

Temple Israel Welcomes Cantor Luis Cattan

by Paul Schwartz

The term “cantor” in its most basic form originated from the Latin word “canere” — meaning “to sing.” It is a simple, accurate definition, yet lacking the full depth and scope for what a cantor, or “hazzan,” means to a congregation.

A beautiful voice, melodic chanting and musical enhancement of a Jewish service starts to tell the tale of the liturgical and spiritual connection a cantor and worshippers share. Harkening back to the traditions of the past and present, and looking ahead to the future, Temple Israel welcomed Cantor Luis Cattan in through the doors at 108 Old Mill Road on July 1, and embraced his arrival into the larger Great Neck community.

“The role of the cantor is much more than leading services or singing beautifully,” Cantor Cattan explained. “A cantor helps build community, teaches, models Jewish living, and helps people find their own authentic Jewish identity and their connection with God, with tradition, and with one another.

“Abraham Joshua Heschel described the cantor as someone whose task is to create a liturgical community, to help transform a group of individuals into a community of prayer. For Heschel, the cantor is not a performer standing before an audience, but a *shaliach tzibbur*, a spiritual messenger, who serves the words of the liturgy and helps open the heart of the congregation.

“That vision speaks very deeply to me. I believe the cantor does this work through davening, through teaching, through role modeling, and also through the quiet one-on-one conversations where people feel seen, heard, and encouraged to take the next step in their Jewish journey.”

Cantor Cattan comes to Temple Israel with more than 35 years of experience in synagogue leadership and an established track record of deep musical and liturgical knowledge.



At Cantor Cattan’s first Friday night service as Temple Israel’s new cantor, it was clear why he was chosen by the Cantor Search Committee. After leading the service with Rabbi Schweber, Cantor Cattan introduced a new melody for *Adon Alom*, a melody he had written. Towards the end of the service, he told everyone how good it felt to have received so

many emails welcoming him to Temple Israel. A balloon arch displaying the message “Welcome Cantan” was set up outside the Grand Ballroom. During that July 3rd service, his wife, Rabbi Lisa Sachs, lit the Shabbat candles.

“Continuing the legacy of the exceptional cantors who have graced our *bimah*, we welcome Cantor Luis Cattan with great enthusiasm,” Temple Israel of Great Neck president Rachel Geula said. “From our very first conversations, it was clear that he brings not only extraordinary musical talent, but also warmth, authenticity, and a deep love of

Jewish life. He has a remarkable ability to connect with people of all ages and to build community through music and prayer. We are excited for him to build upon our rich tradition while helping to shape the next chapter of Temple Israel.”

Cantor Cattan most recently served as *hazzan* for Sutton Place Synagogue in New York City. He previously served for nine years at The Conservative Synagogue in Westport, Connecticut.

“What excites me most is the vibrancy of the Temple Israel community and the opportunity to be part of such a respected clergy and professional team,” Cantor Cattan said. “Temple Israel has a wonderful reputation, and Great Neck has a large and diverse Jewish population. I am excited by the possibility of helping the community to keep growing both in quality and in quantity: deepening prayer, strengthening relationships, expanding learning, and also collaborating in community-wide programs and events.

“I look forward to bringing my experience, my music, my teaching, and my love for Israel and [\(continued on page 17\)](#)



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from the rabbi

Rabbi Howard Stecker

rabbistecker@tign.org



We Must Stop Attacking One Another

The ancient prophet Balaam was hired to curse the Israelites by a king who found them threatening. When Balaam saw the Israelites encamped, however, he was unable to curse them. Rather, he offered them a blessing which became the opening verse of our daily liturgy. *Mah tovu ohalekha Ya'akov*. How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob. And he noted that they are "a people who dwell apart."

"We would benefit from discovering, or rediscovering, the art of 'argument for the sake of heaven.'"

The Jewish people have often felt apart from the rest of humanity. Recently, that feeling has intensified as antisemitism continues to grow, as younger Americans have

increasingly negative views toward Israel, and as Israel more and more is left alone to confront her enemies.

What should we do to the extent that we understand our current isolation? To be sure, we must always seek to encourage our current allies and to find new ones. At the same time, however, we must also turn toward one another for support.

The first step in doing so is to stop attacking one another. In Israel, Haredi Jews are in some instances physically attacking those seeking to require them to serve the country through military or national service. Various political leaders in Israel are vilifying one another publicly as upcoming elections draw near. Here in the United States, Jews of differing political perspectives are lambasting one another publicly in ways that are hardly productive.

In no way do I wish to understate the significant differences of opinion held by Jews here and in Israel. We disagree profoundly in our views regarding a whole range of political and ideological issues and that's fine. But instead of engaging with one another constructively, we often tear one another apart in ways that only help our enemies.

The ancient rabbis understood the value of well-intentioned arguments, which they called "arguments for the sake of heaven." These occur when two individuals or groups of people are genuinely seeking the common good. Such arguments, the rabbis said, will eventually achieve positive, wide-ranging impact. On the other hand, the rabbis were mindful of the negative implication of self-interested arguments, which they called "arguments not for the sake of heaven." Such arguments, they said, ultimately fail to result in significant benefit to anyone.

Especially when we feel most isolated, we should try to identify whatever values unite us as a people and to draw strength from them. And in those realms where we disagree, we would benefit from discovering, or rediscovering, the art of "argument for the sake of heaven." The key element of such an argument is our intention. Are we looking merely to serve ourselves or are we looking to achieve that which is best, pragmatically and morally, for the greater whole?

We are living through a challenging time for our people, a time when we feel, to invoke the ancient prophet, deeply "apart." Will we use this time to attack one another? Or will we use it to engage one another respectfully, with the goals of strengthening ourselves and, ultimately, continuing to serve as "a light unto the nations," an inspiration for the wider world? ■

Mazel Tov to...

