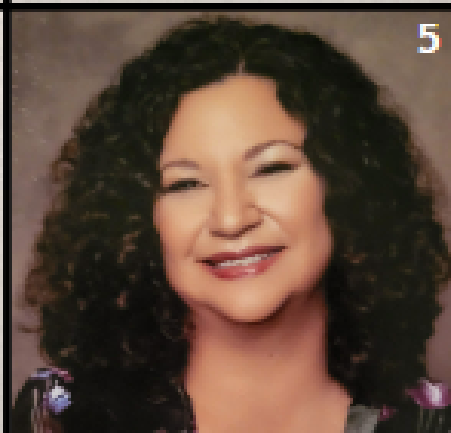
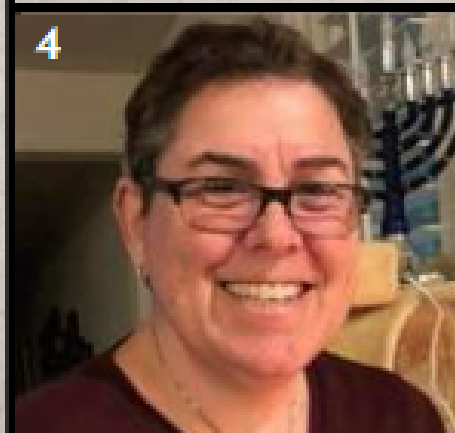


# THE 2023 ADULT B'NAI MITZVAH CLASS



(1) Sonya Haggerty was born in the early 70's to a Holocaust survivor. Sonya is originally from Massachusetts; she grew up in Quincy, just 20 minutes south of Boston, as one of 12 kids (from a large blended family). Her Jewish heritage has always been important to her. She was never really religious but always believed in a higher power. It wasn't until she had children that she really believed in the miracle of His work. Today, she is a wife and mother. As a young adult, she moved to Las Vegas, where she met and married Aron, an amazing, kind, compassionate man (who, believe it or not, is a native Nevadan) almost 20 years ago. She is also a mother of two: Ryan is 18 and a freshman in college, and Abigail is 15 and a sophomore in high school.

Sonya says of herself:

"I am a cancer survivor.

I love helping those that need a hand up.

I am a college graduate (first in my family).

I am an entrepreneur at heart and love what I do for work. I have been in real estate for over 20 years.

I am hopeful.

I love to travel (the ocean and beach is my happy place ). Being around the large open ocean gives me much hope and peace.

I am a loyal friend. It's important to me to make meaningful connections.

I love my village.

Above all I want to make a difference... to leave this world a better place (for my/our kids) than I found it."

(2) Ann Brandt, a native of Connecticut, received her B.S. from the University of Connecticut and her M.S. from the University of Bridgeport. One week after graduation she married Lee and moved to Maine where she taught grade six while he finished his tour of duty as a Staff Judge Advocate. They then moved back to CT. and Lee opened his law practice while Ann taught kindergarten, her favorite grade. In time they had children: Donna and Susan. And then the unthinkable happened when Lee died of cancer. Ann went back to teaching...nursery school, Headstart, and Sunday school...and pursued her interest in politics, being elected twice to represent her district in the Representative Town Meeting. Three years later she was introduced to Sid who lived in California and had three teenagers: Larry, David and Linda. They moved from coast to coast and became active in synagogues in Massachusetts and California. She served as Sisterhood President and was elected to the National Board of Women of Reform Judaism. Their blended family has now grown to 19 fun-loving people who love to hike, to travel, to eat, to win at Scrabble and to tease each other while Ann sits in the middle of all the action!

(3) John Henderson converted to Judaism in February, 2019, after several years of study at Congregation Beth Israel in Scottsdale, Arizona. He moved to Las Vegas for a few-year stint as an owner of Rachel's Kitchen, and ultimately found CNT. Since joining CNT, John has been active in the music programs, most notably as the regular guitarist for the "Shabbat in the Round" service. John loves the study of Judaism and has enjoyed working with his fellow students. Outside of CNT, John is the CIO of WorldStrides, a father of five, a grandfather of two and one on the way, a huge fan of the Alabama Crimson Tide, and the husband of Morah Pamela.

(4) Mindy Bachrach is originally from Brooklyn, where she was one of four siblings raised in a Conservative Jewish family. While her brothers both became Bar Mitzvah, Mindy and her sister did not. Now, a year after celebrating the Bar Mitzvah of her son Jason, it is her opportunity to do that. Mindy is also mom to grown daughters Haley and Lauren and grandmother to Abby and Brooke. Mindy graduated from NYU and has been an occupational therapist for 30 years, in both California and Nevada. She acknowledges that "life is different now, and I plan to keep going forward in my recovery."

(5) Pamela Karel Henderson is the morah of this special group of eight. She has studied and taught about Judaism for most of her life. This is the second ABM class she has taught at CNT, a task she finds exceptionally rewarding. In her past 15 years at CNT, Pamela has taught a variety of adult education classes, has supervised the madrichim students during religious school, and has served on the Board of Directors. Outside of CNT, Pamela is a high school librarian with CCSD, a proud UCLA graduate, mom to adults Janna and Adam, and wife to bar mitzvah John.

