



the Omer

T E M P L E B E T H A B R A H A M

Volume 40, Number 7

April 2021 Nisan/Iyar 5781

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other, let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors. — *From a Prayer for a Pandemic (author unknown)*



GENERAL INFORMATION:

All phone numbers use (510) prefix unless noted.

Mailing Address	336 Euclid Ave. Oakland, CA 94610
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Gabbai	Marshall Langfeld
Executive Director (x 214)	Rayna Arnold
Office Manager (x 210)	Virginia Tiger
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Gan Avraham Director	Rachel Fenyves 763-7528
Bookkeeper (x 215)	Paolo Gomez
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COMMITTEES & ORGANIZATIONS: If you would like to contact the committee chairs, please contact the synagogue office for phone numbers and email addresses.

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Chesed	Heidi Bersin & Heike Friedman
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Men's Club	Bryan Schwartz
Omer	see page 6
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Schools	Jessica Sterling
Social Action	Ann Rapson
Women of TBA	Gabriella Gordon & Abby Klein
Youth/BBYO/La'atid	Celena Ritchey

SERVICES SCHEDULE

Monday & Thursday Morning Minyan
Zoom, 8:00 a.m.

Friday Morning

Gan Shabbat, 12:40 PM on Facebook

Friday Evening (Kabbalat Shabbat)

Facebook and YouTube, 6:15 p.m.

Candle Lighting Times (Friday)

April 2	7:15 pm
April 9	7:21 pm
April 16	7:28 pm
April 23	7:34 pm
April 30	7:40 pm

Shabbat Morning

Facebook and YouTube, 9:30 a.m.

Torah Portions (Saturday)

April 3	<i>Pesach VII</i>
April 10	<i>Shmini</i>
April 17	<i>Tazria-Metzora</i>
April 24	<i>Achrei Mot Kedoshim</i>



Save the Date: May 23
Temple Beth Abraham
Annual Membership Meeting

Watch for more information including Zoom link, via email.

Oakland Congregations Yom Hashoah Commemoration (click to register)

This year, Second Generation representatives from the three Oakland synagogues – Temple Sinai, Temple Beth Abraham, and Beth Jacob Congregation – have come together to plan a Zoom Yom HaShoah commemoration for **Sunday, April 11th from 4pm to 5pm**. You do not need to be a member of one of these synagogues to participate and anyone interested is welcome.

Services During Covid:

Morning Minyan moved to ZOOM virtual location.
8-9am on Monday and Thursday

CLICK HERE

Meeting ID & Passcode in Rayna's weekly emails.

Monday, April 5

Morning Minyan virtual Zoom location 8-9am

CLICK HERE

Meeting ID & Passcode in Rayna's weekly emails.

Tuesday, April 6

Virtual Bet Sefer 4pm

Wednesday, April 7

Weekly Text Study 9:00am **Click here** to contact Rabbi Bloom for the viewing platform

Adult Education Hebrew Decoding 7:00pm on Zoom-
Click here to sign up through Susan Simon

Thursday, April 8

Virtual Bet Sefer 4pm

Friday, April 9

Kabbalat Shabbat Virtual Service at 6:15pm

CLICK HERE OR can be accessed through the TBA website www.TBAoakland.org

Saturday, April 10

"A Taste of Text Study" Adult Education 9:00-9:30am.
Come gain some insight into the Torah.

CLICK HERE

Meeting ID & Passcode in Rayna's weekly emails.

Shabbat Virtual Service begins at 9:30am Service

CLICK HERE OR can be accessed through the TBA website at www.TBAoakland.org

Shabbat Mishpacha with children ages up to 5.
Watch emails for Zoom link 10:15am

Virtual Kiddush: bring your own food and gather after services for a WTBA Zoom for ALL

Link opens at 9:45am Service ends around 11am

CLICK HERE

Meeting ID & Passcode in Rayna's weekly emails.

Watch for Rayna's weekly Shabbat emails.

Join Women of TBA & Oakland Ruach Hadassah

ROSH CHODESH MEETING

APRIL 19
at 9:30 AM

Monthly meetings on a Monday close to Rosh Chodesh and are facilitated by group members.

We are reading
"America's Jewish Women:
A History from Colonial Times to Today"

FREE. All East Bay women are invited to join.

For Zoom link: Amy Tessler at
abtessler@comcast.net or (510) 482-1218

WEEKLY TEXT STUDY with Rabbi Bloom

Contact rabbibloom@tbaoakland.org
for Zoom link

SHABBAT MISHPACHA WITH AMANDA

APRIL 3
10:15AM ON ZOOM

Use Amazon and TBA will receive a percentage
Go to this link and enjoy your shopping!:

<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/94-1375793>



Why we cover our eyes during Shema

One of the most common questions I am asked by those newly familiarizing themselves with our services is why people cover their eyes during the **Shema**. The simple answer is that it is the only prayer that requires **Kavanah**, intentionality. In order to force us to concentrate our intentionality on the one God, we cover our eyes.

How does one define **Kavanah**? The plain definition is intentionality, but it is so much more than that. It is the direction of our energy, it is a connection to Hashem, God, a higher power, it is “praying like you mean it,” and so much more.

In a Jewish prayer service, at least those of **Shacharit, Mincha, and Ma’ariv**, morning, afternoon, and evening prayers, **Halacha** (Jewish law) requires us to recite certain prayers, primarily the Shema and surrounding blessings, the Amidah, and the Kaddishes. You meet the **Halachic** requirement when you say the prayers. How you say them or whether you concentrate is of lesser importance. It would be better if you had intentionality surrounding these prayers, but even if you don’t, you have still met your obligations. This is the reason why many of us rush through the prayers. We still have to say them, and there are so, so many of them.