NELLY MIZRAHI

on the marriage of her granddaughter,
Arielle Greenspan,
daughter of Nadine & Jonathan Halevy
and Steven & Lynn Greenspan,
to Alex Vincoff

HAZZAN SUZANNE G. MAZEL & GEOFFREY R. MAZEL

on the birth of their granddaughter,
Stella Blaze Mazel,
daughter of Alexa & Max Mazel
and sister of Shayna Ray Mazel

MITCHELL KAISER

on the birth of his granddaughter,
Emily Rosner,
daughter of Jessica & Glenn Rosner.

VIVIAN & YUVAL BRASH

on the birth of their grandson,
Ely Jude Brash,
son of Rebecca and Benjamin Brash,
brother of Raphael,
and grandson of Rochelle & Bennett Broad

ROMINA & DAVID POUR

on the engagement of their son,
Oliver Pour
to Stephanie Afari,
daughter of Desi & Fred Afari

Building for Tomorrow

from the president
Rachel Geula

president@tign.org



Summer is often viewed as a season of relaxation. School is out, families travel, routines slow down, and many of us take the opportunity to recharge. Yet in Jewish life, the summer months also contain one of our most profound periods of reflection.

During this season, we observe Tishah Be'Av, the day on which we mourn the destruction of both the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. It is a day of sadness, remembrance, and introspection. But Tishah Be'Av is not only about what was lost. It is also about what comes next.

Our sages teach that the Second Temple was destroyed because of *sinat chinam*, baseless hatred among fellow Jews.

The lesson is timeless. Communities are not sustained by buildings alone. They are sustained by relationships, respect, compassion, and a shared commitment to something greater than ourselves.

Today, as we witness a disturbing rise in antisemitism around the world, that lesson feels especially relevant. Jewish communities are facing challenges that many hoped had been left behind in history. Yet throughout our history, the Jewish people have demonstrated remarkable resilience. Time and again, we have responded to darkness not with despair, but with determination. We have rebuilt.

That spirit of rebuilding is very much alive here at Temple Israel.

Over the past year, we have watched our synagogue continue to grow and evolve. Spaces have been renewed, new families have joined our community, and exciting plans are taking

shape for the future. We are welcoming a new cantor while continuing to build upon the strength of our clergy, staff, and lay leadership. At the same time, we are investing in our campus and our programs so that Temple Israel will continue to thrive for generations to come.

These physical improvements are important, but they are not the true measure of our success. The true strength of Temple Israel is found in the people who fill these spaces. It is found in the volunteers who give their time, the members who support

our mission, the families who choose to make Temple Israel their Jewish home, and the friendships and connections that bind us together.

Every act of kindness, every prayer shared, every class

attended, every volunteer effort, and every contribution to our community is an act of rebuilding. Brick by brick, relationship by relationship, we are building something that will endure long after any renovation project is complete.

As we move through the summer months and reflect on the lessons of Tishah Be'Av, may we remember that destruction is never the end of the story. In Judaism, mourning is always followed by hope, and loss is always followed by renewal.

May we continue to build — our synagogue, our community, and our commitment to one another. In a world where hatred seeks to divide, may we answer with unity, compassion, and faith. And may the work we do today ensure a vibrant and thriving Jewish future for generations to come.

Wishing you and your family a meaningful summer filled with rest, renewal, and blessing. ■

“The true strength of Temple Israel is found in the people who fill these spaces... and the friendships and connections that bind us together.”



If you are a Temple Israel member who is a contractor, architect, engineer, project manager or experienced in construction, facilities management or the building trades...

**TEMPLE ISRAEL'S
HOUSE COMMITTEE**
encourages you to join them!

Contact Executive Director Jamey Kohn to learn more.
jkohn@tign.org 516.482.7800



The First Amendment Likely Saved Judaism

In September 1654, a small ship named The Sainte Catherine landed in New Amsterdam carrying 23 Jews fleeing the inquisition in Dutch Brazil (Recife). New Amsterdam's Governor Peter Stuyvesant petitioned the Dutch West India Company to expel the 23 Jews. He argued that they were usurers and burdens on society.

Back in Holland, the Jews on the board of the Dutch West India Company spoke up:

"Dear sirs, it is customary to treat Jews as equals in the Netherlands. Is New Amsterdam not an extension of the Netherlands? In addition, allowing the Jews to remain is good for economic success."

Stuyvesant is told that he must allow the Jews to remain.

New Amsterdam may have only existed for a few decades, but it was a successful experiment showing that diversity and tolerance creates wealth. New Amsterdam was a company town with the goal of profit instead of a tribal town.

"During Shabbatot in July, I will explore various questions and challenges we Jews face in the United States in 2026. Even with our struggles, we should celebrate and give thanks for the United States of America."

Successful businesses today diversify. When merchants are pedaling a diverse array of goods from around the world, that is the definition of diversity. Merchandise and money freely flowed through New Amsterdam. (Yes, much of the merchandise was the result of exploitation and included trading of humans.)

Money and alcohol are universal languages.

In 1660, there were 19

taverns and three breweries below Wall Street! There was only one church building, Trinity Church. When not at the tavern or the docks, the small diverse communities did what they did. Some gathered for prayer in living rooms. Others engaged in less seemly activities like prostitution. In many ways, no harm, no foul.

If we jump a century later to the 13 British colonies in 1770, they were also quite diverse. There are Puritans in New England, Quakers in Pennsylvania, and Patricians in the south. The small number of Jews were accepted because they were contributing to wealth and also they are the people of the Old Testament.

The American Revolution was waged around the desire for local rule and a government that stays out of as much of life as possible. Nations no longer need to be tribal, ethnic or religious. This diversity and freedom is thankfully enshrined in the First Amendment.

It is my thesis that this successful experiment in diversity saved the Jews. Maybe, just maybe, the cycle of Jews being invited to a country and then subject to pogroms and expulsion has come to an end. It seems the cycle of state-sponsored violence and expulsion was finally broken. Will the Jews be safe this time?