(6) Libby Miller is a 'Jersey Girl' who retired to Henderson after a career in education and human resources. She loves the lifestyle here, the wonderful friendships she has made, and especially enjoys the festivities and live entertainment that Las Vegas offers. She is the proud mom of Wendy, Erin and Shari, and is happy to be a member of the Adult B'nai Mitzvah class.

(7) Valerie Catallozzi became a Jew-by-Choice in 2019 after meeting her Jewish boyfriend, Sandy, several years earlier. His love of Judaism was infectious, and it sparked her interest in studying Judaism and her desire to become Jewish. When CNT announced the year-long Adult B'nai Mitzvah program, Valerie knew this was the next important step in her Jewish education. The ABM program has given her an opportunity to better understand Hebrew and Jewish ideology on a much deeper level, as well as making life-long friends with her fellow classmates. Retired from a 36-year career in Information Technology and Finance, Valerie loves to learn and share her knowledge with others. When not designing, creating, and teaching others how to make jewelry, Valerie can be found golfing and spending time with her family and friends.

(8) Demetra McGowen began her journey into Judaism in 2012 and continues to this day with The Israel Institute of Biblical Studies and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She has completed five levels of Biblical Study, a course in Aramaic, and, to date, three of eight levels in the modern Hebrew language; she is considering Rabbinic Studies. Prior to delving heart-first into her Jewish studies, Demetra worked for the University of Arizona Medical Center and the University of California San Diego where she designed a medical on-call database with an interactive disaster plan protocol. Upon completion of this work, she began working in the field of Medical Administration as a Medical Director for Norwell Medical Weight Loss, and later, after teaching 9th-12th grade English for Nye County, she returned to Medical Administration as the Regional Director for Nye Regional Medical Centers. Most importantly, she is the mother of two beautiful children, grandmother to two amazing granddaughters, and wife to Stephen.

(9) Lauren Vogel Friedman has had it on her bucket list since she was 13 (now 51) to become a Bat Mitzvah. When this opportunity presented itself, she grabbed her buddy Sonya, who had a similar goal, and signed up. Lauren has embraced learning to read Hebrew, studying the history of Judaism and is looking forward to reading from the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah. Lauren is leading by example for her children, by taking on the motto "it's never too late to achieve a goal." She is driven by passion and trust in herself all while making the class laugh when they're all feeling a little meshuga.

# What is an Adult B'nai Mitzvah?

A bar or bat mitzvah is a Jew who chooses to make a public acknowledgement of his or her status as an adult within the Jewish community. This ritual traditionally occurs at the age of 13, but some Jews participate in the ceremony later in life.

For the eight people in this class, becoming a bar or bat mitzvah (literally, a "son or daughter of the Commandment") has been a meaningful religious experience. They lead this morning's worship service following twelve months of intense study during which they learned to read Hebrew, to understand the history and culture of the Jewish people, and to appreciate the value of Judaism in their lives.

Over the course of the past year, they transitioned from eight individuals experiencing a personal rite of passage to a close circle of friends sharing a journey of discovery. They appreciate the family and friends who supported them in this endeavor.

## The Elements of Jewish Worship

**The Time:** Based on the story of Creation in the Book of Genesis, the Sabbath (Shabbat, in Hebrew) is observed from sunset on Friday through sunset on Saturday.

**The Place:** This building is known in Hebrew as a *beit kneset* (meeting house) and in English as a synagogue (from the Greek word for "meeting"). The raised platform in front is a *bimah* and the curtained area is the *aron ha-kodesh*, or Holy Ark. In accordance with the Second Commandment ("You shall not make for yourself an image"), there are no pictures or statues of people or animals within this sacred space.

**The People:** The service is officiated by Rabbi Sanford Akselrad and Cantor Jessica Hutchings, although most of this morning's worship will be led by the ABM class members. Congregants are invited to participate in the service by reading and singing, as well as by standing in respect at various moments. There is no kneeling in Jewish worship.

**The Objects:**

The *aron ha-kodesh* (Holy Ark) contains the Torah scrolls. One will be taken out to be read by the ABM class members during the service.

The Torah scrolls are hand-written Hebrew copies of the Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Number and Deuteronomy. The text is divided into 52 *parashot* (portions), and one is read each Shabbat morning. In this way, the entire text is completed each year. This morning's reading comes from Bo (Exodus 10:1-13:16), and will be followed by the *Haftarah*, a passage from the books of the Prophets (Jeremiah 46:13-28).

The *siddur* (prayer book) is written in both English and Hebrew. It contains a variety of traditional prayers, Biblical passages and modern poetry and prose designed to enhance the worshipper's connection with the Divine. Its title, *Mishkan T'fillah*, means "dwelling place (of) prayer."

The *kippah* (skullcap) is a small headcovering meant to remind the wearer that s/he is in the presence of God.

The *tallit* (prayer shawl) is worn by adult Jews, following the commandment to wear a "fringed garment" (Numbers 15). Each B'nai Mitzvah student will receive a *tallit* at the beginning of this morning's service.