

HaKol The Voice of the Pelham Jewish Center

September 2020 5 Elul/Tishrei 5780–5781

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Dear PJC community,
Shalom and Shanah Tovah!

In Hebrew, the word *Shanah*, year, comes from the same root as the word "change". Which means, each year that starts, it's an opportunity for change. We are changed. The world has changed. That has been the case for the Jewish year 5780. But nothing prepared us for THIS much change. It would not be an overstatement to say that, as we approach the holiday *Rosh Hashanah*, this New Year of 5781, we have all been forever changed. Our lives, our families, our homes, our communities, our routines and traditions, all have changed so much, that saying that this will be a different year doesn't begin to describe the extent of this statement.

We not only experience change, we feel that so much is broken in our world, both internally and externally. The great poet Leonard Cohen, z"l, once said: "there is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in". And as we contemplate the rupture of normalcy, we also witness the light of goodness and kindness, the light of community and connection, beyond physicality. We see generosity and creative problem-solving. We see selfless giving and care.

Such has been my personal experience as I navigated the waters of the pandemic in search of solutions for the continuity of our Learning Center. First and foremost, the deep involvement and care from fellow PJC doctors who donated their time and expertise in counseling and advice so we can ensure the safety of our children, parents and faculty. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, to Dr. Debbie Korenstein, Dr. John Leonard, Dr. Carlos Salama, our medical advisors, who were always available to answer questions and to patiently guide us as we envisioned how the Learning Center would continue to deliver the highest level of Jewish educational experiences while keeping all our families safe. Thank you for your leadership and inspiration.

My thanks go also to Rabbi Alex Salzberg, whose summer was devoted to helping our community continue to connect beyond walls of brick and mortar. A summer of online *shivas* and online prayers, of weekly rounds of phone calls and checking in with each and every PJC congregant. Together with the PJC Board, and especially Marjut Herzog, and Mike Teitelbaum, our past and present Education Chairs, as well as Mitch Cepler, our Treasurer, I felt blessed for this partnership as we strengthen our commitment to the Jewish education of the PJC's future generations. This sacred work would not be possible without their deep and selfless support.

A while ago, I saw a video about *Kintsukuroi*- a Japanese tradition- which means "to repair with gold": the art of repairing broken pottery with gold or silver, understanding that the piece is even more beautiful for having been broken. Accepting the pain and struggles of the past is the path to build a better, richer, deeper, and more beautiful future. Our wholeness as a community includes our brokenness, and the story of each crack

illuminates another story, of how the light came into them.

The Japanese believe that when something suffers damage and has a history, marked by those golden lines, it makes it more beautiful. In our *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* liturgy, we chant a line: "*Ve hine kahomer b'yad hayotzer*" - we are like the clay in the hands of the potter. The Japanese tradition of repairing broken vessels with golden lines applies to us as well. All that we have gone through, doesn't make us less valuable, it makes us stronger and full of light. We are vessels, containers and holders of love, of Divine and human light flowing from one another. G-d molds us and offers us opportunities to bring into his pottery the golden lines of wisdom, generosity, and love. This is what community is all about and this is how I experienced our community when I most needed it. So much light!

In a few days, when we listen together to the sound of the *Shofar* as a community on this very different (*Shoneh*) *Rosh Hashanah*, we will listen to four different *Shofar* blows: *Tekiyah*, *Shevarim*, *Teruah*, and *Tekiyah Gedolah*. Each of these different *shofar* sounds emanate different levels of energy, different cries from our hearts up to heaven. The second sound, *Shevarim*, means in Hebrew "broken pieces". Every year, when we listen to the call of the *shofar*, we are called to reflect on our existence and what is the true calling of our heart. This *Rosh Hashanah*, when we hear the call of "*shevarim*", let's focus on our call for light to come into our broken world.

The *Hassidic* masters associate the *shofar* in itself with the first breath of life blown by G-d into the first human being, Adam, in the story of Creation. The *Hassidic* tradition believes G-d is the infinite light; therefore, the first blow into the human soul was a blow of light, as we read in the *Book of Bereshit*, "He blew into his nostrils a soul of life." The *Zohar* explains the expression "blew" to mean that just as when a person blows he is giving out from his deep inner self; so too, G-d blew from His "inner self" a spark of G-d-liness into man. The blow of the *shofar* reminds us of the holiness of our soul and of our mission to live a meaningful life with values and love as we use both body and soul.

