stepped up to lead, organize and give *divrei torah*, sometimes spontaneously (and a very big thank you to those who did - Roger Krulak, Mark Levine, Gary Trachten, Jeremy Schulman, Shelley Klein, Barry Emer, Michael Weissman, Joel Serebransky, Sheldon Horowitz, Rachel Radvany, Steve Martin, Jack Klebanow, Rhonda Singer, Joel Peck, Darren Lee, Audrey Beerman, Ana Turkienicz, Maria Abeshouse, Michael Teitelbaum, Ivan Corwin and any others I've forgotten).

Just like many of us take our vacations from work and the stresses of life in the summer, the PJC also sort of takes it easy this time of year. And just like many of us experience when the vacation ends and we face those first few days back at work, summer's end at the PJC means facing the coming *Yamim Noraim*, the Days of Awe. In truth, the nuts and bolts of planning the High Holidays begin long before the dog days end, but now is when it shifts to a higher gear and things start to (hopefully) fall in place.

So far, everything that's fallen has landed in the right place. Yet the practicalities of getting everything scheduled, ordered and in place are not the only things that, in my view, we as an institution need to tend to as we look to the High Holidays. *Teshuvah* - repentance - is just as important, or even more important, and definitely more difficult. *Teshuvah* isn't normally thought of as being a collective activity. True, we do it communally when we get together during services, but we still have to do it individually - each of us looking inward in an effort to take an honest assessment of ourselves. This is necessary, but is it all that's necessary? Does *teshuvah* apply only to individuals? Of all the things Judaism is and can be, one thing it hasn't ever been is individualistic, which leads me to think that the PJC - as an institution and as a community - needs to do the work of *teshuvah* too.

I can't say I have any idea how exactly we go about doing this collectively; I don't think we can form a committee. We have some time though, it's still summer. But as we approach the Holidays let's begin to think about where we as a community have fallen short and how we can do better in the coming year and beyond.

Mike

Mike Dvorkin

President, Pelham Jewish Center

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A Message from the Editor of HaKol

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the new, streamlined version of *HaKol* (5779-5780). As we start a new decade, I hope to make *HaKol* look more like a magazine. To this end, two new columns will be added - The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah D'var* and Congregants' Corner. If you miss a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* or simply want to review the words of *Torah* taught by our celebrant, this column is the place to go.

If you have an idea that is Pelham Jewish Center-related, or want to share your thoughts and feelings about a PJC or Learning Center event, The Congregants' Corner can be your voice. Simply, e-mail me your idea. When approved, send in your column by The 15th of the month in which the article will appear. This will enable me to format and add your thoughts to the upcoming *HaKol*.

As we enter the period of introspection (*Yamim Noraim*), you may wish to share your thoughts on preparing for the High Holidays. *HaKol* will make space for you.

Wishing you and your loved ones a happy, healthy and meaningful New Year,

שנה טובה ומתוקה

Barbara

Barbara Saunders-Adams
Communications Director

madamadam1955@gmail.com

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A Message from the Programming Chair

Did you know that members of the Pelham Jewish Center are invited to attend the monthly Board meetings? Board meeting dates appear on the PJC website calendar.

As the PJC's new Programming Director, I hope to continue the programs guided by my predecessor, Mimi Steinberg, as well as add fresh ideas.

The first program scheduled is the Welcome Back/New Member BBQ and Shabbat Service on Friday, September 13th. Please attend and share your summer fun with us. Kids can bring their camp songs.

Other programs in the mix include ways for congregants to connect, such as our Friday night dinners and Holiday celebrations. We are interested in your input for such events and small group gatherings. Another suggestion is a child-friendly activity utilizing our new movie projector. Additional programs percolating are play-readings with our theater enthusiasts (aka the PJC Players); trivia contests, cooking events and a *Shul-In*, including a *Scholar-in-Residence*.

I'm excited to have this opportunity to serve the congregation along with my husband, Marc Shepherd.

Please e-mail me your thoughts (wendyprinceesq@aol.com). Or better yet, stop by and visit us - our puppy Maple is ALWAYS in the mood for company.

Wendy

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Join Us at the PJC for the High Holidays



We are so fortunate to have **Rabbi Salzberg** and **Avinoam Segal** lead our community in beautiful, intellectually stimulating and emotionally engaging services. We have a full program of related activities throughout the High Holidays.

