The Talmud (Shavuot 39a) states “Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Ba’Zeh”, all Israel are responsible for one another. This saying comes from the evolution of fraternal and communal obligation in the Bible.

The stories of Genesis revolve around familial relationships and specifically the responsibility between brothers. The stories begin with the low point of Cain and Abel, and treat us to a parade of sibling tensions: the estrangements involving Isaac and Ishmael, which is never fully resolved; Jacob and Esau, which eventually is partially resolved, and Joseph and his eleven brothers, whose dramatic resolution ends Genesis.

At the climax of the Joseph narrative, his brother Judah finally steps up to take responsibility (in Hebrew “areivut”). He tells his father — and later Joseph — that he will take personal responsibility for his younger brother Benjamin (whom Joseph was holding as collateral) and would even act as guarantor (areiv). The example of Judah (Yehudah) stepping forward becomes a model for how we as Jews (Yehudim) are to step forward and take responsibility for our brothers and sisters.

The concept of whom we are responsible for expands as does the Israelite nation. In the book of Exodus, God’s commandments and rewards are addressed to the whole community, down to the strangers in your gates: “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress the foreigner, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 22:20) The Torah goes even further, commanding us to help those who are struggling and help lift them up: “If your kinsman falls low, and their hand falters beside you, then you must strengthen them — sojourner or resident — let them live by your side.” (Leviticus 25:35)

There is an arc here. The focus of responsibility widens, from the selfish individualism of Cain to the acceptance of the foreigners and sojourners by the massed tribes of Israel in the desert before they come to the Promised Land.

I am very proud of all the ways that Etzniks are focusing on areivut, and continually stepping up and taking collective responsibility. One example is the Mitzvah Chavurah, which began long before I got here. Another, newer one, is the Anti-Racism Impact Team, which grew out of a learning series I gave. I am heartened by the multiple expressions of areivut that you will read in these pages of Connections. Thank you to Ted Schachter for his leadership in coordinating the areivut efforts and to all Etzniks who make areivut a priority. What makes us a community is the care we demonstrate, both within Etz and in the broader community. As we begin a new year and continue to endure this pandemic, may we deepen our connection to one another and our responsibility for those in need.

Interested in learning more about our Areivut teams? There is lots of extra information to be found, as well as opportunities to volunteer and serve. Join and be a force to help others..... https://www.etzchayim.org/areivut-committee.html
The Etz Chayim offices look a little like a ghost town these days, but our mighty staff of six is working from kitchen tables and makeshift offices to keep our community, our programming, and our connections flourishing. Unfortunately, this far-flung workforce (from San Jose to San Francisco) makes it impossible just to drop by Etz to take care of business and figure out who to talk to when you arrive.

So here's a handy guide to who does what. And if what you're looking for is not listed here, please do not be shy to reach out to Ellen or Megan (see below) who will connect you with the right person.

Chaim Koritzinsky – Rabbi
Rabbi Chaim is responsible for all things related to services, celebrations, and sad occasions, too. Shabbat morning Torah study is among his regular teaching gigs. He also works with the Religious Practices Committee, Areivut Committee, and Israel-related programs. Do you just need to talk to someone? Reach out to him. rabbik@etzchayim.org

Ellen Bob – Executive Director
Ellen is responsible for all things logistical including facilities, volunteer recruitment, membership, and publicity. She supports the Board of Directors, as well as many committees and social groups. She also supervises everyone except for Rabbi Chaim, who also reports to the Board. If you want to talk, but don't want to “bother” the rabbi, she's a good bet. ellen@etzchayim.org

Abra Greenspan – Director of Learning
Abra is responsible for all of our youth, family, and adult learning programming, including running our renowned Bar/t Mitzvah program. She also teaches our seventh graders, writes Torah commentary, and organizes many of our congregational Tikkun Olam hands-on projects. abra@etzchayim.org

Donna Munic – Director of Finance and Administration
Donna is responsible for everything that money touches. She does our bookkeeping, accounting, and sends out donation acknowledgements. She supports the Finance and Fundraising Committees. She also is responsible for HR functions and is our “IT guy.” donna@etzchayim.org

Megan Thilmony – Office Coordinator
The most recent addition to our team, Megan has a million “nuts and bolts” responsibilities. She maintains our database, keeps our calendar and website current, edits our Ebulletin, coordinates mailings, sends out greeting cards, and is queen of our copier, among other things. She also supports Ellen and Donna. megan@etzchayim.org

Vicky Tsur – Learning and Prayer Program Coordinator
Vicky works closely with Rabbi Chaim and Abra to implement our Bar/t Mitzvah program, create innovative programming, and keep all the balls in the air. She also provides traditional administrative support to both of them. vicky@etzchayim.org

You can actually call us, as well, but we won't answer immediately. If you leave a message on the office phone, 650-813-9094, a recording is sent to our email and we will call you back as soon as we are able.

