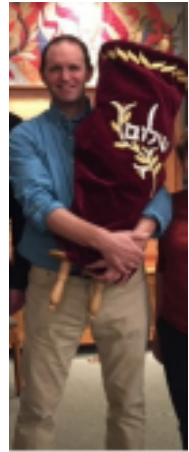


## Passing the Torah from Rabbi to Rabbi (May 2022)

This Torah has been passed from Rabbi to Rabbi and will soon go on another journey where the Torah is passed once again to a new rabbi and a new community. Each time the Torah was passed, the Rabbi used the Torah to create a sacred Jewish space for the community. This is the story of rabbis, Torah scrolls, and sacred spaces for Jewish communities.

Rabbi Joseph Asher from Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco, California passed the Torah to Rabbi Charles Yeshaia Familant at Stanford University Hillel who passed it to Rabbi Ari Mark Cartun when he succeeded Rabbi Familant at Hillel. Later, when Rabbi Cartun became the rabbi at Congregation Etz Chayim, the Torah accompanied him. Upon his retirement, Rabbi Cartun passed it to Rabbi Chaim Koritzinsky. The Torah was in need of repair. Rabbi Koritzinsky had the Torah repaired so he could pass it to Rabbi Lila Veissid in Israel.



From the Torah calligraphy, we know that this Torah originally came from Poland. A *sofer* can tell where a Torah scroll was scribed based on the kind of lettering. We know that the Torah went from Poland to Germany. On November 9, 1938 during Kristallnacht in Germany, someone rescued the Torah from a burning synagogue.

The Torah was brought to San Francisco by an uncle of Rabbi Joseph Asher. Rabbi Asher was one of the rabbis at Temple Emanu-El.

It was later passed along to Rabbi Familant when he left Hillel at Stanford and began a private practice. When Rabbi Familant retired in 1975, he passed it along to Rabbi Ari Cartun at Congregation Etz Chayim where it has stayed for many years.

When we, the Etz Chayim travelers, were in Israel during June 2019, we met with Rabbi Lila Veissid who had studied with Rabbi Chaim in rabbinical school at Hebrew College in Boston, Massachusetts. She told us a story that touched us deeply. She had lost access to the Sefer Torah she had been using at a local synagogue due to backlash from a small but vocal Orthodox group new to the region. The group took issue with her use of the synagogue's Torah because she was a woman, and because she was using it to help young women become bat mitzvahs.



After listening to her story, we wanted to help get her a Torah of her own that she can use with people in the region she serves. Rabbi Chaim suggested the Familant Torah as it wasn't being used. He checked with Rabbi Familant for his blessing (it belongs to Etz Chayim so permission was not needed, but his blessing was desired.) Rabbi Familant was extremely enthusiastic and pleased that the Torah would be making Aliyah and have a purpose with another rabbi.

The Torah has been used at the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center Grief & Growing Weekend and has also spent several summers as the resident Torah at the JCC Maccabi Sports Camp in Menlo Park. Rabbi Familant called this scroll a "Survivor Torah" and he was very moved to think of it making "aliyah" to Israel.

When we spoke with him, he stopped us at one point to let us know that the Torah is *pasul* (not kosher for use in religious rituals). When he was told that we actually just had a *sofer* make it *kosher*, he was very touched. Jon Kaplan created new torah rollers ("Atzei Chaim") for the scroll and Barbara Marcum attached the scroll to the rollers.



The Torah will make its way to Israel to serve a community in north-western Israel. It will be on loan to Rabbi Lila Veissid.

### A story about Rabbi Joseph Asher from his son

Rabbi Joseph Asher was at Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco from 1967 until his retirement in 1986 as rabbi emeritus. His personal story started in Germany, England, Australia, then the United States. Joseph Asher was born Joseph Ansbacher on January 7, 1921, in Heilbronn-am-Neckar, Germany. He changed his surname as early as 1947. He was known for his advocacy of reconciliation between the Jews and the Germans in the post-Holocaust era, and for his support for the civil rights movement in the United States.



