



Chadashot Ha'am

A bi-monthly newsletter for Congregation Bet Ha'am

September/October 2021
Av/Elul 5782

Welcome to the Chadashot Ha'am!

RABBI JARED H. SAKS

The Rabbi's Column

In 1808, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Lefin of Satanov, in his work *Sefer Cheshbon ha-Nefesh (Book of Spiritual Accounting)*, transformed Benjamin Franklin's vision for moral perfection for a Jewish audience. In an article for CNN, David G. Allan writes, "Franklin started by taking a critical look at his behavior, and he found that too often he traveled down unvirtuous roads that 'natural inclination, custom or company might lead me into,' as he put it. He fell short of his ideal in more than a dozen areas of his life, he concluded. He ate and drank too much. He talked too much, especially about himself. He spent more money than he should. He didn't finish all his goals. And so on. In other words, he wrestled with the very same human urges, flaws, and proclivities that now fuel our New Year's resolutions and the ever-booming market of self-help books. Then he considered various virtues that, if mastered, would counteract his unwanted behavior. His list of 13: Temperance, Silence, Order, Resolution, Frugality, Industry, Sincerity, Justice, Moderation, Cleanliness, Tranquility, Chastity and Humility."^[1]



Lefin named his work *Sefer Cheshbon ha-Nefesh*, the *Book of Spiritual Accounting*, giving it the same name of the most critical spiritual work of this season. While 'spiritual accounting' is a good literal translation of *cheshbon ha-nefesh*, this tenet of Judaism implies much more than just a spiritual or moral accounting. We are called to do some real soul searching at this season, to evaluate our lives over the past year, looking at our actions and where we've missed the mark in our relationships with each other, with God, and even with

ourselves. We began this work in the Hebrew month of Elul, which this year began on Sunday, August 8, and continues throughout the fall holiday season, right up to the end of Atzeret-Simchat Torah, this year on Tuesday, September 28. The work of *cheshbon ha-nefesh* isn't reserved for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur alone. In fact, it's not only restricted to this season; it's work in which we should engage all year long.

Lefin expanded on Franklin's list of virtues, drawing from classical sources, creating a step-by-step program for self-improvement. His list of virtues (*middot*, in Hebrew), included Equanimity, Tolerance and Patience, Orderliness, Decisiveness, Cleanliness, Humility, Righteousness, Economic Stability, Zeal, Silence, Calmness, Truth, Separation, Temperance, Deliberation, Modesty, Trust, and Generosity.

At this High Holy Day season, I invite you to examine Lefin's list of *middot*. How can you use these virtues to create balance and reduce stress in your life? Which of these are easily attainable for you? Which are more challenging for you to access? Where have these *middot* been driving forces in your life and where are they needed? This season calls us to engage in deep soul searching to reveal our greatest potential.

One of my favorite poets, Ruth Brin, offers this poem, *In the Days of Awe*, which is a powerful entry into the work of *cheshbon ha-nefesh*:

*Dangling from a leather sling in the oak,
the tree trimmer, high in the swaying tree,
reaches out to saw away a branch.
It leaves a staring eye when it drops,
a round white eye on the tree trunk.
Cautiously, with rope and saw,
tools swinging from his belt,
he crawls upward, seeking limbs to cut.*

*Now I too slash away unnecessary branches,
opening eyes to the sky.
Imperiled, dangling, lacking skill to choose
the limbs that stifle growth, I pray
to Thee Whose marks I bear within
like rings of trees.
I pray Thee guide my hand,
I, the tree trimmer, I the tree.[2]*

[1] <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/01/health/13-virtues-wisdom-project/index.html>

[2] Ruth F. Brin, *A Rag of Love*, Emmet Publishing Co. (Minneapolis, 1969), p. 39.

SYLVIA MOST, President - Board of Trustees

Rosh Hashanah Resolutions



In my early career I read Stephen Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. While it didn't end my legendary knack for procrastination, it did help me learn to be proactive about setting goals. In case you missed it, "proactivity" was the 1990's version of the "needing to pivot" we are obliged to do today. I never mastered the art of being proactive, but I did learn to set and work toward personal goals.