I am looking forward to once again seeing you all in person. Meanwhile, I am happy to be able to see everyone on Zoom. Have you not been zooming with Etz? Contact me so I can tell you what you're missing.
When I signed on to Zoom for the Chanukah Flametacular a month ago, the first thing I saw was Rabbi Chaim on the front porch at Etz, striving to speak louder than the rushing wind around him. Then, Rabbi Cartun with his daughters in the pelting rain, igniting a chanukiah made of highway flares, the shamash and four candles blazing red against the night sky. The camera switched back to the porch, and I saw the ingenious man-sized chanukiah that James Baloun had built — out of what looked like galvanized pipe lengths and elbow bends! And then the singing, from homes near and far, and the story-telling and play-acting…. My oh my, what a can-do attitude, what creative minds, what dedication! I had been through a rather hard week, and truly, this celebration renewed my spirit.

So the first thing I want to say here is, “Dear Etzniks, thank you.” Now, let me bring you up to date on some Board decisions from the past few months:

- A new dues category to encourage younger people to become members is already bearing fruit
- A process for timely consideration of proposals to use Etz’s name in support of community issues, worked on together with Areivut (see article on page 6)
- A reorganization of administration duties and hiring to fortify staff operations
- Continuing adaptations to Covid-19 guidelines, first to permit careful increases of in-person activities, and then to roll back as needed

In addition, as you know from the last issue of Connections, the Board has committed to a renovation of our building with the goal of creating an even better space for coming generations. The first steps of that long project have begun, with the establishment of a building project team under Jeff Weitzman’s leadership, and an exploratory capital campaign team, which Jason and Leslie Matlof have agreed to co-chair. A task force to select the architect, led by Jim Baloun and Jon Kaplan, have the steps of that long project have begun, with the establishment of the architect, led by Jim Baloun and Jon Kaplan, have the steps of that long project have began, with the establishment of a building project team under Jeff Weitzman’s leadership, and an exploratory capital campaign team, which Jason and Leslie Matlof have agreed to co-chair. A task force to select the architect, led by VP David Helfenstein, evaluated the proposals and attributes of two top-notch architecture firms, and the Board approved its recommendation of Studio Bondy Architecture. Thank you to that team and to Jeff, Jason, and Leslie for their commitment to Etz’s long-term aspirations. Please keep an eye out for more information on these fronts, and if you are interested in participating, let me know at president@etzchayim.org.

Finally, the Board is ready to look for new people to fill Board seats when they become vacant in June. Immediate past president, Evan Goer, will form the 2021 nominating committee, which will reach out to potentially interested members in order to compile a slate of candidates for the membership to vote on. If you are interested in Board service, please let me or Evan know.

Wishing you all a healthy and fulfilling 2021!
Our fall learning programs have concluded. As we look to the future, it is clear that virtual
programming will continue for a while. I hope to be able to punctuate our regular weekly learning
with safe in-person backyard/patio or parking lot activities. The current environment certainly gives
us plenty of opportunity to think outside the box even as we continue to offer programming “inside the zoom box.” For
the most part, we have been able to continue to do many of our lessons with minor adaptations. For example, our 2nd
grade students and their parents did not miss out on the chance to learn about Hachnasat Orchim/Welcoming Guests. Instead of coming to Abraham and Sarah’s tent at Etz, each family made their own in-house tent and welcomed in the
other families. Our 4th grade students and parents typically spend time exploring the leadership styles of Moses and Joshua. After reading some Biblical texts about each leader, we shared what we had learned in the chat box:

Chavurat Chitah, our 7th grade students faced the inside/outside the box challenge of leading a Shabbat morning
service on Zoom. Without being able to sing together in our practice sessions on Wednesday nights, students made
more extensive use of our Shabbat audio guide recordings on the website. In previous years, I’ve felt that this resource
was underused by our families, but this year it became an important and significant teaching tool. The service these
students led on December 5 was remarkable as each of them truly inhabited the role of shaliach tzibor/service leader. It
was a great preview of what the future holds for our Bar/t Mitzvah Class of 2021.