The **Shema**, on the other hand, requires **Kavanah**. You have not met your obligation unless you pronounce every word with intention, focusing on the meaning of those words about our one, unique God. Covering our eyes facilitates that **Kavanah**.

I should also point out that this is only true in services of the main **Shema** in **Shacharit** or **Ma’ariv**, the one that comes between **Ahavat Olam/Ahava Rabba** and the **Mi Chamocho**. There are additional Shema’s in the warmup part of the service, in the **Musaf Amidah**, and in the Torah service. These do not “require” **Kavanah**, so you do not have to cover your eyes.

You also need to cover your eyes when you recite the **Shema** at home, “when you lie down and when you rise up.” That requires the same **Kavanah**. If you are not accustomed to praying at home on your own, if you are looking for a way to connect to God, start by saying the **Shema** every morning and every night with that intentionality. You may be surprised by how connected you feel.

L’shalom,

Rabbi Mark Bloom

Kavanah and Our Bylaws

By David Goodwin

The Omer sets a theme for each month and asks anyone else who wishes to contribute an article (including the president) to write something related to the month's theme. This month's theme is kavanah, which means "intention" or "direction of the heart," and usually concerns the spirit in which one prays or acts. This month, however, I am going to stretch the theme rather a lot and talk about an incident a couple of years ago concerning our bylaws that turned on the Congregation's kavanah on an issue of governance.



The answer to a rather obscure trivia question is that TBA's formal name in fact is not Temple Beth Abraham, it's Congregation Beth Abraham of Oakland, California, and we are, technically speaking, a Nonprofit Religious Corporation organized under California's Corporations Code. Under California law, every corporation has to have bylaws, which are the corporation's "constitution," governing how the organization is run. The founders of TBA almost certainly approved a set of bylaws when they started the Congregation nearly 115 years ago, and the members have approved revisions to the bylaws a number of times since then, most recently in 2015 and 2020.

Under the bylaws, the Congregation is governed by the Board of Directors, and the endowment is managed by the Board of Trustees, a separate entity. Most of the directors and trustees are elected at the annual members' meeting but if there is a vacancy, the Board can elect someone to fill the vacancy until the next members' meeting. With me thus far?

A few years ago, Rayna pointed out that we had somehow forgotten to elect two of the trustees on the Board of Trustees at the annual members' meeting and there thus were two vacancies on that board.

What did we do about it? We consulted the bylaws but they were far from clear. They explained clearly that there is a vacancy on the Board of Trustees when various events occur (such as when a trustee dies or resigns or leaves the Congregation) but they did not come right out and say that there is a vacancy when no one has been elected to fill a position on that Board. A vehement discussion followed while we debated whether the bylaws had provided an exclusive list of when there could be a vacancy on the Board of Trustees or whether a Board of Trustees seat can also be vacant when it is actually..... vacant. If the Board of Trustees had vacancies on it, then we would have needed to call a second members' meeting to fill the vacancies so the Board of Trustees could function.

The bylaws had a solution. They provide that if a bylaw is unclear the Board of Directors can clarify it by determining what the intent of the Congregation was when it adopted the bylaw in dispute. They also provide that once the Board of Directors clarifies the bylaw, it is good practice to present the clarification to you, the members, for approval. And that is exactly what happened. There was a spirited debate at the Board of Directors over the intent behind the bylaws, and the Board eventually decided that an empty seat on the Board of Trustees is a vacancy that can be filled without calling a second members' meeting. The Board then elected two people to fill the vacant positions, with terms lasting until the next year's members' meeting. Then, last year, at our Zoom members' meeting, the members amended the bylaws to make that interpretation of the bylaws, the members' kavanah, crystal clear.

Kavanah-Do You Feel the Divine Flow?

By Ann Rapson

There is a famous shtick from Woody Allen in which he was asked “Are you religious?” To which he replied “Sort of, but my people pray in a different language, so I never really knew what they were saying.”

Despite Woody Allen’s current notoriety he makes a solid point. It is difficult for many Jews to pray since traditional Hebrew is used in the liturgy and many Jews simply do not speak or understand Hebrew. Without prior religious education and some familiarity with the language, many Jews who would otherwise worship may be turned off because they do not understand what is being recited in synagogue.

Clearly there are myriad reasons that we continue to pray in Hebrew. It is traditional to read from the Torah and chant prayers. Jewish customs revolve around words and symbols from Hebrew. And when Dave and I found ourselves in Paris during Rosh Hashanah, we knew just enough French to talk ourselves into the Agoudas Hakehiols Synagogue, an Orthodox shul in the Marais. We were enchanted to hear the service in Hebrew and felt right at home! Similarly, in Jerusalem on Shabbat, we moved along with the throng and sang with the soldiers and everyone else at the Wall. We felt a sense of belonging in Israel.

Now, we turn to the theme of Kavanah which requires some devotional belief and not the mere recitation of prayers, particularly those that we may not understand. We are back to unraveling the initial query; are you religious if you do not understand the meaning of the Hebrew prayers? Does humming along with the Rabbi suffice if you have not studied? Conversely, what if you read all the Hebrew and chant Torah, but do not feel anything?

Jewish philosophers have addressed themes of Kavanah throughout the ages. Here in the Diaspora, our efforts to pray with soul and capture the divine essence are further complicated by whether you understand any Hebrew. But I think the answers to these questions may be attainable.