One goal I set last year with a college friend is to hike 60 of New England's highest peaks before we turn 60. There are 67 peaks in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont that are over 4000 feet – that's the list we are working from. While I've got a few years remaining to meet this challenge, some of these mountains involve long hikes to relatively inaccessible places. None are in Scarborough - they all require a long drive. I had been busy with travel and visitors this past summer, and given the weather and all of these challenges, I hadn't done as much hiking as I'd planned. So, on Friday evening I found myself needing to pivot from my original plan to attend Shabbat morning services to going for a solo hike. (See what I did there?)

When I arrived at Crawford Notch early in the morning, I was amazed to see the trailheads all packed with cars and lots of people everywhere. What I didn't realize until later in the morning, was that I had stumbled into "Flags on the 48 - a September 11 Memorial Hike." It was a spectacular late summer morning – reminiscent of the actual day. Hiking parties all over the New Hampshire peaks were erecting flag poles to fly American flags in memory of the events of September 11. The people I met who had carried the flag to the summit of Mount Field, were heartfelt and earnest in their desire to participate in this unique and special tribute.



Here is a picture of the flag flying over Mount Field. My hike also included seeing the flag flying over Mount Tom.

SAM SPINRAD, Religious Education Director

Jewish Advocates: There When You Need Them

When I went to college, I didn't anticipate having meaningful Jewish experiences. My religious school Tanach was the only Jewish object I brought across the country. On my mind were the new setting, the academics, and most of all, the military lifestyle. The upperclassmen cadre were known for their intensity and tolerating no excuses. I figured that attending High Holy Days services was not in the cards for me during cadet basic training.



A few weeks into my new rigorous lifestyle, an upperclassman entered the barracks and spoke to my cadre. They announced, "Anyone who wishes to

attend Jewish services, talk to this cadet." I was introduced to Master Sergeant Mahoney, and later to Professor Adler, a Jewish professor who made Jewish inclusion her business.

Professor Adler made it clear she was my advocate. As a criminal justice professor, she was completely comfortable putting the cadre and any clueless administrators in their place. Before I knew it, I was excused from PT (physical training), academic classes, and even Tuesday Afternoon Training with Marine Corps ROTC.

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, I found myself away from the shouting and tension of the corps and in a cozy home with a friendly German Shepherd. Sitting on the professor's couch and watching her cook delicious brisket (despite being a vegetarian), I found myself feeling completely relaxed for the first time in a month. The other freshmen and I attended services in uniform. The service gave me a unique opportunity for introspection.

Over my college years, my appreciation grew for Professor Adler's efforts to accommodate Jewish cadets. She was no rabbi, and it took an effort to find the Jewish students, but each year she found them. It made those High Holy Days some of my favorites ever.

In Maine where Jews are also sparse, we should continue to advocate for each other when necessary. I hope to do that in this new year. Shanah tova!

TOM ROSEN, Treasurer



Treasurer's Ledger

I have just returned as treasurer after taking a one-year break (my sabbatical?) due to term limits. Previously, I served two six-year terms as treasurer of Bet Ha'am. I want to thank Mark Stone for being treasurer during my absence. As an entrepreneur, he brought some great skills to this position. His ability to clearly articulate the future financial needs of Bet Ha'am and to have the board increase their involvement in fundraising and

financial oversight were great accomplishments that will pay dividends for years. He has strengths in areas that are not my specialty and I look forward to his assistance on the finance committee to continue building a more sustainable plan. I encourage you to review Mark's excellent slideshow from the Annual Meeting and his May 2021 report. Both present an overview of two important topics: short-term results and longer-term projections. In summary, we have done ok in the short-term BUT longer-term we have many challenges. The reports are on our website, in the Treasurer's Ledger section: <https://www.bethaam.org/who-we-are/treasurers-ledger/>.

Our fiscal year ended on June 30. It will be another month before the final figures are reviewed, but it looks like the surplus will be around \$68,000. The budget was for a deficit of almost \$17,000. The primary reasons for this swing were lower maintenance and utility bills due to the building being closed and staff departures. While this is good for the bottom line, it is definitely not good from an operating standpoint.

The budget for this fiscal year includes a projected deficit of over \$62,000. Given the uncertainties associated with the pandemic, budgets tend to be less accurate. The budget for this year includes some aggressive

fundraising assumptions for the board and staff. It assumes limited rental income. Payroll and Benefits is the largest expense, at 64% of total expenses. Next month, once the past year financials are completed, I plan on providing a more in-depth discussion of our performance and future needs.