All countries and governments are run by imperfect human beings, the United States included. Nevertheless, we would be remiss not to celebrate America's 250th. We Jews have so much to be grateful and thankful for in the United States. For much of U.S. history, Jews could immigrate to the *goldene medina* (Golden Land) and thrive while observing Judaism openly with the support and protection of the state.

And since the inception of the United States, Jews could serve the government in all capacities. Remember, the Constitution prohibits religious tests. In 1845, the first Jewish House representative and senator took office. In 1993, there was a high of 51 Jews in Congress; that was 9.5 percent. In 2000, we made it so high as to have Joseph Lieberman as the vice presidential nominee on the Democratic ticket.

During Shabbatot in July, I will explore various questions and challenges we Jews face in the United States in 2026. Even with our struggles, we should celebrate and give thanks for the United States of America.

I think it is fitting to end with the lyrics of "God Bless America." It is written by Irving Berlin and still has become a ballad just one notch lower than the Star Bangled Banner.

GOD BLESS AMERICA - Irving Berlin

*While the storm clouds gather far across the sea,
Let us swear allegiance to a land that's free,
Let us all be grateful for a land so fair,
As we raise our voices in a solemn prayer.*

*God Bless America,
Land that I love.
Stand beside her, and guide her
Through the night with a light from above.
From the mountains, to the prairies,
To the oceans, white with foam
God bless America, My home sweet home. ■*

Israel Affairs Committee Spotlight: Supporting Leket Israel

by Neal Picker

The Israel Affairs Committee helps strengthen the bond between our congregation and the people of Israel through education, advocacy, and charitable giving. In addition to organizing our synagogue's participation in the Celebrate Israel Parade and presenting programs on issues affecting Israel, the Committee directs financial support to carefully selected organizations making a meaningful difference on the ground. Since the attacks of October 7, 2023, and the ongoing challenges that have followed — including war, displacement, and widespread emotional and economic hardship — the need for thoughtful, targeted assistance has only grown. Through the Israel Solidarity Fund, funded by the generosity of our congregants, the Committee is able to respond to these evolving needs by supporting organizations that provide both immediate relief and long-term resilience. We remain deeply grateful to everyone whose contributions allow Temple Israel to stand

with Israel in practical and impactful ways.

In the previous issue of the *Voice*, we highlighted our support for Congregation Eshel Avraham in Be'er Sheva, where our



donation is helping address both the immediate and longer-term needs of a community recovering from the effects of war. Another beneficiary of the Israel Solidarity Fund is Leket Israel, the National Food Bank of Israel. Many Temple Israel members became familiar with Leket during the March 2024 Solidarity Mission to Israel, when volunteers worked alongside the organization's staff to sort and pack rescued produce for distribution to Israelis in need. (See photo.) Seeing the organization's work firsthand reinforced our confidence that Leket Israel is making a meaningful difference.

Unlike traditional food banks, Leket Israel focuses exclusively on rescuing healthy surplus food that would otherwise go to waste and delivering it through a nationwide network of nonprofit partners serving families, children, seniors, Holocaust survivors, and others facing food insecurity. Since October 7, Leket has expanded its efforts to meet dramatically increased demand, providing nutritious food to displaced families and other vulnerable populations while also supporting Israeli farmers affected by the war. By reducing food waste and feeding hundreds of thousands of Israelis each week, Leket Israel continues to address both immediate hunger and long-term food security.

Those who wish to help the Committee continue this important work are invited to contribute to the Israel Solidarity Fund at <https://www.tign.org/donate/> ■

Sanctuary Work Being Done Prior to High Holy Days

The summer is upon us, which means we have several weeks with light scheduling and without *b'nai mitzvah*. Temple Israel is using these summer

weeks to move ahead with the rejuvenation of the Sanctuary in this pocket of time before the High Holy Days. (Services are temporarily being held in the Cocktail Room of the Grand Ballroom.) By the time congregants are seated for Rosh Hashanah, the ark will be built out to make it deeper, making room for additional torahs; improvements will be made to the sound system and the lighting; the wood on the wainscoting will be restained; and the walls of the Sanctuary will be refreshed with new paint and, in some areas, wallpaper.

In January, we hope to be on schedule for the installation of new carpeting and new pews, and to complete any remaining work in the Sanctuary.

Outside of the building, new porcelain tiles were installed on the patio leading to the parking lot. New railings will soon be installed on those

steps; they are currently being fabricated. Meanwhile, orange cones mark the steps for safety purposes.

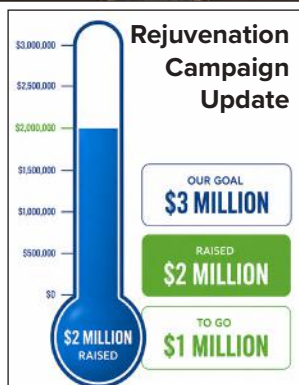


Inside the building, recent changes include new carpeting in the hallway leading from the Sanctuary to the Grand Ballroom and a ramp leading to the Sanctuary. The ramp will soon get its permanent railings.

A lot of progress has been made throughout our building and we continue to move forward with renovations. The Crystal Ballroom is scheduled to be next.

These changes will make the building a safer and more attractive space for our members, future members, and our guests, not only now, but for years to come.

If you would like to learn more about how you can help fund the rejuvenation, adding your name to the list of donors, and help us reach our goal, please reach out to Executive Director Jamey Kohn at 516.482.7800 or jkohn@tign.org. Naming opportunities are available; Jamey Kohn would be happy to discuss them with you. ■



Men's Club Update: A Season of Celebration, Learning, and Community at Temple Israel

by Neal Picker, Men's Club Co-President

The past few months have been an exciting and meaningful time for the Men's Club, filled with events that brought our community together in celebration, learning, and *mitzvot*.

Here are some highlights:

The Men's Club will be hosting a **Bourbon & BBQ event** this summer. Check your email and the website for an announcement of the date and other details.