Yes, I think that you can be religious and have a sense of Kavanah even absent a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew liturgy. Does it help? Of course it helps, but that is why it is important to consider the terminology of “practicing Judaism,” much like “practicing” law or medicine. We are on the journey of lifelong study. We are led along by the Rabbi, the Cantor and our lay leaders to help guide our path through the prayers and Torah, but we can impart our own spirituality and connection with God through our personal meditations of the heart at any time. And if you happen to find yourself in a synagogue anywhere around the world, put on your kippah and go with the flow!

THE OMER

We accept member submissions. Deadline for articles and letters is the seventh of the month preceding publication.

Editors in Chief	Lisa Fernandez & Rachel Dornhelm	Copy Editor	Jenny Rooney
Layout & Design	Jessica Sterling	Proofreaders	Rachel Dornhelm, Charles Feltman, Debbie Spangler
Calendar	Virginia Tiger	Distribution	online version only during pandemic
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Help From	People like you!	email	omer@tbaokland.org
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Q and A with Jessica Sterling, Omer designer and layout artist

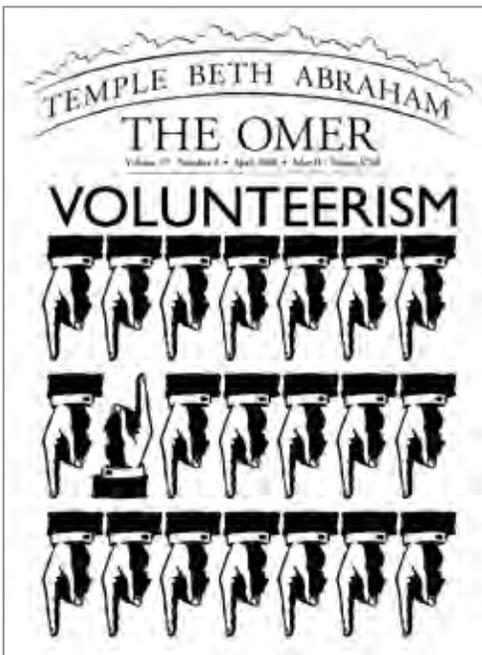
Interview by Rachel Dornhelm

The Omer's layout guru of a decade plus – Jessica Sterling – is moving on to other roles at TBA and in the community. We want to celebrate her volunteerism and commitment to making the Omer happen for so many years. We also want to give others a sense of the job. She will be passing the baton this summer. Please don't hesitate to reach out to Rachel Dornhelm (handknit@gmail.com) or Jessica Sterling (jessica.sterling@ymail.com) with any questions about the position.

This month, Jessica answered some questions from Rachel about her time with the Omer and the highlights of doing the job.

What first brought you to this job doing layout?

When our family joined TBA I thought the best way to learn about the community was producing the newsletter. I have a background in desktop publishing and felt like I could use my skills as an opportunity to volunteer for my new synagogue.



At the time [congregant] Steven Shub was doing it and I saw an ad and I answered it. That was 13 years ago. The issue was about volunteerism.

You remember the issue! What stood out to you about it?

It was all about volunteers at

TBA and what stood out was the time and love that the community put into the synagogue. Some people did this working in the kitchen, others through education programs... so many volunteers!

Are there parts of the Omer that you have enjoyed most as designer?

One of my favorite parts to put together were the photo collages, after Purim, or for the Bet Sefer page and the Gan page.

I've also always liked reading the bios of the new member families. I like learning about the families who are joining the synagogue. I also like reading the pieces that our members write because it really shows their opinions and perspectives on the topic of the issue.

But I also want to acknowledge this takes a team. I really appreciate all the people who volunteer to review draft before it is loaded and also all the people who vet them and load them in.

Why are you deciding it's time to pass the baton now?

Basically, my work hours at JCRC have increased. I used to work very part-time and now I am on the synagogue's executive board plus I have close to full-time hours.

What can someone who takes over the job, expect to experience as far as satisfaction?

I think it's a great role for someone who is new to the synagogue. You get to meet members through their writing. You get to work with Virginia which is a big part! She and Rayna are a great resource and so knowledgeable about upcoming synagogue events and holidays, so you get a connection to the staff and to members of the synagogue. And you get the satisfaction of the collaborative process every month.

What skills are helpful?

Some basic knowledge of programs that can be used for layout -- like InDesign or Publisher. Familiarity with a photo editing app can be helpful. But there is a lot of room for flexibility going forward. The main skill is getting it done on time. Anyone can do it in their own style.

How have things changed with COVID?

We do on average a 24 to 28 page issue that goes to all 500 members. Pre-COVID, Virginia spent hours printing it. And then volunteers would come in to help with mailing. But because of COVID the office was closed, so it's all online. We love that it gets to be all online. (And one of the biggest positives for the layout person is that it doesn't have to be exactly a 4 page spread. The online version can be as many pages as we want.)

The best part is people are enjoying reading it online! We still get positive comments.

Tell me about where people can find you to say hi after your time at the Omer.

I am on the executive board and I am the education chair now. I do go to services a few times a month, so when we're back in person look out for me -- I'd love to say hello.

Thank you Jessica for your many years of service!



NOMINATION FORM FOR STUDENT ATHLETE HONOREES

2021 Scholarship Awards are named for: Tad Taube, Stuart & Gaye Seiler Family, Roland Au, Joseph Albanese, Aerial Gilbert, and Dennis Brown.