LYNN MANSFIELD, Executive Director

Getting to Know One Another

Lots of introductions, many planning meetings, two B'nai Mitzvahs, one ice cream social, High Holy Day services...and a partridge in a pear tree! Ok, I made up the partridge, but the rest sums up my first two months here at Bet Ha'am. It's been a whirlwind, but I'm loving it all. I eagerly await the days when our religious school is buzzing with students and families gather for Shabbat services. I'm craving connection—faces to names and children to parents. I can only imagine how hard it has been for you, the people who make up our vibrant community, to be away from our beautiful synagogue for so long. Without skipping a beat, you learned to daven at home, eat together over Zoom, celebrate the B'nai Mitzvahs of our children—all while using technology to preserve a strong sense of community. I am impressed by your resilience.

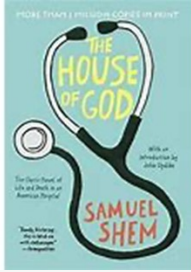


While I've had the pleasure of meeting some of our volunteers, I've yet to meet many of our members in person. If you read the summer issue of the *Chadashot*, you already know a little about me—raising ten children tends to stand out! I've had many questions about my non-traditional family, so I thought I'd share more of my story with you. I've raised 6 boys and 4 girls between the ages of 30 and 13. I've homeschooled my youngest four since kindergarten, cultivating an amazing tribe along the way. I can assure you that true homeschooling is easier than being thrown into remote learning and I commend you for rocking such a difficult task. I have five left in the nest—one in graduate school and four teens. My grocery bill is huge, but family dinners are worth every penny. Others have asked if I'm Jewish. The answer is no, but I can honestly say that I am grateful for the opportunity to learn more about Judaism and its rich culture. When I watch our B'nai Mitzvah kids recite Hebrew, I am in awe of the years of dedication and practice it takes. I still can't pronounce chet properly, but I'm working on it!

Now that you know more about me, I'd be delighted if you'd take a few moments to share more about you. From photos of your own families to your memorable experiences here at Bet Ha'am, I invite you to email Lynn@bethaam.org to share as much as feels comfortable. I'm listening and look forward to knowing you all.

Cries to God and *The House of God* by Congregant Catherine Share

When I started on my long journey to practice medicine, someone along the way told me to read *The House of God* by Samuel Shem. It is the fictional account of six newly graduated medical students starting their internship at a very famous teaching hospital (think



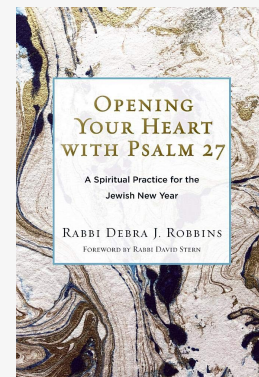
Mass General). It became a cult phenomenon and reading it was a rite of passage for new interns. It is full of acronyms that we all learned and would quote in tense and difficult situations. For me and my fellow medical students, the familiar terminology was like a secret handshake that built the necessary camaraderie to face challenging situations.

As I advanced through my own surgical residency, a difficult five years that tested me in so many ways, I would sometimes think about that book. As surgeons we developed our own sayings like, "A chance to cut is a chance to cure." This famous saying became the title of the surgical resident's handbook (basically a survival manual) at Parkland Hospital in Dallas (where Kennedy was taken after the assassination). Another famous saying was oft quoted by a senior resident to the struggling intern. "Sure, call me if you need help, but remember, it's a sign of weakness." Not an encouraging piece of information to unsuspecting patients scheduled for surgery at teaching hospitals during the month of July when internships start. (By the way, interns never operate. We are there only to hold retractors).