Honoring our Men's Club Man of the Year and Youths of the Year at the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs event on May 17. We were proud to recognize Man of the Year Seth Kurpiel, whose strength and resilience over the past year have inspired our entire congregation. We also celebrated Youth of the Year honorees Elliott Kassin and Raquel Landerer, two exceptional young leaders who have demonstrated maturity, compassion, and commitment well beyond their years. This special event not only highlighted the honorees' accomplishments, but also enabled us to raise important funds for organizations doing vital work, including Neve Hanna Children's Home, Camp Ramah, Mercaz, JNF, USY Scholarships, and the Holocaust Memorial and

Tolerance Center of Nassau County. It was an event that truly reflected the values of Temple Israel — honoring leadership while supporting causes that strengthen the Jewish future.

Tequila, Tacos & Texas Hold'em on May 12. Our annual Men's Club Tequila, Tacos, and Texas Hold'em night was once again a hit. Participants enjoyed a delicious make-your-own taco dinner before settling

"Your participation strengthens our community and helps us continue creating meaningful experiences for [our] community"

in for a lively Texas Hold'em tournament, complete with exciting prizes for the top finishers. The evening also featured an important and eye-opening conversation about organ donation, led by Rabbi Joshua Rabin of LiveOnNY. Rabbi Rabin addressed the Jewish perspectives on organ donation and dispelled several common myths and misconceptions. It was a powerful reminder of how Men's Club events can blend fun, learning, and meaningful discussion.

Blood Drive on April 26. We were proud to host our semi-annual blood drive, collecting about 30 pints of blood — a *mitzvah* that directly saves lives. Thank you to everyone who donated and helped make this effort a success.

Our annual Scotch & Seder on March 30 brought learning, camaraderie, and good spirits together in classic Men's Club fashion.

Visit to a Long Island Nets Game (NBA G-League).

Participants had the chance to meet Ben Saraf, the rising Israeli NBA star and 26th overall pick in the 2025 NBA Draft.

Break-the-Fast. We will once again host our popular Yom Kippur Break-the-Fast on September 23, following the end of Yom Kippur.

We Encourage You to Join Us. We warmly welcome all members of the congregation — not just men — to join us. Whether you're looking to learn, volunteer, celebrate, or simply connect with others, the Men's Club offers something for everyone. Your participation strengthens our community and helps us continue creating meaningful experiences for the Temple Israel of Great Neck community.

We look forward to seeing you at a future event. ■

Tish'ah Be'Av 2026

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22 — THURSDAY, JULY 23

Temple Israel of Great Neck and Congregation L'Dor V'Dor invite everyone to dim their lights and join us to observe Tish'ah Be'av, commemorating the Destruction of the First Temple (in 586 BCE) and the Second Temple (in 70 CE) in Jerusalem, and the exile of the Jewish People.

This solemn day reflects the greatest tragedies of Jewish history (including the Holocaust), but also serves as a reminder that the Jewish tradition of renewal is alive in Israel and in America.

Wednesday, July 22nd

8:10 P.M. Minhah, Ma'ariv and Reading of Eicha (bring a flashlight)
Cocktail Room of the Grand Ballroom and TIGN Zoom

8:20 P.M. Fast Begins

Thursday, July 23rd

7:30 P.M. Shaharit and Kinot Poems (mournful poems)
Cocktail Room of the Grand Ballroom and on TIGN Zoom

8:00 P.M. Minhah/Ma'ariv (with tallit and tefillin)
Chapel and on TIGN Zoom

8:54 P.M. Fast Ends

Sisterhood: A Place for Everyone

by Karen Ashkenase, Sisterhood President

Yes, we are Temple Israel Sisterhood, chartered in 1941 and part of The Women's League for Conservative Judaism. But what we really are is a "sisterhood" — women coming together because of mutual Jewish values, a desire to serve community, and a yearning to learn.

Our Sisterhood gives us an opportunity to bond, share and care for one another in good times and at difficult moments.

"...we welcome you. We are always glad to see old friends and to meet new ones."

And that is just what we do. We are blessed by the friendships we have developed and hold dear, friendships that span generations, something that we have in common with Men's Club. We learn from each other and we welcome new members who enjoy working together on our different initiatives.

Sisterhood is proud of our ongoing contributions to Temple Israel, which include:

Our **Yad B' Yad (Hand in Hand) program** acknowledges deaths in our congregation by reaching out to the family and offering assistance with *shiva* set up, paying a *shiva* call, delivering a *yahrzeit* candle, and offering a *Shabbat* dinner the week of *shiva*.

Our **Sisterhood Judaica Shop** is fully stocked with elegant ritual items, gifts and children's books for our congregants' needs. Proceeds go directly to support Sisterhood's work in Temple Israel. Shopping is by appointment. Please call Laura Bardash at 516-466-4297 to arrange a time.

In the days following Yom Kippur, we welcome you to join Sisterhood members to **decorate the congregation's sukkah**. We are blessed to have creative members who have a sense of design — as well as others who just enjoy the process. All of that shines through in the finished product, a beautiful and meaningful *sukkah* for the entire congregation to enjoy.

For Purim, we assemble **Mishloah Manot packages** that we ship all over the country to make it easy for congregants who want to take part in the *mitzvah* of giving.

Details about our **Honey for the Holidays** project are on the Temple Israel website now. Share the sweetness of the new year by sending honey jars to family and friends. **The deadline to place orders is August 28th.**

Each September, we offer families the opportunity to send **holiday packages to their college students**. It is a wonderful way for the students to stay connected to Temple Israel and

for the families to remember the students at holiday times.

Through our affiliations with the **Women's League for Conservative Judaism**, Sisterhood gives support to **The Jewish Theological Seminary** in New York and to other Conservative institutions of higher learning by participation in its annual **Torah Fund Campaign**. Ask our rabbis what studying at the Seminary meant to them!

Our ongoing **Community Action** program is as colorful as the crayons donated. Crayons, in any condition, are collected and given to a company that recreates them into brand new crayons for children in hospitals.