Left to right: Rabbi Zvi Helfgott (later Rabbi Zvi Asaria), Josef Rosensaft and Rabbi Joseph Asher, members of the Central Jewish Committee for the British Zone of Germany. Photo taken at Bergen-Belsen, probably in 1947.

Rabbi Joseph Asher died of prostate cancer on May 29, 1990. His son, Rabbi Raphael W. Asher, served as the rabbi at Congregation B'nai Tikvah in Walnut Creek, California until his retirement in 2014. Rabbi Joseph Asher wrote this about his father, Rabbi Jonah Ansbacher, and what happened on Kristallnacht, November 9, 1938:

*“My father’s synagogue was irreparably vandalized that night. He managed to rescue one damaged Torah scroll, which he took home for safekeeping. Mother, ever inventive and determined, had the idea that the safest place to be that night was on a train bound for anywhere. She took my father to the railroad station, sequestered him in the restroom and proceeded to the railroad station to buy two tickets on the next train leaving town. She then retrieved my father and rushed him to the train. On that short walk, my father, being the prominent and widely recognized citizen he was, was spotted by a Gestapo agent and arrested. A few days later, Mother was told he was incarcerated in Buchenwald and so she began a constant and fearless vigil in front of the Gestapo Headquarters in Wiesbaden. After some ten weeks, he was released on condition that he leave the country within thirty days.”*

From: Asher, Joseph (1991). Moses Rischin; Raphael Asher (eds.). ["An Incomprehensible Puzzlement"](#). The Jewish Legacy & the German Conscience Berkeley, CA: The Judah L. Magnes Museum: 26–37. [ISBN 9780943376486](#)



Rabbi Raphael Asher

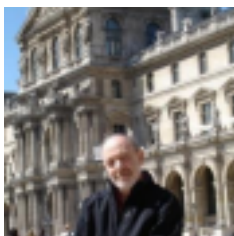
## Rabbi Familant helped find a sacred place for Jews at Stanford

In 1903, when Jane Stanford erected Memorial Church in her late husband's memory, she envisioned a sanctuary that would serve Stanford's broadest religious needs. Church services would be nondenominational; differences between sects were to be minimized.

Hers was a pluralistic vision, one that aimed to be inclusive, though some have disparaged it as a practice of the highest common denominator of the various Christian faiths. A century and a quarter later, it's easy to recognize that Jane had some blind spots. Those who did not fit her Protestant construct struggled to bend the Founding Grant's dicta. Sometimes it was easier to apologize than to ask permission.

The Jewish community at Stanford ... struggled to find its place on campus and outside the church, where Christian iconography made Jewish worship difficult, if not impossible. Hillel, the Jewish community's campus organization, had an office off-campus, above a Palo Alto tire store. The small space could not accommodate worship. So, in 1966, when a Jewish medical student requested a nightly campus gathering to recite the prayer of remembrance for his recently deceased father, Hillel Rabbi Charles Familant appealed to Professor Richard Lyman, then chairman of the President's Advisory Committee on Religious Activities, for permission to accommodate the student's request in the Clubhouse. Private services were approved, but when the daily gathering spilled over to "public" Sabbath services, Lyman's committee drew the line.

The *Stanford Daily* headline "Rabbi Barred from Services" set off a series of newspaper stories, debates, discussions and a supportive refusal by all campus ministers to hold services in Memorial Church. The following Friday evening, the Clubhouse overflowed with students—many not Jewish—who came in solidarity. Trustees felt bound by the worship restriction in the Founding Grant; religious communities demanded a solution.



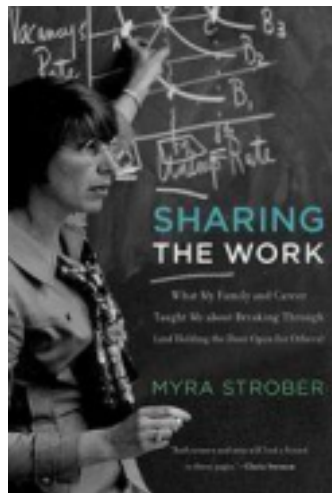
In an interpretation worthy of King Solomon, soon-to-be-Dean of the Chapel Davie Napier proposed broadening the definition of Memorial Church from the building itself to all activities under its auspices, which included Hillel. It was a de facto removal of the nondenominational requirement. On May 9, 1966, the Trustees conceded. Finally, in 1973, the terms of the Founding Grant were

legally amended, forging a path for all religions for the future.