Thinking about a cry for help brings me to consider the various Torah readings on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. These stories are filled with cries for help. Was Abraham so obedient to God's command to take Issac to the mountain and sacrifice him that he didn't secretly cry out for help to stay the blade? The angel appeared just in time. He/she was not too late to save a single life and thus the Jewish people. The cry for help from the barren Hannah in the temple, originally thought to be from a drunken woman, softened the heart of Eli, the high priest who blessed her. Hannah eventually conceived and bore a son. As promised, she dedicated Samuel to God. As a young man, he heard the call of God and responded "Here I Am." On Yom Kippur, we read about Jonah, the reluctant prophet, who initially ran away from the call of God, as he cries out from the belly of the whale, "You cast me into the depths, into the heart of the sea, the floods engulf me; all your breakers and billows swept over me. I thought I was driven out of your sight: would I ever gaze again upon your holy temple?" *Jonah 2:4-5*, JPS translation.

At this writing, the High Holy Days, the Days of Awe, are almost upon us. In all these situations, whether it is the seasoned surgeon who encounters something for the first time in the operating room and asks for a colleague to come in and help figure out what is going on, the barren mother who cries to God in her despair, or the reluctant prophet who finally finds a voice. These calls to God and to each other, are like the shofar. They come from places in the heart that seek the face of God. We can all raise our voices, and it is not a sign of weakness.

Inspired by *The House of God* by Samuel Shem and *Opening Your Heart with Psalm 27* by Rabbi Debra J Robbins.



CHAG SAMEACH!

HAPPY SUKKOT!



Etrog Box Encircled with Sukkahs
by Toby Rosenberg Pottery

Bet Ha'am's First Most Excellent Etrog Raffle

by Toby Rosenberg

Over the next few weeks, the open-air markets in Israel will be brimming with etrogs (citrons) on sale for Sukkot. Not all etrogs will fetch the same price. Depending on size, shape, surface, and the presence of the pitom (flower stem), an etrog might cost from a minimum of 35 shekels up to hundreds, even thousands. Many synagogues around the world sell etrog and lulav sets as autumn fund raisers. Here at Bet Ha'am, we grow our own organic etrog plants. *It has taken nine years for our plants to produce three impressive fruits!* They are large and excellent in form. We will keep one for the Bet Ha'am sukkah.



We will raffle off two of these excellent etrogs on **Friday, September 17th at 11:00 AM** live on Facebook! Each will come with a lulav to complete the ritual sukkah symbols. Two other prizes are offered: a children's book with plush etrog and lulav set and a festive Israeli hostess set that will be perfect for entertaining! With four drawings, each ticket has four chances to win. When you enter to win, Bet Ha'am wins too!

1 ticket \$18.00

3 tickets \$50.00

7 tickets \$100

Rabbi's forearm length (11 tickets) \$150

PURCHASE RAFFLE TICKETS AT: <https://tinyurl.com/2mfdvj8w>

What is an Etrog?

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etrog>

Making the Most of Sukkot

by Toby Rosenberg



With this perturbing, persistent, pandemic postponing in-person, indoor gatherings, Sukkot promises plenty of

opportunities for open-air social engagement. May we suggest you put up a sukkah at home this year? Links below will help you create your sukkah even if it is your very first time. Have fun constructing your creation.

Keep it airy and breezy. Decorate it to your hearts content. Did you know that in Israel, sukkahs are often adorned with ornaments and the tinsel we associate with Christmas? Make sure to include harvest symbols.

Now take every opportunity during the festival from September 20-27 to spend time in your sukkah and *invite guests!* Hospitality is part of the tradition. Perhaps you will invite your Bet Ha'am neighbors and get to know them better or introduce non-Jewish friends to the delights of this festival. Maybe you will spend contemplative time in your sukkah reflecting on the abundance of the season, your relationship to God or the fragility of life. However, you "live" in your sukkah, it can bring great meaning and delight to this season of joy.

For more on what to do with an etrog after Sukkot, celebrating Sukkot at home, and building your own sukkah, visit <https://pjlibrary.org/beyond-books/pjblog/june-2021/tips-for-building-your-sukkah>.

How to Celebrate Sukkot Without a Sukkah

by Rabbi Robyn Frisch

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, some of us who might have been able to visit or even celebrate Sukkot with a meal in a sukkah in regular circumstances, may not be able to this year. The central symbol of the holiday of Sukkot is the sukkah, a temporary hut that is built outside to remind us of the 40 years the Israelites spent wandering in the wilderness, during which they dwelled in sukkahs.

So, what can you do if you want to celebrate the holiday of Sukkot, but you don't have a sukkah?

Have a picnic—in your backyard.