Our next Community Action program will be our **Morning Mitzvah** event on **Monday, July 13th at 10:30 A.M.** Come join us as we assemble the ingredients for bags of soup mix, which will be distributed to local food pantries.

Sisterhood is extremely proud of our vast variety of excellent programs. Over the past few months, they included a Persian Shabbat - History and Traditions of Persian Jewry; The Power of Music to Inspire Social Change; Jews and the International Chocolate Trade; Justice, Justice You Shall Pursue: Ruth Bader Ginsburg and the Art of Persuasion.

Sisterhood will be celebrating **America at 250** on **Monday, July 20th at 6 P.M.** Join us for an authentic Colonial American dinner followed by a program called "Celebrating the Patriot Jews who Fought for the Revolution and Profoundly Affected the Future United States and Judaism in America." Sisterhood is bringing back our wonderful Summer Dinner program.

All of these programs and projects are possible because of the most extraordinary group of women on our Sisterhood Board. It is because of our deep commitment to what we do that we are able to offer these programs. I take this time to thank, with all my heart, the wonderful women I work with.

Watch your email and mail for further information about all our upcoming projects. You can read more about the events in the *Voice* and on tign.org.

Our programs are not just for women. Many men have joined us and we welcome you. We are always glad to see old friends and to meet new ones.

I would be pleased to speak to anyone who wants more information about what we do and for me to hear what would be of interest and importance to you. **We always welcome new ideas.** Please call me at 516-487-3048 anytime (except *Shabbat*, of course).

Warmly,

Karen Ashkenase, Sisterhood President

Beth HaGan Wraps Up School Year; Transitions to Summer Program

by Yve Fouladi, Director, Beth HaGan Early Childhood Center

Beth HaGan wrapped up another wonderful school year with hearts full of pride, gratitude, and a few happy tears! In addition to joyful classroom celebrations and our final *Oneg Shabbat* for this school year together in the Sanctuary at Temple Israel, many special moments, like releasing our butterflies and Pre-K graduation, highlighted the end of our year.

Our annual butterfly release gave children the opportunity to celebrate growth, transformation, and the beauty of nature as they watched the butterflies take flight — a meaningful reflection of their own learning journey. We also celebrated our incredible Pre-K graduates, who marked this important

milestone with songs, smiles, and memories that will last a lifetime.

As we wished our graduates success on their next adventure, we were delighted to welcome many familiar faces back for the start of our summer program. Thanks to our dedicated staff and wonderful families, the transition was smooth and seamless, and Beth HaGan is already buzzing with laughter, exploration, and summer fun.

We look forward to an exciting summer of warm weather fun together! ■



The Story Behind Our New Security Team

by Susan Lopatkin

If you've been to Temple Israel recently, attended our Congregational Meeting, or have had conversations with other congregants, you are likely aware that we have a new security team in place. This is the story of what led to the decision to hire a security firm instead of continuing to employ our own team and how we went about selecting Upfront Security Associates, our new security firm.

Jewish communities around the world are concerned with the rising wave of antisemitism and Temple Israel is no different. The Board of Trustees and Executive Committee took the time to thoroughly discuss this important issue and ultimately determined that increasing the level of security in our building and perimeter by having armed guards was a top priority. Although Temple Israel employed a wonderful group of security guards, we don't have the appropriate New York State license to hire armed guards and cannot satisfy the requirements of that license in order to obtain one. Therefore, in order to have armed guards, which is the practice at many synagogues on Long Island, we went about a search for a security firm.

First, a task force was created from members of Temple Israel's Security Committee. Past Temple Israel President Richie Kestenbaum, Josh Forst and I were named to the task force and asked to investigate and vet a security firm for our synagogue. Having served on the Security Committee for some time, we are well-versed in the security needs of our synagogue. Understanding the scope of the responsibility, we made sure to follow a rigorous process that was careful and exacting.

As a starting point for our search, Executive Director Jamey Kohn compiled a list of security firms that other synagogues were using; we added other firms as we learned of them. Zach Goldfarb, a Temple Israel member highly experienced in emergency management, and Jamey Kohn put together a Request for Information (RFI) which is a detailed document outlining the selection process and included specific criteria that are important for a vendor to satisfy. We had many criteria

to be met, but most importantly, we wanted a firm that has current synagogue clients with religious and nursery schools; carries adequate insurance with no history of litigation; provides extensive training to their employees; has longevity; has stringent personnel standards for

hiring their guards; and is supervised by local, accessible and responsive owners. Ideally, we wanted a firm with ties to the Nassau County Police Department.

We ended up contacting 12 security firms and each was asked to respond to our RFI. Of those, four met with Jamey and conducted a walk-through of our campus. After several task force meetings to review the RFIs we received, and to share our feedback, we identified two of the firms as strong candidates. I spoke to the owners and principals of these firms at length many times. We also spoke to the Executive Directors and/or the Director of Security at their synagogue referrals.

"...when you see someone with a black polo shirt with the Upfront Security Associates logo on the front, please say hello and introduce yourself."

Upfront Security Associates, the firm that we hired, had the most positive reviews. The reviews from their client synagogues were glowing. Guards were described with words such as "amazing, responsible, flexible and dependable" among others. Even more telling, all the references told us that "the guards became part of the community and know the parents, kids and congregants." And most importantly, congregants "felt safe with the guards who were assigned."

After several more task force meetings to review and share our feedback, we unanimously concluded that Upfront Security Associates met all our criteria and was the best option for us to hire.

We presented this information to the full Security Committee and received an overwhelming endorsement to move forward. Our recommendation was shared with the Executive Committee which negotiated a contract with Upfront Security Associates that provides for a 60-day interim period, and which will become permanent when affirmed by a vote by the Board of Trustees.

The security guards who were employed by Temple Israel were all offered employment with Upfront. While some chose not to join Upfront, we are very happy that Steve Conversano has joined the Upfront team.