Zoom learning is not easy. Zoom teaching is a real challenge. Some of our efforts have resulted in exciting and
wonderful surprises. Others have had dismal results. Any teacher can tell you how your heart sinks when you pose a
question or introduce an activity to the children and get no response. Sometimes, when their cameras are off (even though we discourage this) and they are muted, it can feel like you are teaching into a deep cavern and nothing bounces
back! Fortunately, our small class size and the intimacy we have developed in pervious years as a community —
combined with a team of veteran teachers with whom students and parents are familiar — enables us to bridge those
awkward moments. Our program will continue online in the first months of 2021, which means we will face many
challenges and be offered opportunities for novel and creative responses. That sounds a lot like the history of the Jewish
experience. Perhaps, this is the most powerful lesson we can teach our children.

We are pleased to announce that Etz members donated generously in 2020!
Second Harvest got $32,000 over three food drives to fight food insecurity.
118 member families contributed $47,484 to Etz’s Chanukah Appeal. An all-time record!
Olivia Levine (January 23, 2021) is a seventh grader at Columbia Middle School. She enjoys drawing, painting and reading, but her favorite activity is working on her comic books. She has several different series that she has been developing over many years. Olivia is actively involved in Girl Scouts and will be starting work on her Silver Award this year. Olivia is interested in improving girls’ education, specifically around understanding their own bodies. She intends to work with the Days for Girls organization to help increase access to menstrual products that will help keep girls in school in developing countries.

Isaac Telyaz (January 30, 2021), son of Yelda and Leon Telyaz, is a seventh grader at JLS Middle School. He has a human sister Leah, and a dog brother Simba. Isaac loves basketball, both in real life and playing with his friends on Xbox. His favorite food is pizza, his favorite vacation place is Cancun, and his favorite subject at school is Math. For his Tikkun Olam habit, Isaac chose www.nokidhungry.org, a non-profit organization, and raised money from his family and family circle for the organization.

Zophia Ori Padilla (February 20, 2021) is a seventh grader at Graham Middle School. Zophia is very creative. She loves all forms of art and works hard to share them with everyone. Zophia is always working on making the world better. When she helps pack sandwiches for the homeless, she works very hard on decorating every bag, so every person knows they are special. She loves to make people feel loved and included, she tries to keep peace, and make everyone around her smile.

As her Tikkun Olam habit, Zophia is adopting a grandparent, virtually and reaching out with cards and letters to veterans.

Sarah Cohn (March 6, 2021), the daughter of Adrienne and Joseph Cohn is a seventh grader at Blach Middle School. She has an older sister, Zoe, and two cats. Her interests are sprinting, hanging out with friends and going to the overnight Jewish summer camp called Ramah Galim in Monterey. For her Tikkun Olam habit she drew and made cards for the elderly that had inspirational and supportive words inside. For example, “have a great day”, “stay positive”, “you’re the best!” She knows during COVID-19 it’s hard to stay happy and positive when you are isolated and that the little things, like receiving a colorful card, can make someone happy. Sarah loves making others happy and making their day better.
What is the Areivut Committee? Three years ago, at the June 2017 general membership meeting, Rabbi Chaim gave a broad definition of Tikkun Olam and challenged us to see if we were meeting the needs of the community. He cited the Jewish teachings of Chessed (loving kindness, social service), Tzedek (social justice and systemic change), and Re’ut (acts of friendship and solidarity) as guiding principles.

In response, there was a Tikkun Olam initiative, a listening campaign and series of house meetings on that subject. Issues were identified, people got involved, and finally a new committee structure emerged, which incorporated all of the existing Etz activities and made room for new ones. In order to show that this committee built on what we had done in the past but also looked to the future, a unique name, “Areivut”, was chosen. Areivut (עריבות) translated from Hebrew, means "mutual responsibility" or guarantee — responsibility to one’s community and responsibility to the world.