In order to pray very specific prayers, such as the Mourners' *Kaddish*, Jewish tradition requires a presence of at least 10 Jewish adults. We came together as a community throughout the pandemic and held each other as we all grappled with how to mend together the pieces of our lives. We stood together with our mourners; by showing up for prayers and *shivas* we brought with us the golden gift of human support. This *Rosh Hashanah*, we are called to continue to be there for each other, for the fellow human beings around us. To be accountable and bring a new golden light repairing the darkness of loss and brokenness.

The Learning Center strives to be that light, bringing the spark of Judaism into our homes and hearts. We create from each class a small community of students and parents, in-person and online, with the goal of helping each and everyone of our students feel comfortable, supported, and loved. Our teachers spent the summer learning and preparing to overcome social distancing with "connectedness" and much empathy and understanding. Many years from now, when we tell the story of these times, I am hoping we will be able to recall how the light of our community and Judaism helped us overcome and sustained us with meaning and spirituality. How we were able to fill the fractures with gold and silver and transform our vessels into even more exquisite and beautiful ones. I

am hoping we will feel proud that we imparted our children with the most valuable message of Judaism: resilience based on learning and community.

May you and your family be blessed with light,
May our community continue to shine a new light
May our country and the world find healing and sanity
May G-d bless each and everyone of you with health, love and joy.

Shanah Tovah U'Metukah,

With Love,

Ana

President's Message

Dear Congregants,

Though the building is quiet, much is happening behind the scenes. Rabbi Salzberg, Ana Turkienicz and the PJC Board are working tirelessly to create authentic Jewish experiences.

Our High Holiday program is coming together beautifully. We have recorded prayers and songs by Avinoam and Havi Segal, reflections from our members and live streaming from the PJC with Rabbi Salzberg and a minyan. We trust this will effectively bring *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* into our homes. Rabbi Salzberg is creating a meaningful *chag* in this unfamiliar format that will serve all our families. Ana Turkienicz is fashioning engaging *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur* services for our children and youth which is so important for our most prized family members.

Our regular services in the sanctuary, alas, will have to wait for an effective vaccine since our older members are very concerned about the risks of returning before the pandemic has ended.

Our Zoom learning will ramp up after the High Holidays and will fulfill the important adult need for continuing Jewish study and learning. This may provide a new paradigm for greater engagement even though it is not the same as direct contact and discourse. So we may very well come through this with expanded programming.

Your feedback and ideas are valuable and I encourage all members to feel free to contact me at my email address: da.haft@live.com with any thoughts or issues concerning our community.

David

A Message from the Editor of *Hakol*



Dear Friends,

We have been getting ourselves ready for this unusual *Tishrei* 5781 High Holiday season. The Gift of Elul activities designed by Marjut Herzog, Joel Peck & Rabbi Salzberg have, hopefully, helped set us on the right path. We have been awakened to this time of introspection by the call of the *shofar*. Some of us have discussed the challenges of giving and receiving forgiveness, doing *teshuvah*, through the Israeli program, *Shtisel* and the book, "The Song of the Jade Lily". The *Meshugah* Chefs shared recipes for *Rosh Hashanah* dishes. And, Peter & Andrea Rothberg shared their backyard for the Second Annual *Elul* Wine Tasting.

We have been doing *tikkun olam*, acts to perfect the world, through the PJC Blood Drive, donations and delivery of food packages to families in need and donations to worthy causes. In October we will come together to clean up Orchard Beach.

Many of us have written personal reflections or introduced prayers and Torah portions for the High Holiday services. Others have volunteered to read *Torah* and *Haftarah*. We are joining our voices with those of Avinoam and Havi Segal, albeit virtually. We have given of ourselves to care for the Klein family in their time of darkness. This preparation will, hopefully, culminate with a year of joy, spirituality, tolerance and togetherness.

May the year 5781 bring *Shalom* for the entire PJC community.

Shanah Tovah U'Metukah!

Wishing you a Good and Sweet New Year.

Barbara

Bar Mitzvah D'var Torah/ Ben Sasson



Shavua Tov!

My Torah Portion, *Nitzavim-Vayelech*, is about following God's commands.