We are excited to welcome Upfront Security Associates to Temple Israel. They are really eager to get to know our congregants and our staff and establish a long term connection to our synagogue community.

So when you see someone with tan or khaki pants and a black polo shirt with the Upfront Security Associates logo on the front, please say hello and introduce yourself. ■

Susan Lopatkin, a Temple Israel member who serves on the Security Committee, is the chair of the Task Force that reviewed security agencies and recommended Upfront Security Associates.



Impressions of a Descendants' Reunion Trip to Augsburg, Germany

by Jeffrey Englander

Temple Israel members Jeffrey Englander and Alise Kreditor, along with their three adult children, recently went to Augsburg, Germany. Augsburg is where Jeffrey's father, John, spent the first 18 years of his life until 1938, when his parents were able to send him to safety in the United States. John's parents — Jeffrey Englander's grandparents — stayed in Augsburg, unable to procure visas for themselves. This story is about what Jeffrey, Alise, Jacob, Rachel, and Samuel learned about Jeffrey's grandparents at a conference among Descendants of the Jewish Community.

I last visited Augsburg in 1993 with my father, John Englander, and my son, Jacob, who was nine years old at the time. During that trip, my father shared his childhood recollections of the happy home from which he was thrust out, escaping into a new world in 1938. My father passed away in 2007. I returned to Augsburg recently with my wife, Alise, and our three adult children — Jacob, Rachel and Samuel — taking part in a conference for the Descendants of the Jewish Community of Augsburg, which was organized by the Jewish Museum Augsburg Swabia. The idea behind it was to create a vehicle through which former residents of Augsburg and their descendants can stay in touch with each other and with the museum, helping to preserve the legacy of the Jewish community that existed in Augsburg, Germany.

We were among the 75 returning descendants.

Augsburg, nestled in Bavaria between Munich and Nürnberg, is a beautiful old city more than 2,000 years old, which, prior to the Holocaust, was home to a thriving, albeit small Jewish community, boasting of several important synagogues as well as substantial commerce and professionals. Virtually all that community was wiped out during the rise and stronghold regime of the Nazis. My grandfather was a dentist, providing services to the Jewish community as well as to non-Jewish members of the community. His license was revoked by the Nazi regime and thus his only form of livelihood was lost. He and my grandmother, unable to procure exit visas for themselves, separately sent their daughter and son — my father — to New York to escape the horrors that awaited them had they not been able to leave.

As a family, we visited the synagogue where my father, John, became a *bar mitzvah* in 1932. More than anything, though, we were amazed — and truly heartened — by the immense

amount of planning which went into the reunion event by so many people, including most notably, a large number of non-Jews whose time and effort were fully apparent. So, too, the outpouring of events and words to make us feel at home and comfortable in a gorgeous city which had cast our ancestors out (if they were lucky) or who otherwise perished under Nazi rule. Chief among these was the Mayor's reception as well as other tours and special events.

For us in particular, the most important and surprising event was the tour given by Dr. Elisabeth Friedrichs commemorating the lives and Holocaust-mandated paths of the persecuted Jewish doctors of Augsburg. This tour was exceedingly well-researched by Dr. Friedrichs who told us many new facts about my grandfather's professional life. The last stop on the tour was in front of the building at 6 Annastraße, the home and dental office of my grandfather, Dr. Paul Englaender, and my grandmother, Hedwig (née Steinfeld). This was also my father's home during his 18 years in Augsburg and, as Alise puts it, "just being in front of the majestic building where my father-in-law grew up helped to fill in the rich details of his early life in Augsburg."

It was known that my grandparents, upon learning that they would be deported the next day to a labor camp, determined to take their own lives on their

own terms that evening — March 7, 1943 — along with two other couples as an alternative to the horrors which lay ahead. What we did not know and what we learned during the tour was that a seventh person, Dr. Martha Zeitler (protected by her marriage to a non-Jew), had been in attendance as they took their lives, assisting and comforting them in the process.

Interesting to note is that the German word used to describe the decision that Jews made to take their own lives as an alternative to deportation is "*freitod*," which means "free



death,” distinguishing it from suicide. The word “*freitod*” is shown in the photo (*below center*) of the remembrance band in front of the Englaender home in Augsburg.

Dr. Zeitler was also entrusted with my grandfather’s gold watch which he wanted her to give to my father after the war. She was able to deliver the gold watch, a family heirloom, when my father participated in liberating the city during World War II as a US Army Lieutenant and a member of the Ritchie Boys. (The Ritchie Boys were a top-secret U.S. Military Intelligence unit during World War II, consisting of over 20,000 soldiers who trained at the secret Military Intelligence Training Center at Camp Ritchie, Maryland. While the unit included a diverse array of American soldiers, the most notable group was the approximately 2,000 to 3,000 German, Austrian, and European Jewish refugees who enlisted to fight Nazi Germany.) Unaware until that moment of the existence and identity of this seventh person, we learned as we stood outside this building that it was the great aunt of another Descendants’ Reunion participant, Leanne Zimmerman, who at that moment was standing next to me on the tour. I was stunned and speechless to say the least, as was Leanne. Happily, that moment and the warm, emotional embrace that followed was caught and preserved in photos (*see photo at top right*), as was the sense of what it all meant and how it proved the importance and wonder of reunions such as this one and the connections they engender.

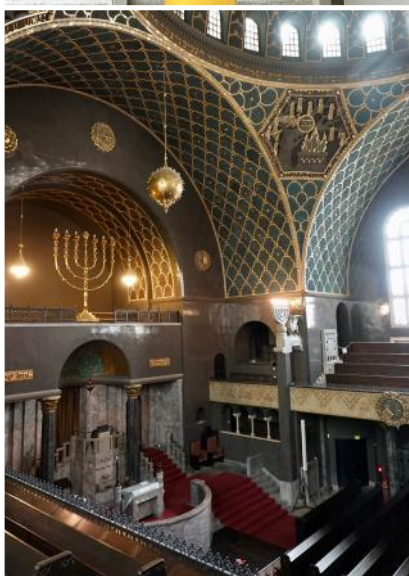
Alise’s experience as an American Jew with no prior connection to Germany — her family came over in the early 20th century from other parts of Europe and Ukraine — had, until this point, made it difficult for her to understand how my father could have such a strong connection to the city and country that destroyed his family. But she came to realize that those first 18 years of his life were as important to him as his subsequent 69 years. And being included in the Descendants’ trip made this all crystal-clear.