We encourage you to try something new this year. Give yourself a chance to experience, in a new way, what makes the PJC's High Holidays so special. A number of our programs and activities require RSVPs, including:

- Non-Member, Guest and Youth Registration
- Listing Loved Ones in the Scroll of Remembrance
- Participating in Sukkot Programs
- Ordering a Lulav and Etrog
- Renting a Sukkah

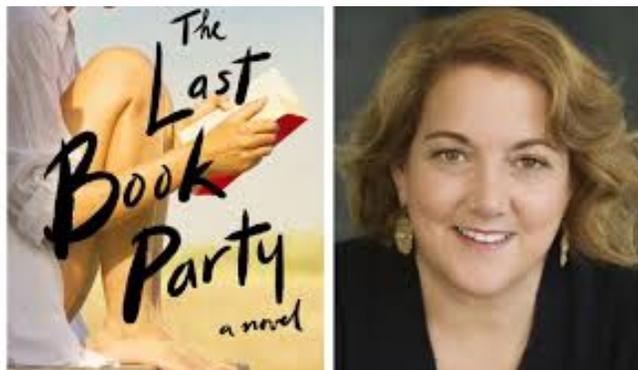
As we are no longer using paper registration forms, all replies should be made by clicking the link to our online sign up form, which you will find [here](#). Information is also available on the PJC website. If you have any requests, problems or questions, please email Jacqueline Stein at holidays@thepjc.org.

We have a full program of related activities throughout the High Holidays, a schedule for which you will find by clicking [here](#). For our comprehensive High Holiday packet of services and program, click [here](#). We look forward to seeing you at the PJC throughout the High Holidays, and we wish you and your family a healthy,

happy and sweet New Year!

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PJC Book Notes: September 2019



The Last Book Party

by Karen Dukess

Enter the bohemian world of 1980's writers and artists in picturesque Cape Cod. Eve Rosen is a young, Jewish, publisher's assistant with aspirations of becoming a writer. She is invited to attend a party at the home of a writer from the *New Yorker* and experiences an undercurrent of *Anti-Semitism*. Despite this, the romance of the dunes and the "beautiful people" tug at Eve like the tide. She becomes a research assistant to the famous Henry Grey, of *New Yorker* fame and gets more than she bargained for.

Some of Eve's musings hit home. I remember feeling like this in my twenties - -

" I made my way through a group of people surrounding a wooden table, disappointed to discover it held nothing but a platter of deviled eggs and a small bowl of mixed nuts. Did the scant amount of food explain why everyone seemed so thin, their bodies as

straight as their hair? I didn't regard myself overweight, a little soft around the edges, but as I stood among these angular people ... I felt shamefully curvy." And, Eve's struggle to find an authentic writer's "voice" is familiar to all aspiring writers.

Dukess' repartee is crisp and the descriptions of Cape Cod will bring back memories to anyone who has been there. As Eve gets more and more entangled in Cape Cod's artistic life, she learns some hard truths about herself and those she admires.

The Last Book Party was written by our own Karen Dukess. Karen will discuss her new book at the PJC Book Group on September, 8th in the PJC library. A book signing will follow.

Barbara Saunders-Adams

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Bat Mitzvah D'var Torah – Mira Schulman



In this week's Torah portion, *Shoftim*, Moses lists several laws for the Israelites to follow, more specifically for judges, tribes, and officials. He addresses the topic of fairness. Moses also gives guidelines for the Israelites involving sacrifices, kings and territories. During the process of understanding my *parsha*, I developed a question: What does it really mean to treat people equally or fairly?

Vayikra, Chapter 19, verse 18 gives a famous answer to this question. It reads "And you shall love your fellow as yourself." I believe this means that you should treat others the way you would like to be treated. For example, when I am with my friends, I offer to help them with their homework because I would want them to help me with mine. There is also a story from the *Babylonian Talmud* about this topic. A man told the first century scholar Shammai that he (*Shammai*) could convert him to Judaism only if *Shammai* could teach the man the whole *Torah* while he (the man) stood on one foot. *Shammai* turns him away. The man, still desperate, approaches the scholar *Hillel* with the same question, and *Hillel* converts him saying, "That which is despicable to you, do not do to your fellow, this is the whole *Torah*, and the rest is commentary, go and learn it." Therefore, *Hillel* was implying that treating others with fairness is the most important message of the *Torah*; a lesson so short and simple that it can be learned while standing on one foot. Additionally, the man should not have asked *Hillel* to fulfill such a ridiculous request, as the man would not have wanted to do it himself.

I saw the importance of kindness and fairness when volunteering at Willow Towers, an assisted living home in New Rochelle. I played games with the senior citizens, helped to set up activities and had conversations with them. Despite the major differences in age and backgrounds, I felt as if we played important roles in each other's lives. While interacting, I asked about their childhoods and hobbies. They would often ask me to repeat what I had said, and I would patiently answer. I knew if I couldn't understand what someone was saying to me, I would want them to repeat it. Once, I was walking past a group of residents, when one woman stopped me. When she was told I was volunteering for my *Bat Mitzvah* project, the woman asked me to remind her of the song often played at Jewish parties. When I said "*Hava Nagila*," she started to sing it and asked me to sing with her. As I sang with her, I noticed how happy she seemed, and it made me feel good, to know that I was brightening her day by treating her with kindness.