The number of people involved in social action continues to grow each year and this new structure enables us to adapt to emerging issues, discover what congregants are doing, and communicate with one another even during the pandemic. The first Areivut Committee meeting was held on May 14, 2020. Attending were Sue Weber, Ted Schachter, David Bergen, Amy Bayersdorfer, Bill Alexander, Lisa Alexander, Jim Fox, Lisa Ratner, Sara Selis, Emily Jones, Dana Kornfeld, Rabbi Chaim Koritzinsky, Mark Lee, and Kate Lorig. They have all taken on different activities under the aegis of the Areivut Committee in action areas as diverse as asking the City Council to create safe overnight parking spaces at houses of worship to directly aiding victims of the summer fires.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks reminds us that a nation or a community “is strong when it cares for the weak, that it becomes rich when it cares for the poor, that it become invulnerable when it cares about the vulnerable.” (Morality, page 20.) The Areivut Committee is composed of Rabbi Koritzinsky, Ted Schachter as chairperson, and leaders of independent “impact teams” that formulate team agendas and drive outreach and action in their areas, as well as members at large. The committee meets regularly, virtually.
**Etz and The Broader Community – The Manzanita Coalition**

Part of the focus of our Areivut Committee is the larger community. To strengthen Etz ties to the larger community, Etz joined the Manzanita Coalition, with Kate Lorig and David Bergen as representatives. The Manzanita Coalition is an independent community organization comprised of voluntary civic institutions (community, faith, secular, nonprofit, and business) working together to improve the lives of Bay Area workers and their families. Kate is on the transportation subcommittee and David is on the housing subcommittee. David Cohen, another Etz Chayim member, represents the teachers union.

““It’s rewarding to connect and form relationships with members from diverse organizations, including a tenant coalition, day workers’ center, hospital and education worker's unions, and faith-based communities,” David Bergen said. “I'm co-chair of the Areivut Committee’s Housing Impact Team and am on Manzanita's Housing Subcommittee. My exposure to other Manzanita groups has broadened and deepened my understanding of the region's housing crisis. I believe we have a real capability through Manzanita to address the issue collectively with other member organizations and have greater impact than what we could do at Etz alone.”

Meanwhile, David Cohen is participating in Manzanita strictly as a representative of the Palo Alto Educators’ Association. “I’m the vice-president of the union, and largely entered union leadership to bring more of this kind of community work into focus, along with the professional concerns that comprise the bulk of our focus. The fact that Etz Chayim is also part of Manzanita makes it that much more appealing for me,” David said. “We all need help sometimes, as people, as a religious community within a larger community, and as organizations. The idea in the Manzanita Coalition is to build relationships so that we're all more aware of each other's strengths and needs, and able to collaborate more readily to address community needs. I hope we’ll have ongoing connections that bring support to Etz Chayim when needed, and put us in a position to enact some tikkun olam in support of our partners.”

Manzanita Coalition's website address is: [https://www.manzanita.works/coalition](https://www.manzanita.works/coalition). The members are:

| California School Employees Association, MVLA Local Chapter 275 | Mountain View Los Altos District Teachers Association |
| California School Employees Association, Palo Alto Local Chapter 301 | Los Altos Teacher Association |
| Congregation Etz Chayim, Palo Alto | Palo Alto Educators Association |
| Day Worker Center of Mountain View | Ravenswood Teacher Association |
| Mountain View Tenants Coalition | St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, East Palo Alto |
| | St. Mark AME Zion Church, East Palo Alto |
| | University AME Zion Church, Palo Alto |

---

**Etz Author Jordan Gruber**

by Melissa Mathieu

Jordan Gruber, who works as a professional writer, published two books this year. His most recent book is *Your Symphony of Selves: Discover and Understand More of Who We Are*, and was co-written with Dr. James Fadiman, a prominent psychologist and proponent of therapeutic psychedelic microdosing. Jordan described the main premise of the book as, “There isn’t a single self. Everyone is comprised of different parts, and different personalities.” More than a mere self-help book, Jordan called his book “a book of observation” drawing from many sources including Jewish thought. Jordan consulted with Rabbi Chaim Koritzinsky and Rabbi Ari Cartun for Jewish sources, and noted the teaching that we have two souls on Shabbat. The book argues that the key to good mental health is to harmonize our many selves, and to learn how to bring out the “right mind at the right time.” The book argues that the idea that we have a single, unified self can be misleading and limiting. Wellness comes from harmonizing the many selves.