<https://stanfordmag.org/contents/a-brief-history-of-faith>

### Story About Rabbi Familant from a book by Myra Strober

“At Rosh Hashanah, Sam and I attend Hillel services on campus, and they are unlike any services we’ve been to. We gather in a shabby room at the Old Union, with no more than twenty or so in attendance. We sit on couches with the stuffing sticking out and use prayer books on the verge of crumbling. But the service is inspiring. Men and women sit together, and because there is no organ or choir, we all sing. For the first time ever, I see women read from the Torah. Rabbi Familant gives a sermon on caring for other people that is scholarly but heartfelt. On Yom Kippur morning, we return and enjoy the services again, but I am shocked at how few people are there. Hillel services at Cornell were at least five times the size. For the first time, I realize how very small Stanford’s Jewish community is.”



From: Sharing the Work: What My Family and Career Taught Me about Breaking Through (and Holding the Door Open for Others), MIT Press, 2016

<https://mitpress.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.7551/mitpress/9780262034388.001.0001/upso-9780262034388>



## **Rabbi Familant officiates at Tom Steyer's marriage**

<https://www.nytimes.com/1986/08/17/style/kathryn-taylor-weds-tf-steyer.html>

Tom Steyer was born in 1957 in Manhattan, New York. His mother, Marnie (née Fahr), was a teacher of remedial reading at the Brooklyn House of Detention, and his father, Roy Henry Steyer, was a partner in the New York law firm of Sullivan & Cromwell and was a prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trials. His father was a non-practicing Jew, and his mother was Episcopalian.

In August 1986, Steyer married Kathryn Ann Taylor, a graduate of Harvard College who earned a Master of Business Administration and a Juris Doctor from Stanford University. The Reverend Richard Thayer, a presbyterian minister, and Rabbi Charles Familant performed the ceremony. Kathryn was on the President's Council for the United Religions Initiative, an interfaith group

Tom Steyer is an investor, activist, philanthropist, and donor to progressive and Democratic Party causes. He announced on July 9, 2019, that he was running for president of the United States. He suspended his presidential campaign on February 29, 2020, after placing third in the South Carolina Democratic primary.



## **A STORY FROM GAIL SLOCUM, ETZ CHAYIM MEMBER**

I have known Rabbi Familant since 1989. He lives in my neighborhood in Menlo Park, CA, and is a remarkable man, who used to be the Director of Stanford Hillel in the late 60's and 70's. After that, he decided to move in the direction of counseling, including interfaith couples – of which I was one. He was, for many decades, the only Rabbi that would do interfaith Jewish weddings, and he co-officiated at our wedding alongside a shaman friend of mine. It was an amazing, meaningful and unique ceremony and celebration that bonded us with Rabbi Familant through all the preparations.



Nine years later Rabbi Familant again played a pivotal role in our married life, after my husband I had encountered much tzuris on the path to becoming parents (7 years and 8 miscarriages, 2 of them late term losses that were devastating for us). Rabbi Familant counseled my husband, Jordan, and I through a very tough time. Luckily, just before I turned 40, we finally had a child, our only one, Diana (now 22 years old and about to graduate from Oberlin College and Conservatory of Music... sigh). Rabbi Familant did the baby naming in our backyard, which again was very moving and powerful because she would not have existed if not for his skillful and wise counseling.