At a time when one cannot open a newspaper nor read the news online without being saddened by yet another act of antisemitism, it was encouraging that a group of mostly non-Jewish people in Augsburg became experts in the Englaender family history so that we can continue to tell a more complete story of what happened in Augsburg before and after the Nazis came to power.

Our son, Jacob, noted that “what made this trip so powerful was the combined efforts of the people who put it all together. The museum staff that care deeply about preserving the historical record of the city’s Jewish heritage, including the cultural and commercial impact of our relatives; the mayor, who demonstrated the sociopolitical imperative of continuing to engage with the city’s Jewish history through both formal recognition and simple human engagement with the next generations; and Dr. Elisabeth Friedrichs, whose devotion to telling the individual stories of the city’s highly accomplished Jewish medical professionals who suffered (and died) at the hands of the Third Reich.”

Family members of the friends who helped my grandparents take their own lives to avoid deportation to the camps were standing next to us, substantiating in real time the ongoing human connection to our shared past. It was the type of experience that will leave a lasting impression.

Both Rachel and Samuel were struck by the fact that Augsburg is a true cosmopolitan city with a rich history and so many individuals making it a priority to remember what had taken place more than 90 years ago. The efforts of the Descendants group made the whole experience engaging, memorable, and welcoming. This type of connection could not have been made possible without the efforts of the entire community in Augsburg and those of us who still feel a strong connection to our past. ■



Photos opposite page:

Top photo: From left to right: Jeffrey, Samuel, Jacob, Mayor Eva Weber, Rachel and Alise at the Mayor’s reception; **Bottom left:** John Englaender, Jeffrey Englaender’s father, in his formal Armed Services portrait as a Ritchie Boy; **Bottom right:** Dr. Paul Englaender and his wife Hedwig, Jeffrey Englaender’s grandparents.

Photo this page:

Top: Jeffrey Englaender and Leanne Zimmerman whose great aunt aided Jeffrey’s grandparents’ “free death”; **Middle:** the “remembrance band” which stands in front of the Englaenders’ home (and others persecuted by the Nazis) — this is an alternative to “stumbling stones” and each such band sets out some historical detail of the former residents and the pole which supports each such band recites in stark letters: “Nie Wieder” — never again; **Bottom:** Augsburg Synagogue where John Englaender — then known as Hans — and many others had their b’nai mitzvot.



*Scenes from
An Enchanted Evening
Temple Israel's Gala Dinner Dance
June 4, 2026*





It was so much fun... we're not quite done! See page 19 for more photos.

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Rabbi Stecker for officiating at the *auf ruf* of their son, Joseph Oginski, and Jamie Wohl
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Welcoming Cantor Luis Cattan, *continued from first page*

Jewish life to a congregation that already has so much strength, history, and potential.”

Cantor Cattan’s responsibilities will include leading *Shabbat*, holiday, and daily services, overseeing the *b’nei mitzvah* program, adult education initiatives, concerts and cultural programs, supporting congregants through life-cycle moments and providing pastoral care and helping to further strengthen the spiritual and communal life of our synagogue for all generations.

The hiring of Cantor Cattan was the culmination of several months of research and deliberation by the Cantor Search Committee, chaired by Eve Keller and Mara Green. The Search Committee members were Natalie Faraz, Manny Korman, Lori Oppenheimer, Moji Pourmoradi, Oliver Pour, Yosef Soleymani, Steve Spitzer, and Gil Weitzman.

The process included reviewing 21 applicants, with 14 coming from the Cantors Assembly and seven arriving as independent applicants. Ten applicants were interviewed and two finalists were invited to participate in extensive *Shabbat* visits and services, preschool and religious school visits, and social gatherings with congregants. The committee requested and received feedback from congregants following those visits and the feedback for Cantor Cattan was decisively positive. That input played a role in the search committee’s vote to recommend Cantor Cattan.

Rabbi Stecker was fully involved throughout the process and was in agreement with the committee’s recommendation.

“Cantor Cattan impressed our search committee with his sincerity, versatility, and engaging style of cantorial leadership,” Rabbi Stecker said. “I was impressed by the way he was equally comfortable leading hundreds of adults in prayer and singing with our religious school and preschool students. I’m confident that we will all benefit from his talent and warmth, and I look forward to welcoming him as our new cantor.”

Luis Cattan was born and raised in Uruguay and studied at the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano. He later earned Rabbinic Ordination and a Master’s Degree in Jewish Studies from the Academy for Jewish Religion in New York.

As a past President of the Cantors Assembly, Cantor Cattan serves as a trustee of the Joint Retirement Board and is a faculty member at the Academy for Jewish Religion. He is also the Founder of Mercaz Uruguay and serves as the International Vice President of Mercaz Olami, reflecting his longstanding commitment to Conservative Judaism and Jewish communal leadership worldwide.

Cantor Cattan believes there are multiple ways to make a spiritual connection with a congregation.

“Spirituality, like music, begins with listening,” he said. “It requires paying attention to the different pitches of sound, the nuances of expression, the needs of our own hearts, and the needs of the hearts of others. Sometimes what is needed is knowledge of Torah. Sometimes it is musical skill, training, or experience. But most of the time, what is needed first is real human connection.”

Cantor Cattan describes his style of davening as leading with “clarity, warmth, and assertiveness, while also creating space for others to shine and to be heard. In davening, as in leadership, I try to practice *tzimtzum*: the sacred art of making space. A cantor needs to know when to lead from the front, when to guide gently, and when to step back so the congregation can find its own voice.