CRITERIA FOR AWARDS

- Must be a member of the graduating class of 2021 or 2022.
- May be male or female.
- Must identify as Jewish, or acknowledge one's Jewish heritage.
- Non-Jewish students are eligible to apply for the Dennis Brown Award.
- Jewish students who have overcome significant life obstacles are eligible to apply for the Aerial Gilbert Award.

APPLICATION PROCESS AND APPLICATION MATERIAL

Applicants may be nominated by themselves or by others who know the student well. Applicants or people nominating a student shall include the following along with the nomination:

- A letter from the student who is applying for a scholarship (not to exceed 150 words).
- A letter from a person who is familiar with the student (not to exceed 150 words).
- A list of athletic participation signed by a coach or counselor.
- Transcript of grades up to date of application or nomination (must include verification stamp).
- A complete list of community service and extracurricular activities.
- Additional letters of recommendation (not to exceed three) from administrators, counselors, teachers, coaches, clergy, parents, etc.

Aerial Gilbert applicants should have an advocate or their sponsor submit a signed verification of the obstacle the student has overcome.

Applications Must Be Emailed by September 15, 2021 to Gary Wiener, Executive Director, of the Jewish Sports Hall of Fame of Northern California at Gary@jshofnc.org

Please indicate if you are applying/nominating a student for the Aerial Gilbert Award.

Induction Dinner and Awards Presentation: October 24, 2021 at the Four Seasons Hotel, San Francisco (scholarship recipients must be present to receive their award)

For questions, contact Mr. Gary Wiener at Gary@jshofnc.org or 408-242-3339

(student's name)

(school)

TBA Welcomes New Bookkeeper

Paolo Gomez had a brief stint as a touring musician before settling into a career in accounting and finance.

While he was working to get his BS in Business Administration/Management, he kept a busy schedule working at a commodities brokerage and playing bass for four different bands. When he finally got his degree from San Jose State University, he was given the opportunity to tour with one of his bands. After several years and almost 40 states, he decided to leave the touring life and transition into the exciting world of accounting. Though he had prior experience with accounting working with his CPA father, this would be his initial foray in accounting within the hospitality industry, which is where he landed.

He worked at several restaurants including the Slanted Door Group in San Francisco which he left as the assistant controller to take on a controller position at the Bull Valley Roadhouse in Port Costa. After a few years, he became the acting CFO for the group in charge of the Bull Valley Roadhouse restaurant, Burlington Hotel, and several holding firms in the small town. He also served as the Treasurer for an agriculture focused non-profit.

He dedicated some of his free time to volunteering at the Alameda County Food Bank as well as being a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) for foster kids. However, much of his free time is now spent with his wife, raising a two year old daughter who makes his heart burst with joy on a daily basis.



Planning a Bar Mitzvah with Flexibility and Kavanah

By Alicia Cernitz

Does B'nei Mitzvah planning have you stressed out and tied up in knots?

It doesn't have to be this way.

I was so fortunate to celebrate my daughter's Bat Mitzvah last month.

There were so many details to attend to even during COVID times.

Being the ultimate organizer and preparer I had my spreadsheets ready to keep me on task.

After Camelia's Bat Mitzvah I started helping other Bet Sefer moms with some organizing and sent a generic organizer to some friends. The feedback was so positive that I wanted to offer it to the wider community.

Becca Posamentier said the planning advice was super helpful.

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TBA FILM SERIES

DISCOVERY & TRANSFORMATION

“In the midst of every crisis, lies great opportunity.”

Albert Einstein

This past year has forced us – both individually and collectively – to manage through the pandemic, and the Film Series is no exception. When we first introduced the concept, one goal was to create a venue for TBA members to come together (remember that?) – to shmooze, see a film, and engage in discussion. To build community.

That model, which obviously wouldn’t work during the pandemic, needed to evolve.

Now, we watch the films from the comfort of our own homes (where seeing the subtitles is never a problem) and grab our own snacks. Then we come together in the Zoom “social hall” for discussions. And, thanks to this virtual environment, we have been able to invite distinguished guests to join us – regardless of where they live and work.

Local academics Michael Fox, Oren Kroll-Zeldin and Mark Dollinger led discussions of, respectively, *The invisibles*, *Tel Aviv on Fire* and *Shared Legacies*. And the creators of *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg*, *In Search of Israeli Cuisine*, *Etgar Keret: Based on a True Story*, *Who will Write our History* shared the back stories of each of their films. The conversations have been lively and illuminating and very well received. Not only by our community, but by our guests as well...

“Thank you for that lovely Zoom session. It’s not often that I use the words ‘lovely’ and ‘Zoom session’ in the same sentence, so that’s says it all. To have a chat with such a sweet and perceptive group of people was really heartwarming to Stephane and me. I totally forgot that it was the middle of the night. Please send our regards to your film club and if they want to send us an e-mail, they can of course.”

All the best,

Rutger Lemm (Dutch Co-creator of Etgar Keret)

We don’t know what the future will bring...if and when we will be able to gather together to take in a movie. But, looking at the positives, this crisis has given us the opportunity to add a new dimension to the films that we have screened and we look forward to building community through film in the coming year.



A Dairy Dish for After Passover – Persian-Style Yogurt and Vegetable Salad

By Faith Kramer

This fresh tasting, yogurt-based, cooked vegetable salad is from Persian and Persian Jewish culinary traditions and there are many variations. The salad makes a tasty dairy main, a nice side dish, an intriguing part of a mezze or salatim (Israeli salad and spread) platter, and a great dip.