It outlines the rewards for following God, and it outlines the consequences of disobeying God. At the very end of this portion, Moses, while dying recites a poem to the congregation of Israel. While reading this portion, I wondered why God has to threaten and bribe the Jewish people to continue to be Jewish. Are we only Jewish because of the rewards and punishments? Or is there another reason why we should remain Jewish?

God threatens us saying that if we start believing in other gods and disobeying God's orders, we will be severely punished. God goes on to list twelve horrible things that will happen to us if we do not do everything God wants us to do. The idea that we remain Jewish because of the consequences, curses, and fallout of discontinuing our practice of Judaism may have at one point scared the ancient Israelites into obeying. But after multiple millennia of people not following God's instructions and not "perishing" or being essentially tortured -- and in many cases people who do follow God's instructions are the ones that are punished -- this idea of punishing people who do not believe in our God doesn't resonate for me. In my opinion, I think we should begin to question the merit of God's threats and whether they are a good reason to remain Jewish.

A very common reason that people remain Jewish is shared by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. He writes that many of us are Jewish because we were born that way; our parents are Jewish, their parents were Jewish, and so on for hundreds of years. This reason to remain Jewish means being born Jewish makes you inherently Jewish forever. He also writes that the curse that comes when you try to leave Judaism is that you can no longer pray with the community and celebrate religious holidays with them. This reasoning makes sense to me but I do not like the idea of being stuck in a certain position because you were born that way.

Rabbi Shira Milgrom interprets these curses to mean that some of God's threats are simply for being ungrateful. By leaving Judaism you are considered *ungrateful* for your heritage and your culture. This means that maintaining the laws of the covenant gives you directions of how to be grateful. So being blessed is recognizing what you have and being content with it.

God also promises some rewards for cooperating such as the land of Israel, wiping out our enemies, and helping us thrive and increase. While some of God's promises did come true, many did not. In many cases throughout history and even in some cases today, practicing Jews have been persecuted.

Rabbi Milgrom believes that the blessings described in the Torah include a responsibility. She writes, "You will need to fight for justice, even though that will be unpopular with those in power (hence the curse, or risk), but this will bring you a reason for being on this earth (a blessing)." For me, *tzedakah* is one of the most meaningful parts of being Jewish, and I agree with the idea that working for justice is a way to feel blessed.

In the beginning of my community service project before the virus reached New York, I volunteered to help serve dinner at the Hope Community service soup kitchen with Aidan Sinha in New Rochelle. I had never realized how just four minutes away from my house there were so many people that relied on the soup kitchens services for meals. I wanted to continue to volunteer there but the pandemic prevented me from doing so. Instead I started a food drive to continue helping out as best I could for the far from ideal circumstances. I was surprised by how many people donated supplies not just from the PJC, but from people throughout the Pelham community. Thank you to all the people who donated food and supplies.

The reason I personally remain Jewish is not because of the rewards or because I fear the punishments. I practice Judaism for multiple reasons. Because I was born that way and until now I had to, because I believe in *Tzedakah* and distributing wealth, and because I believe in a religion where the followers of God question and argue how to practice

Judaism. I appreciate being part of a religion where people like Rabbi Sacks and Rabbi Milgrom can interpret the Torah portion very differently and still both be respected Rabbis. I agree with Rabbi Sacks when he says that we can abandon Judaism, but there will be some consequences, if not from God from your community, such as losing the ability to pray with them and celebrate religious holidays with them. I also agree when he says that we did not give consent but we are born Jewish and therefore it at least partially defines us. While I may not believe in certain religious aspects in Judaism, I do believe in what our God stands for and what Judaism stands for.

I want to thank Ana Turkienicz and the Learning Center staff, Rabbi Salzberg, Jeremy Schulman and my family for helping me complete my *Bar Mitzvah*. My family put lots of effort into organizing it in a safe and responsible way.