Jordan also wrote a book on rebound exercise called *The Bounce: The Complete SuperBound Guidebook to 21st-Century Rebound Exercise* with his co-author Joy Daniels. Jordan has exercised on a rebounder (or mini-trampoline) for the last eighteen years for 45-minutes every day, and says it's an “easy, fun, and safe way to exercise.” The book teaches how to use a variety of weights to build and tone muscle. Not only is bouncing a great form of cardio, but it is also good for the immune system and for balance.

Jordan received his B.A. and M.A. from the State University of New York at Binghamton and his J.D. at University of Virginia. Jordan lives in Menlo Park with his wife and family. Find him at [www.jordangruber.com](http://www.jordangruber.com).
One of the benefits of the new Areivut structure is that it provides a process to deal with emerging issues and a structure to create new impact teams. The Anti-Racism Impact Team is the newest one of these.

Racial inequality in America is a serious matter, and members of Etz Chayim have banded together with various groups to address it. During the summer months, members of Etz Chayim took part in a silent protest along El Camino organized by Spark Church. While getting ready for the High Holy Days, Pastor Paul Bains spoke to the congregation during the Selichot service about what it was like to grow up as a Black child in a white neighborhood in Palo Alto and what it’s like to be a community organizer in our area.

Rabbi Chaim’s Kol Nidrei sermon talked about how he looked at racism five years ago when he first came to the congregation and how he has changed his views. After the holidays, we looked inward to reflect on our individual views on race and held a series of four workshops based on the book “So You Want to Talk About Race” by Ijeoma Oluo. The Anti-Racism Impact Team formed after the workshop.

After Barbara Marcum attended one of the sessions — where Reverend (aka Pastor) Virges of St. Mark AME Zion Church spoke of the challenges that she and fellow church leaders faced with virtual events and technology — Barbara suspected that she and High Holy Day co-chair Karen Bergen had information that might help. Barbara reached out to Pastor Virges about organizing things virtually. She said “we had a wonderful meeting with Pastor Virges and the St. Mark Administrator. The meeting seemed to provide exactly what they were looking for…. Karen and I had put together a document with what we had done at Etz to help create the HHD observances and shared that with them.”

Pastor Virges responded to Barbara’s offer immediately and very enthusiastically. “This is amazing,” she said. “I was already realizing that I had no clue on what we would do for a Virtual and beyond Christmas Season.”

The Anti-Racism Task Impact Team is investigating a number of other activities. The team is still in the formative stage, but as of this writing, members include Ellen Stromberg, Susan Bass, Melissa Dinwiddie, Lisa Ratner, Deborah Rosenberg, Rita Giles, Jana Gold, Alfred Sugarman, Ted Schachter, and Rabbi Koritzinsky.

Rita Giles wants to learn and reflect with ourselves through books and movies. Jana Gold has had some very meaningful conversations with Pastor Danielle of Spark Church and is very impressed with the anti-racism information on their website. Melissa Dinwiddie has already done a series of classes on self-examining your own racism, and is willing to prepare a few sessions with personal experiential exercises for those who are interested. Susan Bass has been exploring tutoring children through the Jewish Coalition for Literacy. She plans to find other tutoring opportunities that are going on in our area.

Session of the Anti-Racism Impact Team.
Today’s teens are not waiting for adults to solve today’s societal problems. They are leading the way. Meet three Etz teens, each with a different social justice story:

- **Paul Kramer** is a sophomore at Gunn High School and lives in Palo Alto with his parents, Viki and Josh Rauh.
- **Ruby Solomon** is a junior at Fremont High School. She lives in Sunnyvale with her parents Steve and Sharon Solomon.
- **Henry Shane** is a senior at Kehillah Jewish High School. He lives in Menlo Park with his parents Liz and Richard Shane.

Paul, Ruby and Henry are involved in youth-led social justice initiatives, that is, efforts initiated and led by teens or young adults. You will feel an urgency to the social justice agenda of our teens. Their problems are very front-facing and immediate and impact them uniquely as youth. According to them, adults are not necessarily doing a good job at solving these problems.