It is also a classic Persian Jewish dish for dinner the night Passover has concluded (this year on April 4) for the celebration known as Shab-e Sal. Yogurt and other dairy foods were looked forward to in Iran since kosher-for-Pesach milk products were not available. The dish would also be nice for Shavuot (this year from the evening of May 16 to the evening of May 18), when dairy foods are customary.

My version is untraditional in that it mixes vegetables and is more highly seasoned. Refrigerate it at least an hour for the flavors to meld (or make it up to 1 day in advance). Serve chilled or at room temperature. Reduce or increase the raw garlic added before serving to your taste.

If using pre-cut chunks of butternut squash, slice them as directed in the recipe. If using frozen chunks, defrost, drain, dry, and then cut into 1/2-inch cubes. Sauté onions until browned (an additional 5 minutes) and adjust squash cooking time as needed.

PERSIAN-STYLE YOGURT AND VEGETABLE SALAD (BORANI) WITH SPINACH AND PUMPKIN

Serves 6-8 as a side, more as a dip

- 1/2 pound frozen chopped spinach, defrosted (see notes)
- 3 Tbs. olive oil, divided
- 2 cups chopped onion
- 1 Tbs. minced garlic, divided
- 1/4 tsp. dried mint
- 1/4 tsp. ground sumac OR 1 tsp. minced lemon zest
- 1/4 tsp. Aleppo or Urfa chili flakes OR 1/8 tsp. regular hot chili flakes
- 1 1/4 tsp. salt, divided
- 1 1/2 cups peeled, cubed pumpkin, butternut squash, or similar winter squash (cut in 1/2-inch cubes)
- 2 cups plain full-fat Greek yogurt
- 1/2 tsp. ground black pepper
- 2 Tbs. finely chopped fresh mint, divided
- 2 Tbs. finely chopped fresh dill, divided
- 1-2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- Additional garnishes: sumac, paprika, pomegranate molasses, pomegranate seeds, chopped tomatoes, chopped cucumber

Squeeze excess water out of defrosted, chopped spinach and allow to drain. Set aside.

In a large skillet, heat 2 Tbs. oil over medium high heat. Sauté onion 7-10 minutes until soft and beginning to brown. Add 2 tsp. garlic. Sauté for 1-2 minutes until golden. Stir in mint, sumac, chili flakes, and 1/4 tsp. salt. Sauté for 1 minute. Add 1 Tbs. of oil if needed. Add pumpkin or squash cubes. Sauté 8-10 minutes until they are almost cooked through. (Add a tablespoon or two of water if vegetables are sticking to the pan as you sauté.)

Add drained spinach. Sauté until spinach is warmed through and squash is completely soft, and there is no liquid in the pan, about 3-5 minutes. Let cool in colander so any residual liquid will drain.

Place yogurt in large bowl. Stir in cooled vegetables. Stir in 1 tsp. salt, black pepper, 1 Tbs. mint, and 1 Tbs. dill. Refrigerate for at least one hour or up to one day before serving. Just before serving, stir in 1 tsp. minced garlic and 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice. Stir well and taste. Adjust seasonings and add more lemon juice if desired.

Garnish with a sprinkle of sumac or paprika and or a swirl of pomegranate molasses if desired and or scatter pomegranate seeds or chopped tomatoes and or cucumbers on top.

Serve chilled or at room temperature as a side salad or a dip with matzah or pita.

Notes: To substitute fresh spinach for frozen, wash, dry, and chop 1 lb. fresh spinach. Add at the same point the defrosted spinach is added to the skillet, but cook 5-10 minutes until spinach is wilted and soft, squash is cooked through, and no liquid remains in pan.

1 1/2 cups of the cubed pumpkin or winter squash is equal to about 1/2 pound peeled and seeded. Unpeeled weight will be a few ounces more.

Faith Kramer writes a food column for the j., the Jewish News of Northern California (www.jweekly.com) and blogs her food at www.clickblogappetit.com. She is the author of the upcoming 52 Shabbats: Friday Night Dinners Inspired by a Global Jewish Kitchen (coming November 2021 from The Collective Book Studio). Follow her on Twitter and Instagram at @blogappetit. Contact her at fjkramer@msn.com

Kavanah: helping young children build relationships through intention

By Amanda Jarman

Some people might think that “intention” is an adult word and that the concept of kavanah, the direction of one’s heart, is something that children are too young to understand. Here at Gan Avraham Preschool we believe that someone is never too small or little to understand matters of the heart. We are born with the need to reach out and be held. We come into the world ready to engage and be engaged. We see kavanah as a driving force in getting needs met and in helping others to understand our plans and ideas.

We use the word kavanah everyday in our classrooms as we play and learn to communicate effectively. To learn

about others, you first have to know yourself. We scaffold this learning by starting inward with inquiry. You might hear a teacher say “I’m curious! What’s your plan? Show us your kavanah!”. We work on the language related to self and slowly build in perspective taking. Does everyone have an intention? Yes, absolutely! Is everyone’s intention the same? Not necessarily. Everyone’s heart and thought processes are different but we are all b’tzellum Elohim, created in divinity. We are unique and different and yet we get to be in our kehillah kedosha, our sacred community, where we are all one, Jewish together!

Once children understand that they have an impact on others, we start challenging them to communicate. Again, we use our “tools” from our vocabulary tool belt. When

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After the Plagues...

By Susan Simon

Do you find yourself a bit philosophical these days? I think our experience of the last year has left me contemplative about everything. I'm questioning more which is a very Jewish thing to do – we Jews love to ask questions.