Shavua Tov,

Ben

Book Notes September, 2020

Kaaterskill Falls

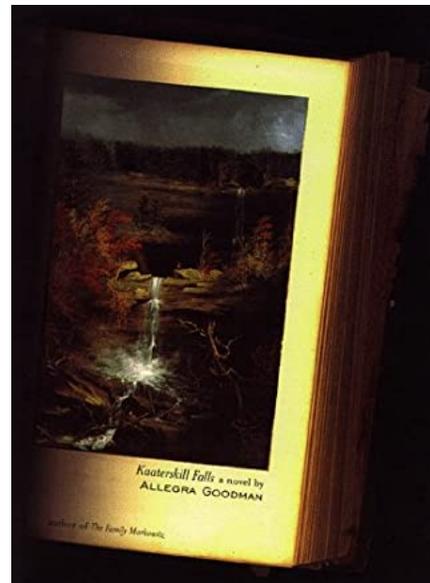
by Allegra Goodman

At the time I was reading this book, my husband and I drove to Kaaterskill Falls, an awesome place of multiple waterfalls and a terrifyingly steep gorge. This upper New York State wooded area is the back drop for Allegra Goodman's book, of the same name.

Set in the late 1970's, the ultra-Orthodox Kirshner sect, under the auspices of their leader,

Rav Elijah Kirshner, migrates from steamy New York City summers in Washington Heights to the woody

bungalows of Kaaterskill Falls. Women and children remain in Kaaterskill Falls for the summer; the men return from their NYC jobs on weekends.



The Rav's decisions rule the community's lives. Most willingly submit, but a few like Elizabeth Shulman, mother of five daughter's, strains to push the envelope toward individual freedom. The tension between submission to the society's norms and independent thought is the underpinning of this novel. Some couples are split --one desires strict observance, the other spouse strains for breathing room. How couples negotiate this difference in world view is the heart of Goodman's story. Her characters are well-drawn and deserving of our empathy. Ms. Goodman burrows into the minds of her characters with kindness and humor while exposing their strengths and flaws. If you sense a kinship with the Israeli series, *Shtisel*, you are right.

The Rav himself is a complex figure. Born in Germany before WWII, he grew up in a religious, but intellectually open family, enjoying all the benefits of German citizenship. A man of intellectual curiosity and admirer of the arts, he is disillusioned by the expulsion of Jewish citizens from Germany. Rav Kirshner recreates his community in Washington Heights. The Rav sees strict adherence to *halacha*, Jewish law, as the only way to

preserve Judaism -- even at the expense of intellectual freedom. His older son, Jeremy, a gifted reader of Torah and Jewish texts as well as a lover of world literature, shuns the Rav's constraints. Isaiah, the younger son, is not as gifted, but is a loyal follower of the Rav and heir apparent to the Rav's reign. In his heart, the Rav favors the brilliant Jeremy, but his legacy will be better preserved by Isaiah. The emotional struggles engendered by this triangle are both fascinating and revealing.

If you enjoyed watching *Shtisel*, you will like Kaaterskill Falls.

Barbara

High Holiday Happenings

Join Us for a Unique Combination of High Holiday Services Zoom, In-Person, and Livestream (PJC Website)



Rosh Hashanah

Zoom Seder: September 18, 5:30 pm

Livestream: September 19, 10:00 am - PJC website

Livestream: September 20, 10:00 am - PJC website

Tashlich & Shofar 4:00 pm

End *Rosh Hashanah* Together

Zoom: September 20, 7:35 pm

Yom Kippur

Zoom - *Yizkor* Service: September 27, 4:30-5:30 pm

Livestream - *Kol Nidre*: September 27, 6:25 pm

Livestream Services: September 28 10:00 am

Zoom Community Chat Rooms:

September 28, 7:25 pm

For more details click here:

[Rosh Hashanah ~ The-Ten-Days-of-Awe ~ Yom Kippur](#)

Food For Thought

I Am Invited to Life

I am invited to life. But
I see that my hosts show signs of fatigue and impatience.
Trees sway, clouds fall ever more
silent. Mountains move
from place to place, the heavens gape.
And in the nights, winds move around
objects uneasily, smoke, people, lights.

I sign the guestbook
of God: I was, I lingered
it was good, I enjoyed, I was guilty, I betrayed,
I was impressed by the reception
in this world.