**Paul Kramer**

In 2020 Paul Kramer co-founded the Institute for Youth and Policy (YIP) [https://www.yipinstitute.com/](https://www.yipinstitute.com/). The youth-led non-profit organization seeks to promote youth involvement in politics through non-partisan civil discourse on public policy issues. Paul and his co-founder Hope Arpa met online through an activist community called the Neutral House. The Neutral House was a group of about 20 teens who held viewpoints all over the political spectrum. Paul and Hope, who is from Canada, decided they wanted to grow their platform from Instagram, and build an organization of teens who would publish articles, hold podcasts, make YouTube Videos, and curate easy to understand Pro/Con Instagram posts on the nations’ policy issues. Their original organization had a structure of two branches for editing and publishing. It has grown to five branches to support over 250 student interns who regularly research and write policy pieces for their website. In addition to posting 30–40 policy papers per month on social, economic, foreign, and national topics, they sponsor a YouTube channel, which hosts political debates, and they post daily to Instagram and push content to TikTok.

Paul is determined to see YIP sustain itself. He and Hope set up YIP as a 501(c)(4) organization, which enables them to transfer leadership to successors within the organization. Paul credits Hope’s experience in business coupled with their diverse policy experience for their success so far. Although only a high school sophomore, Paul has worked on political campaigns, interned at think tanks, and held positions with numerous organizations located in Washington, DC. Paul and Hope set up YIP with officers and a board of directors, as well as a board of advisors that includes HR and legal resources. Their teams meet regularly, set the editorial agenda, and hold each other accountable. Student directors and managers generally commit to 4–8 hours per week; student policy analysts commit from 1–6 hours per week, depending on the project assignment. Members include media experts, legal advisors and other experts to help the directors run their departments, and YIP provides resources and support to its members and directors, who are producing interdisciplinary journals on policy topics.

Paul feels that yipinstitute.com was an influential website this past election cycle, with hundreds of thousands of visitors, although their goal is not necessarily to impact the political process. The goal of the site is to educate youth to develop a “natural thought process to learn how to have political discourse.” He wants to see more debate on all sides of the issues, not just from major political parties. YIP sponsored an online program with the Libertarian Presidential Candidate Jo Jorgenson that was attended by 430 people. YIP has also sponsored numerous fundraisers collectively raising nearly $20,000. In 2020, YIP produced 9 videos with viewership totaling over 8 million. Paul and Hope would like to build and sustain YIP by chartering local clubs, similar to the Kiwanis Keys Club model. Paul has already started a club at Gunn, with 60–70 students participating.

Paul wants to change the current culture from polarization in politics to one of civil discourse where students learn how to participate in respectful debates — to learn how not to “go off” against someone else, just for having another point of view. He feels that depending upon where you are, the other point of view is often suppressed and students with opposing views are often the objects of hatred. Paul wants students to develop policy knowledge from varying viewpoints and engage in civil discourse with each other.
Ruby Solomon

Ruby’s friend Henry Shane encouraged her to get involved in social justice and solving the climate crisis. She got connected with the organization Climate Cardinals through social media. Climate Cardinals is a youth-led organization that helps translate climate change related information into different languages. The organization was founded by Sophia Kianni, a young woman of US-Iranian heritage. Sophia experienced severe pollution while visiting family in Iran; in her research she discovered that temperatures in the Mid-East were rising at twice the global average. Yet she was unable to provide this research and data to her Iranian family because the scientific literature in climate science was unavailable in Farsi. Sophia’s drive to translate materials for her own family led her to start this project in Spring 2020.

Ruby is part of Climate Cardinal’s Education team. They partner with other climate organizations, arranging translations of their materials. One example of a partnership that Ruby worked on was with Climate Interactive, a project at MIT that uses VR (virtual reality) to model the impact of the climate crisis. Because of Climate Cardinals, the information on the Climate Interactive website is now available in multiple languages.

Climate Cardinal’s 6000 volunteers accomplish their mission through 8–9 different teams in 41 countries, translating 500,000 words of climate information into over 100 languages. Ruby’s Education Team has almost 20 teens, from 8 different time zones. They face the same challenge many Silicon Valley workers face, trying to schedule meetings at times that are optimal for the most team members, an effort Ruby finds exciting.

Ruby pointed out that a lot of climate change activism has been youth-led, the effort getting the most attention world-wide being led by Greta Thunberg. As Ruby explained, "It is very empowering to see my generation, myself, my age, doing something good for the world — to see a very young group of people coming together for the world and fighting together for something that is bigger than just all of us.” Covid forced the youth-climate movement to pivot away from marches and school walk-outs. Ruby was impressed with the way that Climate Cardinal’s leader could make the group “work virtually and still be getting things done.” Initially, Ruby didn’t seek out a youth-led initiative to become involved in, but now that she’s in a youth-led organization, she says that youth-led groups are important for this type of activism. “Where the effects of climate change impact the youngest people as time wears on, to see my generation understand that and really get involved is a really cool thing to be a part of.”