So, you can't have a meal in a sukkah. Your backyard (or deck or local park) is still a great place to bring the family and enjoy a meal *al fresco*. Yes, it's a bummer not to be under the sukkah, but isn't a big part of the holiday

cooking seasonal meals and enjoying them outside with loved ones? Even if all the people you'd like to invite to your picnic blanket can't safely join you, this is the time to love the ones you're with. And eating outside on a picnic blanket is fun for the kids, period.



Go stargazing.



While Jewish law teaches that the vegetation covering the top of the sukkah needs to be thick enough so that the shade inside the sukkah is greater than the sunlight, we also learn that ideally, we should be able to see the stars through the top of the sukkah. Assuming the weather is cooperating, you still have access to gazing at the stars. If you have kids, do this as a family. It can be as simple as going outside and looking up at the sky, and

hopefully you'll have the pleasure of seeing some stars.

Help feed and shelter others.

In the 19th century, the Chasidic Rabbi Hayyim Halberstam of Sandz popularized the practice among his followers of inviting poor people to be guests in their sukkahs. By volunteering at a food bank during Sukkot, we can carry on this wonderful idea of making sure that the less fortunate have food to eat. This year, with the number of unemployed, more people than ever are relying on food banks. Even if they aren't having volunteers pack food because of coronavirus, many food banks still need volunteers to deliver food. Or you could donate to a local or national organization that provides food for those in need.



The sukkah, a temporary structure that isn't nearly as sturdy as our homes, also reminds us of how fortunate we are to have a place to live with a roof over our head. Unfortunately, not everyone is so lucky. Sukkot is a great time to explain this to your kids and to volunteer (again, options may be limited due to coronavirus) and/or to give money to a homeless shelter.



Harvest. Cook. Eat.

In the Bible, Sukkot is one of three harvest festivals (along with Passover and Shavuot), and it was originally considered a thanksgiving for the fall harvest. If you grow your own fruits and vegetables, get picking and cooking, and if not, you can go to a farmer's market or farm and buy or pick produce.

Then use the local harvest to make yourself delicious meals during the holiday. See some of our favorite recipes for inspiration.

One of the names of Sukkot is *Zeman Simchateinu* or "season of our joy," so whatever you do to celebrate the holiday, make sure to have fun!

Moroccan-Inspired Vegetable Couscous

by Tina Wasserman

This Moroccan-inspired dish is a perfect way to reap the bounty of wonderful vegetables available during the Sukkot season. It also

makes a beautiful, edible centerpiece for your dinner table in the sukkah.
Ingredients:

2 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 medium onion, diced into 1/2-inch pieces
2 carrots, sliced into 1/4-inch rounds
1 8-ounce can of tomato sauce
3/4 cup dark raisins
1/2 teaspoon salt or to taste
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
2 1/2 cups of vegetable stock, divided use
1 small (1 pound) eggplant, sliced into 1-inch cubes
2 yellow crookneck squash, sliced into 1/4-inch rounds
2 small zucchini, sliced into 1/4-inch rounds, or 1 cup asparagus cut into 1-inch lengths
4 ounces of mushrooms (any type), caps cut into quarters (portabellas cut into 1-inch cubes)
1 15-ounce can of chickpeas, drained
4 Tablespoons butter or margarine
1 cup fine couscous
1 or more Tablespoons of finely minced parsley for garnish



Directions:

1. Heat a large frying pan or 4-quart saucepan for 30 seconds, add the olive oil, and heat for 15 seconds. Sauté the garlic and onion until lightly golden. Do not allow the garlic to brown.
2. Add the carrots, tomato sauce, raisins, salt, cumin, and 1 cup of the stock. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes or until the carrots are crisp tender--thoroughly cooked but firm and not mushy.
3. Add the zucchini and the eggplant and cook for 10 minutes. Spoon in the crookneck squash or asparagus pieces, mushrooms, and chickpeas and stir to combine. Cook for an additional 10 minutes until all the vegetables are tender.
4. In a large saucepan, heat the remaining 1 1/2 cups of stock along with the butter or margarine. Add the couscous. Cover, remove from the heat, and allow the pan to sit for 5 minutes.
5. To serve, spoon the couscous into the center of a large, rimmed dish, and surround with the cooked vegetables. Pour the sauce evenly over all, and sprinkle with a little parsley for garnish.