So in many ways, although we later joined Congregation Etz Chayim, Rabbi Familant has been “my Rabbi” through some of the most potent moments of my life. I did not convert when Jordan and I married, but decided to do so the year before our daughter’s Bat Mitzvah, which Rabbi Familant attended, as he did my mother’s funeral and my shiva five years ago (after which he gave me several sessions of grief counseling). Last fall when my 97-year-old father died, Rabbi Familant came to our home for a long heartfelt shiva visit. So as you can see, Rabbi Familant has walked closely with me at several critical transitional times in my life.

During our many talks, he once told me how he used this Torah at events for interfaith couples at a local nature preserve in the foothills. Everyone there got to interact with the Torah, which he remarked had really changed things for those couples – both the non-Jewish spouse as well as the Jewish one. I am grateful to Rabbi Familant because I am sure I would not be a Jew today (and a very active one, now on the Board at Etz Chayim), had he not patiently opened the door and allowed me to find my way in my own time.

I am excited to be playing a part in Etz Chayim’s effort to provide you with the Familant Torah.

**Strength, Strength, always be Strong!**

## INFORMATION ABOUT RABBI CARTUN

Rabbi Familant passed the torah on to Rabbi Ari Cartun and it came to Etz Chayim..

**Rabbi Ari Mark Cartun** is Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Etz Chayim in Palo Alto, CA where he served as Rabbi and Scholar-in-Residence from 1996-2015. He was the Executive Director of the Hillel Foundation at Stanford University from 1975-1996, and a Visiting Scholar, Stanford Program in Jewish Studies 1996-1997. Before moving to Palo Alto, he was a rabbinical student intern at Reform Temple Sinai, Washington, DC, 1974-75. Before that he was active as a member and then rabbinical student staff member for NFTY (Reform youth group) and BBYO: locally, regionally, and as faculty and program director for their national camps.

A member of the Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Reform Rabbinical associations (from each of whom he has received an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity), Rabbi Cartun has devoted his rabbinate to bridging gaps between denominations within Judaism. As part of that, he was co-founder of the Feast of Jewish Learning, and, before that, of the Midpeninsula Jewish Community Day School, now called Hausner Jewish Day School.

He has done the same for interfaith relations. While in DC as part of the program of Inter/Met, an Interfaith Apprenticeship Seminary, he was also a staff lobbyist for the Interfaith Commission of Greater Washington, D.C. At Stanford he continued his interfaith work as Founder and President of the Stanford Associated Ministries, 1980-88.

Today he continues to engage in Jewish-Christian education with Pastor Danielle Parish of Spark Church, which meets at Etz Chayim. Together they podcast on topics of interest to both religions, and led a joint tour to Israel in February-March, 2017. Another such tour is being contemplated.

Rabbi Cartun is a scholar of Bible and Jewish liturgy, and has published papers and practical guides on these and other topics, as well as a siddur and a machzor. During the academic year 2014-5 Rabbi Cartun taught introduction to Philosophy at Kehillah Jewish High School, and in 2015-16 taught an introduction to Zohar for Lehrhaus Judaica.





**Rabbi Chaim Koritzinsky** is the Rabbi of Congregation Etz Chayim. He was the founding Rabbi of Ruaj Ami, a start-up congregation in Santiago, Chile, which he helped grow from five founding families to 130. He received ordination, and also a Masters in Jewish Education, from the Hebrew College Rabbinical School where he was a member of the inaugural class in 2008.

Rabbi Chaim joined Etz Chayim after Rabbi Cartun retired.

Chaim's rabbinate focuses on community building. This expresses itself in big ways when he focuses on creating a Shabbat community full of joy or when he facilitates cross-cultural understanding between Jews and Muslims (or even Jews from different backgrounds). It expresses itself more intimately when he sits with families after a loss or celebrates with them on the bimah at a baby naming.

He also enjoys exploring how different modes of music can enhance spiritual experience. Luckily, he has landed in a congregation that prides itself on its love of song.

Originally from Madison, Wisconsin, Chaim completed his undergraduate studies at Vassar College focusing on Russian Studies. He has also lived and worked in the former Soviet Union and Israel.

Chaim met his Israeli-born wife Keren Henigman in Chile where they were married and their three children- Yaniv, Noam, and Lielle- were born. In 2015, the family moved to Palo Alto where they are enjoying life, community, and the weather on (North) America's West Coast.