Henry Shane

The school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida sparked the beginning of Henry Shane’s political activism when as a freshman in March 2018 he organized the “March For Our Lives” walkout at Kehillah Jewish High School. Henry watched the horror and anger of the students being interviewed by the CNN news anchors and their call for action. The message of the Parkland students was “we’re youth, we have a voice, this is just the beginning, we’re not going anywhere, and we’re going to become louder.”

 Urgency is a theme throughout the social justice issues Henry engages in. Like Ruby, Henry is also very involved with climate justice. Henry works with the Sunrise Movement, a youth-led movement with a goal to slow down the climate crisis and promote clean and renewable energy. According to Henry, youth need to take charge of the climate movement — we have barely 30 years before the climate crisis is irreversible. “Right now we see policy makers who are passing legislation for a future that they will not even see — for a future that we will have.” Sunrise supports the Green New Deal, “a congressional resolution to mobilize every aspect of American society to 100% clean and renewable energy, guarantee living-wage jobs for anyone who needs one, and a just transition for both workers and frontline communities—all in the next 10 years.”

 Urgency is also seen in other issues Henry is engaged in: racial injustice, income inequality, and LGBTQ+ rights. To Henry and his peers, these issues are “common sense,” and they wonder why they are still even up for debate: legislation that might reverse same-sex marriage, women’s right to control their own bodies, for example.

Henry is involved locally with a group called Justice Vanguard that is focused on racial injustice in Bay Area communities, LGBTQ+ rights and fighting systemic oppression. Henry participated in racial justice protests this past summer after the police shooting of George Floyd, working with fellow activists in East Palo Alto and San Francisco communities. Noting that he himself grew up in a position of privilege in Menlo Park: “It’s time for privileged white
people to step back and sit down and be quiet for a minute — learn from people of color, learn from the marginalized, learn from the people who have been oppressed for generations.”

Henry understands all too well how various movements must work for each other, explaining that as a marginalized community, the LGBTQ+ movement needs to move hand-in-hand with the racial justice movement. He feels fortunate that as a gay man he is loved and accepted by friends and family, but knows this is not the case for many LGBTQ+ people across the world. The LGBTQ+ movement must address the racism and lack of inclusivity that is present even within the gay community. Henry noted that Black Trans women were the ones who led the 1969 New York City Stonewall uprising, and that Black Trans women are one of the targets of discrimination and violence in society today.

According to Henry, all of these movements are intertwined, and we have to focus on them all. “If we don’t have climate justice, then we don’t have racial justice. Then we don’t have full equality for the LGBTQ+ community, and the Black and Brown communities, then we don’t have proper health care — the list goes on. All of these movements cross roads with each other. That’s how you focus on all of it at once.”

In 2020, the big agenda for all youth-led movements was the get out the vote effort for the November election. For many like Henry it was their first time participating in the political process as a voter. He felt that the youth voice was stronger in 2020 than in 2018 — more news anchors and politicians took youth leaders seriously, acknowledging that these new leaders “knew what they were talking about.”

The urgency in youth politics is not just driven by the agenda, but in how youth approach solutions. According to Henry, politics within his generation, “Gen Z,” are different. “When we talk about politics, we talk about politics in a different way than our parents talk about politics. We’re much quicker. It’s a new system that’s coming around.”
Dates to Remember!

All Meetings on Zoom — watch your emails for links!

Special Tu B’shvat Shabbat Service
Friday, January 22, 7:30 p.m.

Fifth Friday Shabbat, “Both Sides Now”
Friday, January 29, 7:30 p.m.

ETZ Talk. “What is Jewish Magic? The Curious Case of the Mezuzah” with Yosef Rosen, PhD
Sunday, February 7, 10:00 a.m.

Purim Shpiel and Megillah Reading
Thursday, February 25, 7:30 p.m.

ETZ Talk. “This is Your Life” — The American Public’s First Encounter with a Holocaust Survivor with Julie Kohner of Voices of the Generations
Sunday, March 14, 10:00 a.m.

Community Zoom Seder
Sunday, March 28th, 6:30 p.m.