Additional Notes:

- Before step 4 above, toast the couscous in a dry pan to bring out its nuttiness and add depth. Couscous can burn very quickly if you are not careful so keep an eye on it!
- After about 5 - 7 minutes, most of the couscous will be a nice golden-brown color. Now you can take the pan off the heat and add your liquid.
- Always heat your sauté pan before adding oil. This prevents the oil from adhering to the pan and the food from sticking to the oil.
- When cooking vegetables, always add in first those that require more cooking time.
- The fins of portabella mushrooms will blacken foods. Before adding a portabella to any recipe, scrape the fins off its underside with a spoon and use only the remaining mushroom cap.

Recipe from [*Reform Judaism*](#)

Bat Mitzvah
Sydney Rosenfeld - September 25, 2021

Sydney Rosenfeld is an 8th grader at Greely Middle School in Cumberland. In her free time, she enjoys playing soccer,

people and often tries to give the support she has received back to those that may need it in difficult times.

Ava would like to thank everyone who has helped her prepare for becoming a Bat Mitzvah, but especially her tutor, Sam Spinrad and religious leader, Rabbi Saks. Additionally, Ava would like to thank all past Bet Ha'am teachers, and her amazing family and friends.

With Deep Gratitude to Chris Skidgel

by Jane Sloven



You may not know all the things Chris Skidgel does for Congregation Bet Ha'am—I don't even know all of them. Yet, I know how important he has been in helping me create contemplative worship services, and I'd like to thank him.

Over the years, Chris could be counted upon to set up the sanctuary or alternative rooms for our contemplative worship. Since the pandemic, Chris has worked closely with me to craft recorded worship offerings for *The Contemplative Service*, *The Selichot Service*, and *The Yom Kippur Healing and Meditation Service*.

To create these services, I set up tables in my yard and used an app on my laptop to record myself, Joseph Py, and Daniel Oppenheim reading prayers or poems, leading meditations, blowing the shofar, and playing guitar and singing. Leslie, Miles, and Liza Simmons recorded themselves singing "Lach Amar Libi." Sharon Newman also recorded herself via her phone, in her home, singing and playing guitar. I labeled, timed, and numbered each recorded segment before sending them to Chris, who went to work turning them into beautifully flowing worship services.

The *Contemplative Service* consisted of 18 separate videos split between Sharon and me. The *Yom Kippur Meditation and Healing Service* consisted of 31 individual videos divided among seven people. The *Selichot Service* consisted of 27 separate videos split among four people.

Chris received the videos, notated services, and separated lists detailing the sequencing and timing of each numbered segment. The instructions looked like this:

Sharon #1 from 4 seconds to 2 minutes 43 seconds

Jane #1 from 2 seconds to 2 minutes 20 seconds

Sharon #2 from 4 seconds to 2 minutes 1 second

Joe#1 from 4 seconds to 2 minutes 1 second

Jane #2 from 3 seconds to 1 minute 5 seconds

Daniel #1 from 5 seconds to 4 minutes 3 seconds

It was Chris' time and skill that linked these recordings. It was Chris' talent that created our flowing worship services. He was patient, kind, and generous in taking the time to collaborate with me. He went above and beyond. Thank you, Chris!

Introducing Congregant Molly Edelstein

Molly Edelstein is a 34-year-old native Mainer new to the Bet Ha'am community since this past spring. She was one of Bet Ha'am's Friday night speakers while Rabbi Saks was on sabbatical. However, the sound system was not working well, and it was difficult to hear her. We asked if she would share her talk in this edition of *Chadashot* so the congregation could get to know her better.



Coming Home to Myself
by Molly Edelstein

I feel honored to have been asked to speak tonight. Thank you so much to the whole congregation for welcoming me and bringing me into the community so wholeheartedly. This feels like a significant moment in my Jewish story and my life story in general. The theme of my talk tonight is "coming home to myself" because I wanted to talk about the path life has brought me on and how my Jewishness has been woven through the whole experience.

I've been on a quest for at least half my life to know deeply who I am and to show up in the world as my fullest, most authentic self. At this moment in my life, I am so pleasantly blown away by how important returning to my Jewish roots has been for my quest to my full expression. I'm also so delighted by how naturally my Jewish connection has blossomed and grown in my life in just a short time, much in thanks to members of this congregation.