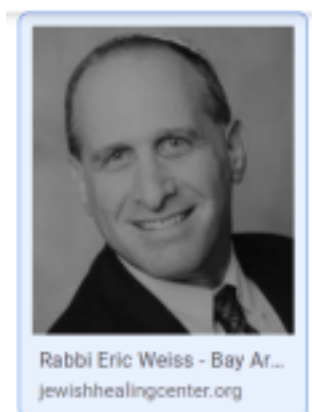
## **A STORY FROM RABBI ERIC WEISS on behalf of the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center's Grief and Growing™ Weekend**

One of the people who made use of the Torah during the time the Torah was at Etz Chayim with Rabbi Cartun and Rabbi Koritzinsky was Rabbi Eric Weiss. Here are some comments from Rabbi Weiss:

We've used this Torah at the annual Grief & Growing weekend for at least six or seven years now.

When our Temple was destroyed in Jerusalem, our Rabbinic imagination forever linked the communal grief to the experience of loss every one of us comes to feel: *Ha-makom yinachem etchem b'toch shaar avalei tzion v'yerushalyim*. – May the Omnipresent comfort you among the rest of the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem. This acknowledgement forever links our people's grief-story to each story of every individual Jew. From our moment of Diaspora to our Return, just as the Torah traveled with us wherever we journeyed, this specific Torah has accompanied hundreds of mourners while at our Grief and Growing™ Weekend.

The stories in this Torah, from the Exodus to Melachim and beyond, have been metaphoric and literal grief support to so many who have journeyed through their own grief. This scroll has been held in *hakafah*, kissed, opened, read, and wept upon with the yearning for nourishment from God and our People during one of life's most vulnerable moments. With this specific and beloved Torah, as it returns to our Eretz Yisrael, we hope that our common grief stories will bequeath to you a Torah to use as comfort and support to all who seek solace.



## In Israel, The Torah is moving to Emek Hefer and Rabbi Lila Veissid

Rabbi Veissid is a regional rabbi for the Israel Reform Movement, meaning she serves not one congregation but all of Emek Hefer, a rural area of central Israel north of Netyana. Rabbi Veissid lives on Kibbutz HaMa'apil.

**HaMa'apil** (Hebrew: פִּילֵט, *lit.* The illegal immigrant) is a kibbutz in central Israel. It is located near Ahituv within the jurisdiction of the Hefer Valley Regional Council. In 2018 it had a population of 855.

The community was established in Hadera in 1938 by a *gar'in* group comprising Hashomer Hatzair members who had immigrated from Galicia, Poland, Germany and Austria. The group received training in Beit Zera, Ma'abarot and Merhavia. Most of the members were illegal immigrants (known in Hebrew as *Madapolam*) to Mandatory Palestine.

The kibbutz itself was founded on 2 November 1945. The land on which it was built had been bought by Yehoshua Hankin in 1932 from the Arab village of Qaqun

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HaMa%27apil>



## A New Kind of Rabbi in Israel

December 22, 2017

By Rabbi Jonah C. Steinberg, Executive Director & Harvard Chaplain of Harvard Hillel  
<https://hillel.harvard.edu/blog/new-kind-rabbi-israel>

In our Torah reading this week, Joseph, sold into exile in Egypt by his brothers, having risen to prominence and influence, reveals his identity at long last to his siblings, who have come to him seeking sustenance.

This week I have particularly enjoyed reading the online observations on our Torah portion by my friend and former rabbinical student Lila Veissid, now Rabbi at *Kibbutz HaMa'apil* and regional Reform Rabbi for the Hefer Valley region in Israel. And, although it is a conceptual stretch (but then, what rabbinic interpretation isn't?) and far from an exact parallel, I cannot help thinking of the resonance between Joseph's improbable story and some aspects of Lila's. *Kibbutz Hama'apil*, where Lila's husband Yossi was raised, is by origin a 1938 product of the *HaShomer HaTzair* Labor Zionist youth movement, built on land purchased in 1932. In some historical ways *HaMa'apil* represents a bygone Israel in which I still stubbornly believe – a labor- oriented liberal social democracy, deeply rooted in a legacy of Jewish peoplehood, and progressive. In some ways that makes me, and *Kibbutz HaMa'apil*, die-hard dinosaurs – but also not, and more on that in a moment.