Like others, I have been making connections between the plagues of Egypt, the plagues of Pesach, and our current plague. Many times, when we read Torah, we are looking for the lesson to be learned from the story. Now we have our own plague to reflect on and I'm seeing the Pesach story from a whole different light. Before this past year, I didn't think about the effect of the entire plague experience on the Israelites who seemed to come through this horror unscathed. But now I understand a bit more, and I couldn't have been more wrong.

Who is not scarred by this past year? And how will it effect Bet Sefer going forward? My mind swims as I think about the possibilities. Because of our wonderful teachers, our students have continued to learn at Bet Sefer. Younger students have reinforced holidays and Torah stories and have been given introductions to Hebrew and other subjects. But we have been meeting for 1 hour per afternoon rather than our usual 2. And even though when in person some of our time is taken up with recess and snack (will we ever serve snack again?), we still have much more time than we had this year.

That's more time for asking questions and really interacting with the material. That's more time for relationships to develop between teachers and students and among the students themselves. That's more time for teachers to be able to notice when a student isn't understanding and to intervene.

What will the knowledge base of our students be next year after the summer? Will their foundation be sufficient to move forward, or will we need to slow down the learning to help them catch up? And I know these issues aren't unique to part time religious schools – this will be a problem for education as a whole.

The fact is that we are in uncharted territory when it comes to our program. Zoom isn't a substitute for being in person, in community, in learning cohorts. And zoom is no substitute for relationships.

So I'm philosophical but at the same time, planning for all of the possibilities that we will face next year. Our Bet Sefer families have been amazing, dealing with internet issues and changes in zoom sessions, helping their children with the technology and picking up supply bags. But I am looking forward to when I can just concentrate on teaching and learning without re-creating the wheel all the time. After the plague, that will be a true blessing.

Gan Avraham, continued from page 12

children are trying to negotiate play, you might hear teachers using the word “kavanah” to help solve social conflict. We assume that everyone in our school is trying their best and offer the children the language to support one another. “I see unhappy faces. Let's help each other figure out the intention so we can all understand and fix the problem.”

Often problems in the classroom arise from a simple misunderstanding or not taking time to pause and gather information before jumping right into someone else's work. In that case, we encourage the children to slow down and preemptively ask about each other's play.

“What are you building?”

“Tell me your idea!”

“How can I help?”

“What's your plan?”

These prompts can help children think deeper about their play and help them to articulate their vision. It gives peers a way to be inquisitive with one another and is a strategy to enter existing play.

As educators we are modeling all of the time. We are transparent about our kavanah and let the children know “the why's”. Expectations for being a member of a kehillah should not be a mystery. Rules shouldn't be random or about controlling someone else... as we will soon learn from our Passover story. As adults, it's our responsibility to help the children be active participants in their own learning but to do that we need to believe that they are capable and competent. Our kavanah of treating even the youngest member of our society with kavod, deep respect, will shine through!

DONATIONS

Charity is equal in importance to all the other commandments combined. combined.

Murray Davis Courtyard Fund

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Norman & Jo Budman

Jerald & Robin Eng, in honor the naming ceremony of our granddaughter Livia

Helen Fixler, in memory of Burt Heisman

Helen Fixler, in memory of my dear husband,
Leonard Fixler

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Askash's Bar Mitzvah

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of Joseph Zatzkin

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Harry Janger

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A Legacy Gift Lasts Forever

Include TBA in your Estate Planning so that your message to your family is loud and clear:

"The existence of Temple Beth Abraham is important to me and for the future of Jews in Oakland."

Contact TBA's Executive Director Rayna Arnold for further details:(510) 832-0936 rayna@tbaoakland.org.

Akash Bornstein, April 10, 2021

Hello, I'm Akash Bornstein. On April 10, 2021, my Bar Mitzvah will finally occur. Despite the difficult challenges we have all experienced recently, I am super excited for this celebration.

My Parasha is Shemini, Leviticus which, in part, focuses on the rules of Kashrut. My drash will discuss the justification for keeping kosher and how it strengthens Jewish identity.

When I am not studying for my Bar Mitzvah, I am a competitive athlete, enjoying basketball and biking. I am also the third of five boys in my family and the third to have a Bar Mitzvah at Temple Beth Abraham. I welcome the opportunity to share this simcha with you – please consider attending the service remotely through the Temple Beth Abraham Youtube channel or Facebook link.



Talia Gordon, May 1, 2021

My name is Talia Gordon and I am going to be a Bat Mitzvah on May 1, 2021. I am a seventh grader attending Edna Brewer Middle School in Oakland. I enjoy skiing in the winter and hanging out with my friends.

My Torah portion is called Emor and it is from the book of Leviticus. It is about Jewish holidays and sacrificing to God. In my drash I will be talking about modern day sacrifice.



Planning, continued from page 9

“Everything has been so upended by the pandemic,” she said. “When we scaled back the Bat Mitzvah so much I just lost track of the details that were still important and necessary to do, Thanks for sharing your spreadsheet. It saved our day since I still have two months to get it all done!”

Here is a [link to a generic B'nei Mitzvah organizer](#) but if you find yourself needing more help feel free to contact me at acernitzcernitzschwartz@gmail.com.

Finally, don't forget these four top tips for COVID B'nei Mitzvah planning:

- It is never too early to plan
- Personalized masks and hand sanitizers for Shabbat Service
- Know your out-of-town guests travel arrival dates
- Be Flexible

Welcome New Members:

Nir Biderman & Aly Ebzery. Son Liam Biderman

Mazel Tov!