I was raised in a Unitarian Universalist church and didn't know many Jewish people. My dad, David was Jewish and my mom, Annie was not. At some-point when I was a kid my dad's youngest sister and her family joined a local Temple. Their Jewish life had this incredible allure to me, I went with the adults to a Jewish learning class led by Rabbi Lev in the basement of Temple Israel in Dover. I loved being at the temple, but I always felt like a little bit of an outsider. I remember learning in that class that Judaism is passed from the Mother, and knowing it had been passed in my family by the Father for 2 generations, part of me felt illegitimate in my Jewishness.

Rabbi Lev was very loving and welcoming to me, as the sidekick to my Aunt, Uncle and Cousins. When I came of age, he offered to do a kind of ceremonial Bat Mitzvah for me at the temple, which was a very proud moment for me as a kid.

I always felt Jewish, but I carried this worry that I wasn't allowed to be— this fear that I wasn't Jewish enough. I mean, I hadn't had a REAL Bat Mitzvah, I

knew hardly any Hebrew, I didn't know the songs or the prayers, I didn't know how to celebrate the holidays and what the Torah even said.

And yet inside me I had this burning matzah ball of Jewishness in my soul never went away, I loved that I was Jewish by my heritage and figured that would be the extent of it— my dark hair and my last name would be my badges of Jewishness, the only Jewishness I felt worthy of having.

Years later, as an adult, when I was working at a local gym, The Body Architect, I made friends with a woman I worked out with, bonding over being Jewish. We would make Yiddish jokes in the elevator after class, we'd talk like Bubbes from Brooklyn, and it made my heart happy.

One day in the locker room as I was blow drying my hair, she asked me if I was seeing anyone. Her next words are burned in my memory "I have a brother." It's corny but the world dissolved a little bit and I got goosebumps. "Is he single?" "Yep." "What's his name?" "Ira Sterling." I feel in love with his name before I even knew him.

I had never dated a Jewish man before and hadn't really thought about it but talking to Meghan that day in that locker room the world crashed down on me.

She introduced us that next week and we've been together ever since. We just celebrated our 2nd anniversary.

Before meeting Ira, I never would have considered what it would feel like being with a Jewish man, and yet something inside me had come online that had never been there before. It's like my DNA was in the relationship, egging me on, "Yes! Yes! This is who you are!"

The pandemic year was tough for my mental health, as it was for so many. I found myself in a dark, unhappy place struggling to find meaning, optimism, and direction.

Multiple Sclerosis has been a part of my life forever. When I was 6 my dad was diagnosed with Progressive MS and was in a wheelchair by the time I was 9. He died in 2014 at age 67. At age 20 I too was diagnosed with MS, though the relapsing remitting form. The pain of my dad's disability and then my own diagnosis has driven my spiritual search for peace and happiness, and it's made me steadfast in my goal of showing up big to life, in my own Full Expression, whatever that is.

At the end of 2020 I woke up in the throes of a new flare-up, my first for 7 years. Emotionally it felt like being diagnosed all over again. Luckily though, that flare up kicked me out of the depression and apathy I had been suffering with and ignited a fire of healing and change.

I recovered from the worst of it with the help of Ira, my Mom, and lots of friends and family. Over and over MS shows me where I'm playing small, acting from fear, waiting, hesitating, and looking for certainty. In January I

started a business called Personal Growth Design where I educate and inspire women to connect back to themselves and live their own fully expressed life.

Part of my healing journey was that I began a regular yoga practice virtually with my sweet friend Ashley Flowers (who I had no idea was Jewish! How did I miss that!?)

One day before yoga I had a thought out of the blue that I'd like to become more involved with the local Jewish community, and perhaps even join a Temple.

The next day I was talking with Ashley when she mentioned going to Zoom Shabbat services that night at Bet Ha'am where she was a member. Whoa. She asked if I wanted to come and sent me the link.

Ask and ye shall receive.

As I've become more involved at Bet Ha'am, studied Torah, volunteered, and continued my learning, I've seen how integral to my self-actualization Judaism is.