Meanwhile, let me explain that, following Lila's ordination at the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College in Newton, Massachusetts, where I was part of the founding faculty, Lila and Yossi and their two daughters took advantage of a program encouraging *b'nei kibbutz* – literally, progeny of the place where Yossi was brought up – to return to life in the present-day and much-evolved collective community. Let me also explain, in case it is not already clear, that as a Labor Zionist offshoot of *HaShomer HaTzair*, *Hama'apil* is, by deep and abiding character, a decidedly secular, even *secularist* community – in a land where 'secular' and 'religious' constitute a far more extreme and totalizing dichotomy than we generally experience in North American Jewish life. That pervasive and often stark divide in Israeli society makes it all the more remarkable that, while Yossi was welcomed back to the Kibbutz in his profession, as an architect, Lila was welcomed by the Kibbutz as their first Rabbi and spiritual advisor.

Lila's position is far from being merely some cute contrivance – she has made it into something far from that. Rather, what Lila now is by profession – a deeply literate and progressive rabbi in a Kibbutz rooted in secular Labor Zionism – reflects a whole new set of voices and long overdue echoes in Israeli society, ones I pray are not arriving in the landscape too late to make the fundamental difference I pray they can. Rabbi Lila,

*Rav Lila, has said about her position: “My rabbinic work here has been a delicate dance between the worlds, and involves a lot of listening and constant inner work and fine 12 tuning. I am a member of a kibbutz and live in a region of rural, mostly secular communities. I accompany individuals and families in times of joy and sorrow, offering a Jewish perspective that is often new to them. I am also involved in bridge-building activities with Israeli Arabs, teaching and learning about each other’s cultures, sharing ideas of tzedek (justice) and chesed (compassion and loving kindness). There is nothing obvious about being a liberal female rabbi here in Israel, and every day brings with it new challenges and surprises. I experiment with ancient words and new melodies, modern ideas and chassidic niggunim. When they echo from the lips of those second and third generation pioneers, when I see tears in the eyes of parents singing the priestly blessing with their hands on the heads of their children – that is when I feel truly blessed.”*

There is so much *naches*, as one says in Yiddish (a term deriving from the Hebrew *nachat ruach*, tranquility of spirit), so much requitement of hopes and dreams and such deep gratification that comes from having had anything to do with Lila’s path. In Lila two worlds I love are brought together at long last: the world of progressive Torah, and the founding visionary spirit of modern Israel.



In her writing about the moment of Joseph’s revealing himself to his brothers this week, Lila reaches to the prophetic passages paired with our Torah-reading, and particularly

Ezekiel's vision of strong bonds and fellowship among the people of Israel. In the same prophecy, Ezekiel says, *"Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms"* (Ezekiel 37:22).

I think of Lila, and the sacred and the secular in Israel – and I think of Joseph, the time of his alienation from his brothers and their rediscovery of one another amid apprehensions, misgivings, relief, tears, and embraces. Joseph's siblings had no place among them for his childhood dreams, there was no such thing in their minds as the future self he dreamt himself to be. With due regard for large differences in the respective stories, and for the long and complex journey of my friend Lila's path – there was no such thing in Israel, decades ago, as the rabbi Lila is today, much less on *Kibbutz HaMa'apil*, where I cannot imagine Yossi in his youth ever imagined he would be a rabbi's spouse. Sometimes one must travel away from one's clan – even in some ways be pushed away by it and push away from it – in order to find one's way back as who one truly is.

*"I will take the Israelite people from among the nations they have gone to, and gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own land. And I will make them a single nation in the land, among the hills of Israel"* (Ezekiel 37:21-22).