Mazel Tov to Chen Blatman and Dinah McKesey, on the birth of a daughter, Liah Hannah

April Birthdays

APRIL 1 - 2

Stella Goodwin
Danielle Raskin

APRIL 3 - 9

Dan Kaiser
Eric Livak Hale
Eva Sasson
Brandee Winikoff
Aaron Sloan Freid
Jerry Lorber
Asher Perttula
Josephine Rooney
Joey Wolmark
Benjamin Bloom
Cheri Feiner
Jonathan Klein
Jeanne Ormsby
Maya Young
Deena Aerenon
Amanda Dahan
Marianna Ezyerovich
David Lorber
Ian von Kugelgen
Roberta Masliyah
Avrah Ross
David Schleuning
Stephen Steiner
Flora Toas
Sara Zimmerman
Mary Kelly
Ethan Julian Klein
Neila Geagan-Jessel
Steven Grossman
Jonathan Jacobs
Rachel Swetnam

APRIL 10 - 16

Michelle Cossette
Fernando Garcia

Jeffery Michael Hamilton
Jenny Michaelson
Yulia Rozen
David Goodwin
Naomi Levy
Levi Moses Popper
Renuka Bornstein
Fifi Goodfellow
Robert Klein
Avi Maidenberg
Richard Shapiro
Ayla Weinstein Martinez
Benjamin Barnes
Beverly Turchin
Rosalind Heeger
Judith Stein
Elliott Weinstein Martinez
Avi WeinsteinMartinez
Willa Heeger
Francisco Martinez
Dylan Rae Smith
Emilio Dreyfuss
Morie Kahane
Ellen Kaufman
Devorah Levine

APRIL 17 - 23

Mathew Frierman
Ruth Kleinman
Maayan Rubin
Alison Schindel
Noa Dolev
Talia Gordon
Deborah Hoffman-Wade
Gabriella Serena Klein
Zachary Pincus
Ray Plumhoff
Liat Porat
Jonathan Gordon

Adelia Hunt
Lindasue Kay
Joseph Young
Shoshana Bette Edelstein
Noah Stein
Jacob Tobias
Lila Miller
David Oseroff
Lisa White

APRIL 24 - 30

Zachary Fisher
Yaeir Heber
Eve Livak Hale
Gideon Ur
David White
Heike Friedman
Liam Gordon
Shoshana Yael Kay
Ember Kadima Kessler
Laurence James
Joseph Karwat
Apollo Cade Kessler
Welch Warren
Aaron Bayen
Kaia Levy Miller
Maya Rath
Sarah Berelowitz
Steven Harris
Bayla Jaffe
Sarah Levine
Shira Levine
Rennen Pincas
Liana Plotkin
Simone Rotman
Elana Sasson
Marc Steyer

Is your birthday information wrong or missing from this list? Please contact the TBA office to make corrections.

April Yahrziets

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

May God comfort you among all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem

19 - 20 NISSAN**April 1 - 2**

Charles Friedman
Abraham Hoffman
Eve Reingold
Birdie Weisbrod
Nathan Weissman
Renee Davis
Jerome Desser
Sidney Szepsel Kahane
Albert Levine

21 - 27 NISSAN**April 3 - 9**

Albert Louis Bloch
Pavel Blymenkrantz
Raymond Bolton
Gussie Leson
Howard Maccabee
Sophelina Reingold
Annie Silver
Augusta Wolffs
Claire Braaf
Ezekiel DeKoven
Judith Diamant
Lily Fidora Gelfand
David Klein
Shelly Jane Raskin Lipton
Aaron Nudler
Robert Shapiro
Rose Applebaum
Mildred Burnstein
Shlomo Fixler
Abraham Grossman
Samuel Heimy
Nancy Quittman
Rosalie Rogers
Connie Schwartz
Annie Silver
Leon Benjamin

Sidney Bernstein
Dora Ruvkun
Bertha Bercovich
Joseph Jacobs
Lillie Pearl Silver
Mary Simon
Joseph Banks
Barbara Miriam Engel
Mayer Goldberg
Herman Weisman
Alvin Alper
Harry Ben David
Maurice Glasser
Moses Rynski
Raizel Rynski
Isadore Schechtman
Faygel Scheinerman
Mordechai Scheinerman
Elsie Sirull
Bob Weiss
Harold Zurier

28 NISSAN - 4 IYAR**April 10 - 16**

Jessica Manasse
Max Blatter
Rose Mauskopf
Simon Nankin
Milton Rosenthal
Pearl Weinstein
Maurice Bolton
Florence Gerstler
Alice Kohn Jay
Burton Polse
Irma Maidenberg
Pearl Myers
Jacob L. Schiffman
Ida Dorothy Schwartz
Frank S. Cohen
Phoebe Grossman

Charlotte Nathanson
Victoria Windler
Steven Beilock
Morris Gerstler
Reuben Levy
Dorothy Dronsick
Eva Liss
Maisie Steckel
Alice Steiner

5 - 11 IYAR**April 17 - 23**

Jeanette Esrig
Harry Lazerwitz
Jane Saunders
Abraham Shapiro
Shirley Silver
Al Gjovig
Hannah Rubin
Janet Bleckner
Bernard Fogel
Henry Isaac Friendly
Ida Gevertz
Hannah Herfield
Thomas F. Hoffman
William Klinger
Leah Lampart
Benjamin Paul
Herman Adler
Bernard Freimark
Anna B. Gurman
Anna Kass
Gittel Rothblatt
Soloman Klor
Ella Morrison
Otto Schweid
Faye Young
Harry Braaf
Benjamin Ramo
Linda B. Rosenthal