- Yehuda Amichai

(Translated by Robert Alter)

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 our new Board Members:

- **David Haft -- President**
 - **Andrea Rothberg -- Executive Vice President**
 - **Lisa Neubardt -- Secretary**
 - **Michael Dvorkin -- Social Action Chair**
 - **Marjut Herzog -- Membership Chair**
 - **Daniel Kushnick -- Head of House**
 - **Jeremy Schulman -- Religious Practices Chair**
 - **Michael Teitelbaum -- Education Chair**
-
- ***Mazel Tov*** to **Ben Sasson**, son of **David & Gabrielle Sasson**, on the occasion of his ***Bar Mitzvah***
 - ***Mazel Tov*** to **Melissa & Brett Wishnia on the birth of their son**. And ***Mazel Tov*** to **Jill and Barry Goldenberg** as they welcome their first grandson,
 - **Owen Miles Wishnia**, born on August 12.
 - ***Mazel Tov*** to **Joel & Beth Serebransky** on the marriage of their daughter, **Hayley**,

to **Sal Parascandola** on September 6th.

- **Mazel Tov** to **Roger Krulak** and **Catherine Levene** on the birth of their daughter, **Julia Jade Victoria Krulak**.
- **Mazel Tov** to **Maurice Owen-Michaane** and **Michael Owen-Michaane** on the birth of their fourth child, **Eve Owen-Michaane**, sister of **Caleb, Abbie & Jacob**.
- **Mazel Tov** to **Ben Yelsey** on his engagement to **Paula Sosin**.

This will continue to be 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...

- Leonard & Judith Cooper, in memory of Len's mother, Gussie Cooper
- Leonard & Judith Cooper, in memory of Len's father, Jacob Cooper
- Leonard & Judith Cooper, in memory of Len's brother, Seymour Cooper
- Leonard & Judith Cooper, in memory of Len's sister, Anne Turok
- Leonard & Judith Cooper, in memory of Judy's mother, Alda DeScenza
- Michael & Michelle Dvorkin, in support of our Adult Education program
- Eleanor Einzig & Dan Perkis, in memory of Robert Klein, son of Alfred & Shelley Klein
- Adam & Kate Lauzar, in memory of Robert Klein, son of Alfred & Shelley Klein
- Jeremy & Sari Schulman, in memory of Robert Klein, son of Alfred & Shelley Klein
- Ana & Neco Turkienicz, in memory of Ana's father, Leonardo Folberg
- Ana & Neco Turkienicz, in honor of the birth of Barry & Jill Goldenberg's grandson, Owen Miles Wishnia
- Ana & Neco Turkienicz, in memory of Robert Klein, son of Alfred & Shelley Klein
- Ana & Neco Turkienicz, in memory of Neco's father, Israel Turkienicz
- Sirica Wright, in support of the PJC's projects and programs
- Neil & Beth Yelsey, in memory of Robert Klein, son of Alfred & Shelley Klein

Donations to the PJC, in support of the Rosenberg Torah, from...

- Mercedes Castiel & Glyn Morgan, dedicating Genesis 47:12, in memory of Mercedes' parents -- Judah & Celia Castiel -- and in honor of their children: Jessica, Daniel, Joshua, David, Sarah & Zachary
- Barry & Jill Goldenberg, dedicating a verse, in honor of Les & Sybil Rosenberg for their continued dedication to the Pelham Jewish Center
- Jonathan & Marjut Herzog, dedicating Parashah Va-Era, in honor of Eliana's Bat Mitzvah
- Jonathan & Marjut Herzog, dedicating Parashah Terumah, in honor of Alexandra's Bat Mitzvah
- Michael & Donna Weissman, dedicating a verse, in honor of Les & Sybil Rosenberg

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

- Leonard & Judith Cooper, in memory of Robert Klein, son of Alfred & Shelley Klein
- Martin & Meryl Druckerman, in memory of Robert Klein, son of Alfred & Shelley Klein
- Rachel Freedman & Daniel Rosen, in recognition of the care and support shown to them following the passing of Rachel's parents -- Paul & Carol Freedman (parents of PJC member, Beth Yelsey)
- Robert & Andrea DeRose Kahn, in memory of Bob's father, Murray Kahn
- Robert & Andrea DeRose Kahn, in memory of Bob's sister, Lenore Fortunoff
- Eleanor Einzig & Daniel Perkis, in memory of Robert Klein, son of Alfred & Shelley Klein
- Patricia Levinson, in memory of her beloved husband, George
- Morris Stampfer, in memory of Robert Klein, son of Alfred & Shelley Klein

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!