I also saw how people can treat others the way they don't want to be treated. I had just finished making "get well" cards for the residents who are hospitalized. While the cards were getting passed around for the other residents to sign, one woman made it clear that she did not want to sign the card because she didn't like the man who was sick. (It turns out, she was confused and thinking of someone else and eventually did sign it.) Still, I realized how she was not acting with kindness at first. If someone had refused to sign *her* card, I'm sure she would not have been happy. So rather than treating the man how she would've wanted to be treated, she did the opposite: she treated the man in a way that she would *not* have wanted to be treated herself. If we want others to be kind towards us, then we should be kind towards them.

After reviewing *Vayikra* and the story from the *Babylonian Talmud*, I noticed a significant difference between them. The first answer, "You shall love your fellow as yourself" is saying that if you would like someone to do something for you, you should do it for them. On the other hand, *Hillel's* answer is the opposite: don't do something for someone if you wouldn't want it done to you, similar to the woman not wanting to sign the card for the man in the hospital. I realized that "loving your fellow as yourself" is a positive way to look at fair treatment. Rather than focusing on what you shouldn't do, focus on what you should do and what would benefit others. Therefore you should treat someone fairly by treating them as yourself.

Chapter 16, verse 20 of this week's reading states, "Justice, justice you shall pursue. This

means that we should always be kind to others and that our job is to chase fairness and equality. Fulfilling this commandment is crucial because it will make the world a kinder, more positive place. Thank you for coming to my *Bat Mitzvah*. *Shabbat Shalom!*

Mira

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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 **Barbara Saunders-Adams**.

This will continue to be a regular *Hakol* feature, so keep your news and updates coming!

- **Mazal Tov** to Rabbi Salzberg, Clara, Eliza and Nathaniel on the birth of their son and brother, Matan Knox.
- **Mazal Tov** to the Schwarz family on the occasion of Phoebe's *Bat Mitzvah*.
- **Mazal Tov** to the Schulman family on the occasion of Mira's *Bat Mitzvah*.

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Tributes & Donations



Make Tributes & Donations **ONLINE!**

Donations to the PJC from...

- The NY Community Trust -- Herbert & Edythe F. Benjamin Fund, in support of the Learning Center, at the recommendation of Jason & Tracie Cohen
- Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, in honor of Dr. David Haft
- Jeremy & Jennie Driesen, in honor of Adam Kagan and his work with the Progressive Women of Pelham
- Jeremy & Jennie Driesen, in honor of Ethan & Mabel Teitelbaum's *mikvah* ceremony, and in honor of their parents, Michael & Alexy
- Barry & Melissa Dreyfus Emer, with wishes for a speedy recovery for both Les & Sybil Rosenberg
- Sophie Frankel, in support of our new Torah
- Phil & Abbey Goldstein, in honor of Cheryl Goldstein & Marcelo Nacht on the occasion of their 35th wedding anniversary
- Florence Grossman, in memory of her beloved husband, Bill
- Adam & Kate Lauzar, in memory of Claudia Lee's brother, Craig Braginsky
- Dan Mailick & Lydia Read, in memory of Claudia Lee's brother, Craig Braginsky
- Matthew & Rebecca Schwarz, for their kind donation of our new Transgender Bathroom sign
- Judy Shampianier & Michael Bowen, in honor of Michael Dvorkin becoming President of the PJC Board
- Judy Shampianier & Michael Bowen, in honor of Leah Leonard, for her service to the PJC

Donations to the PJC in Support of the Professional Development Trip to Israel of Ana Turkienicz and Elise Goldenberg from...

- Spencer & Ronnie Barback
- Hal & Audrey Beerman
- Larry & Diane Cohen
- Martin & Meryl Druckerman
- Barry & Jill Goldenberg
- Robert & Sandra Goldman
- David Haft & Jacqueline Schachter
- Daniel Kushnick & Janice Goldklang
- Marc & Elaine Prager
- Leah & John Leonard
- Steven & Hildy Martin
- Leslie & Sybil Rosenberg
- Steven & Heather Schneider
- Wendy Prince & Marc Shepherd

- Judy Shampianier & Michael Bowen

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

- Sandra Ellis, in honor of Rabbi Salzberg and the Salzberg Family
- Leslie & Sybil Rosenberg, in memory of Eva M. Lewin
- Leslie & Sybil Rosenberg, in memory of Eleanor Rosenberg
- Leslie & Sybil Rosenberg, in memory of Kenneth 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!

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