12 - 18 IYAR**April 24 - 30**

Frances Cohen
David Gross
Noah Nathan
Nathan Rosenblatt
George Zuckerman
Joe Karren
Stanley Korn
Paul See, Sr.
Louis Wachsmann
Stephen Kaplan
Ethel Kronick
Joyce Oppen
Stephen Wittenberg
Irene Balint
Gloria Reid
Charles Silberstein
Charles Silver
Harry Gluckman
David Harris
Olga Kjelsberg
Alan Pressman
Arnold Rosenthal
Bernard Schreiber
Rebecca Schulman
Chassida (Ceda)
Wittenberg
Seth Coltoff
Betty Gitomer
Samuel Lichtenstein
James Craft
Howard L. Levy
Rose Schwartz
Gertrude Weiss

CALENDAR

April 2021			19 NISSAN – 18 IYAR 5781			
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 (19 Nissan) Pesach V Gan and Bet Sefer closed for Pesach 8:00am Morning Minyan via Zoom 7:00pm WTBA Virtual Girls Night Out	2 (20 Nissan) Pesach VI Gan closed for Pesach 6:15pm Virtual Kabbalat Shabbat 7:15p Candle lighting	3 (21 Nissan) <u>Pesach VII</u> 9:00am Adult Text Study 9:30am Virtual Shabbat Services followed by Zoom Kiddush 10:15am Shabbat Mishpacha via zoom 8:16p Candle lighting
4 (22 Nissan) Pesach VIII 9:30am Virtual 8 th Day Pesach service with Yizkor 8:17p Havdalah (42 min)	5 (23 Nissan) 8:00am Morning Minyan via Zoom	6 (24 Nissan) 4:00pm Virtual Bet Sefer	7 (25 Nissan) 9:00am Virtual Weekly Text Study 4:00pm WTBA Girls Night Out 6:00pm 10 th Grade Tichon 7:00pm Adult Hebrew Decoding via zoom 7:00pm Virtual BBYO – AZA & BBG 8:00pm Intro to Judaism via zoom	8 (26 Nissan) Yom HaShoa 8:00am Morning Minyan via Zoom 4:00pm Virtual Bet Sefer	9 (27 Nissan) 5:00pm Virtual Children's Shabbat 6:15pm Virtual Kabbalat Shabbat 7:21p Candle lighting	10 (28 Nissan) <u>Shabbat Mevarchim</u> <u>Chodesh Iyar</u> <u>Parashat Shmini</u> Bar Mitzvah of Akash Bornstein 9:00am Adult Text Study 9:30am Virtual Shabbat Services followed by Zoom Kiddush 8:23p Havdalah (42 min)
11 (29 Nissan)	12 (30 Nissan) 8:00am Morning Minyan via Zoom	13 (1 Iyar) Rosh Chodesh Iyar 4:00pm Virtual Bet Sefer	14 (2 Iyar) Yom HaZikaron 9:00am Virtual Weekly Text Study 6:00pm 10 th Grade Tichon 7:00pm Adult Hebrew Decoding via zoom 7:00pm Virtual BBYO – AZA & BBG 8:00pm Intro to Judaism via zoom	15 (3 Iyar) Yom HaAtzma'ut 8:00am Morning Minyan via Zoom 4:00pm Virtual Bet Sefer	16 (4 Iyar) 5:00pm Virtual Children's Shabbat 6:15pm Virtual Kabbalat Shabbat 7:28p Candle lighting	17 (5 Iyar) <u>Parashat Tazria-Metzora</u> 9:00am Adult Text Study 9:30am Virtual Shabbat Services 8:29p Havdalah (42 min)
18 (6 Iyar)	19 (7 Iyar) 8:00am Morning Minyan via Zoom 9:30am Rosh Chodesh via zoom: 7:30pm TBA Book Club via zoom	20 (8 Iyar) 4:00pm Virtual Bet Sefer	21 (9 Iyar) 9:00am Virtual Weekly Text Study 6:00pm 10 th Grade Tichon 7:00pm Virtual BBYO – AZA & BBG 8:00pm Intro to Judaism via zoom	22 (10 Iyar) Ta'anit Bechorot 8:00am Morning Minyan via Zoom 4:00pm Virtual Bet Sefer 7:00pm Adult Hebrew Decoding via zoom	23 (11 Iyar) 5:00pm Virtual Children's Shabbat 6:15pm Virtual Kabbalat Shabbat 7:34p Candle lighting	24 (12 Iyar) <u>Parashat Achrei</u> <u>Mot Kedoshim</u> 9:00am Adult Text Study 9:30am Virtual Shabbat Services followed by Zoom Kiddush 8:35p Havdalah (42 min)
25 (13 Iyar) 7:30pm TBA Film Series	26 (14 Iyar) Perach Shenit 8:00am Morning Minyan via Zoom	27 (15 Iyar) 4:00pm Virtual Bet Sefer 7:30pm TBA Board Meeting via zoom	28 (16 Iyar) 9:00am Virtual Weekly Text Study 6:00pm 10 th Grade Tichon 7:00pm Adult Hebrew Decoding via zoom 7:00pm Virtual BBYO – AZA & BBG 8:00pm Intro to Judaism via zoom	29 (17 Iyar) 8:00am Morning Minyan via Zoom 4:00pm Virtual Bet Sefer	30 (18 Iyar) Lag BaOmer 5:00pm Virtual Children's Shabbat 6:15pm Virtual Kabbalat Shabbat	
8:11p Candle lighting	8:12p Candle lighting				7:40p Candle lighting	