I titled this talk coming home to myself because I have finally fully embraced what was always there but had been exiled by me, in my feeling of "not Jewish enough."

I identify with being Jewish above most other things, with the exception perhaps of being a woman. For the first time in my life, I am honoring that feeling instead of squashing it.

I feel grateful to have come to this recognition in the way that I have, CHOOSING to come to the Jewish religion as an adult, not with any baggage or pressure, but with Awe and Gratitude for the traditions that connect me to my DNA, my tribe and my Jewish ancestors— some of whom, the Silvermans, emigrated directly to Portland from Russia in the late 1800's. The Universe has connected me to them so deeply as to have put me in an apartment on Melbourne St. on the Eastern Prom in my 20s, across the street from where the Silvermans lived.

*Jewish is in my bones.
Portland is in my bones.
God and spirituality are in my bones.*

From this place I have found where my fully expressed life gets built— and boy does it feel good.

Thank you all for being a part of my Jewish community as I step fully into this part of myself.

You can find Molly online at personalgrowthdesign.com and on social media @personalgrowthdesign.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to:

- Jackie and Adam Karpman, Leah & Noah
- RJ McComish and Peter Brown, Crosby
- Michael and Nancy Halpern, Margot & Jesse
- Welcome back to Sue Erber
- Rachel and Gary Goldman, Stella & Violet
- Sheri January
- Barbara Slote and Mark Klimek, Sam
- Keith and Lauren Rosenberg, Levi, Sawyer & Zaff 'Taco'

CONDOLENCES

***Zecher T'zaddick L'vrachach* to:**

- Juliana and David Dubovsky on the loss of Juliana's grandmother, Marjorie Segal

THANK YOU!

- To everyone who responded to this year's Financial Commitment letter.
- To the Welcome Back Ice Cream Social committee: Sylvia Most, Diane Newman, Catherine Share, Sam Rothman, Donna Landau for organizing this event
- To Alan Davis, Peter Scott and the Spruce Rooster Band for the lively music
- To Ashley Flowers for her relaxing yoga
- To Rabbi Saks, just back from his sabbatical and Lynn Mansfield our new executive director for their support
- To the Board of Trustees and the rest of the volunteers for set up, clean up and welcoming schmoozing
- To the many Bet Ha'am families who ate ice cream while reconnecting with each other after a long time apart – A HEARTFELT THANK YOU. WE ALL NEEDED THIS TIME TOGETHER AND LOOK FORWARD TO MORE OPPORTUNITIES!

DONOR GALLERY

Annual Fund:

- Annette Goodman
- Rachel Reed
- To honor Jeremy Moser as this year's Jane L. Snerson Volunteer of the Year by Toby Rosenberg
- In memory of Susan Paris' mother by Sharon Ash Tancredi
- In appreciation of the Caring Committee by Susan Paris
- In memory of my mother, Rita Rosenberg and my husband, Michael Barriault by Toby Rosenberg

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund:

- In appreciation of Karen Hindall for all her help by Sunday and Charles Perry
- In memory of Ruth Jordan by Marcella Bobinsky
- In memory of Lisa Silverman by Sharon Ash Tancredi

Close the Budget Gap Fund:

- In memory of Norman Salzberg by Meryl Troop

General Fund:

- In memory of Edward Rosen on his Yahrzeit by Tom Rosen
- In appreciation of holiday services by Jeff and Roxanne Marks
- In memory of Zadie David Rickless on his Yahrzeit by Wendy and Bill Sirois
- In memory of Christine Zarr by Gail Zarr
- In memory of Michael Shaw by Caroline Shaw

- In memory of Will Spinrad on his Yahrzeit by Sam and Hannah Spinrad
- To honor Jeremy Moser as this year's Jane L. Snerson Volunteer of the Year by Tom Rosen
- In honor of Mary Lou Michael on her milestone birthday by Amy Roemer
- In memory of Deborah Tillman's brother, Doug, by Tom Rosen
- To celebrate the marriage of Robin Kroll and Steve Shefter by Sue Erber
- In memory of my father William J. Leffler by Rabbi and Ki Leffler
- Susan Lieberman
- In memory of Evelyn Rosenthal by Robert and Rona Rosenthal
- In memory of Joseph and Therese Erdman on their Yahrzeits by Harold Erdman

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