“For me, leadership is not about making everything depend on one person. It is about helping the whole community discover its voice.”

Asked what he hopes members of Temple Israel will feel after meeting him, praying with him and getting to know him, Cantor Cattan said “I hope they say that they felt seen, that they felt heard, and that they know they can rely on me as their clergy.”

“I hope they feel that I bring warmth, presence, a good sense of humor, and a genuine love for people. I also hope they feel inspired and encouraged to learn more, participate more, and deepen their own connection to Jewish life. Most of all, I hope they feel that I am someone who wants to walk with them in prayer, in learning, in moments of joy, and in moments when they need support.” ■

In Memoriam

Temple Israel extends condolences to the families of:

RHODA STORCH

mother of Joanne Exelbert,
Philip Storch, and Debra Katz
grandmother of Jeremy and David Exelbert
and Evan Katz
and esteemed member of Temple Israel

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wife of Austin Abramson
mother of Evan and Jordan
and esteemed member of Temple Israel

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mother of Susan Wagner
grandmother of Zachary Klinger,
Jesse Klinger, and Emily Klinger

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mother-in-law of Manny Alani
mother of Nancy Alani z"l, Edmond Masri,
Rudy Masry, Joyce Schaul, and Olivia Blau
grandmother of 11 grandchildren, including
Temple Israel member David Alani
great-grandmother of 23 great-grandchildren

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mother of Mark Birnbaum,
Dean Birnbaum, and Mindy Birnbaum
grandmother of Deborah Birnbaum,
Jonathan Birnbaum,
Laura Birnbaum, Eric Birnbaum,
and Elyse Brown, Emily Rutcofsky, and
Hannah Rutcofsky
great-grandmother of
Mia Birnbaum, Spencer Birnbaum,
Sienna Birnbaum, and Samuel Birnbaum

JERROLD LANGSNER

brother of Marc Langsner
husband of Barbara Langsner
father of Joe Langsner, Emma Langsner,
Nicole Brazier, and Liz Fernandez

BARRY NYSENBAUM

husband of Esti Nysenbaum
father of Manny and Matthew
brother of Ellen Strunsky
and esteemed member of Temple Israel

NAOMI SCHULMAN

mother of
Linda Schulman and Jacob Schulman
and esteemed member of Temple Israel

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husband of Lorraine Domnitch
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grandfather and great grandfather of
Shayna and Matthew Angrist
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Racheli and Pesach Stein and
Avigall Moshe Domnitch
and Sarah Domnitch

SONIA SIEGEL

grandmother of Aaron Zucker

MORRIS BENJAMIN

brother of Sarah Rothstein
father of Daniel Benjamin, John Benjamin,
and Emily Benjamin

DR. SIMMY BANK

husband of Sybil Bank (née Velkes)
father of Larry, Robert, and Kevin
grandfather of
Anna, Jacob,
Isabelle Scanlan-Bank, and Jeremy
great-grandfather of
Simon, Eli, Leila, Nina, and James
and esteemed member of Temple Israel

JEFFREY WITTENSTEIN

husband of Sharon Wittenstein
brother of Harlan Wittenstein
father of Adam Wittenstein (Julia)
and Brian Wittenstein
grandfather of Maya and Jacob

DR. EVA EBIN

mother of
Paul Ebin (z"l), Jane Tuvia,
Susan Thalehm, and Amy Landesberg
grandmother of 22 grandchildren
and 58 great-grandchildren
Shoah survivor and
esteemed member of Temple Israel

*May their memories be
for a blessing.*

Kiddush Sponsors

The Executive Committee and Board of Trustees of Temple Israel, on behalf of the congregation, thank the following members who have generously sponsored and enhanced the Sabbath *kiddush*.

Contributions toward the *kiddush* on May 2 were made by Hartley and Negin Abdekalimi in honor of the baby naming of their daughter, Amelie; by Vivian Brash to commemorate the *yahrzeit* of her mother, Camille Katz; and by Shirley Goldfeder on the occasion of her 95th birthday.

Contributions toward the *kiddush* on May 16 were made by Wendy and Gerald Oginski in honor of the *auf ruf* of their son, Joseph Oginski, and Jamie Wohl; and by Kathrin Zelouf to commemorate the *yahrzeit* of her husband, Yousef Zelouf.

Contributions toward the *kiddush* on May 16 were made by Mandy and Jared Melnicoff in honor of the *bat mitzvah* of their daughter, Halle Melnicoff; and by Maddy and Robert Gould in honor of Maddy's special birthday.

A contribution towards the *kiddush* on June 6 was made by Lisa and Bradley Schoenfeld in honor of the *bar mitzvah* of their son, Jordan Schoenfeld.

A contribution towards the *kiddush* on June 13 was made by Stephanie Krugman in honor of the *b'nai mitzvah* of her children, Atticus and Harlan.

The congregational *kiddush* on June 20 was sponsored by Laura and Eric Lichtenstein in honor of the *bat mitzvah* of their daughter, Isla Lichtenstein. A contribution towards the *kiddush* was made by Fanny and Alfred Narotzky in celebration of their 65th wedding anniversary. ■



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A few fun facts:

- My Dad used to write music for Cantor Ben Siegel.
- My oldest brother was a member of the Great Neck Symphony and went on to play oboe with the Israel Philharmonic 1973 - 2020.
- I graduated from South in 1978.

D'var Torah

D'var Torah summaries written by Rabbi Marim D. Charry can be found on the Temple Israel website:

<https://www.tign.org/learn/dvrai-torah/>

A printed booklet of the D'var Torah summaries is available by calling the Temple Israel office.

PINCHAS • July 4
MATOT-MASEI • July 11
DEVARIM • July 18
VAETCHANAN • July 25
EIKEV • August 1
RE'EH • August 8
SHOFTIM • August 15
KI TEITZEI • August 22
KI TAVO • August 29

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Upcoming Events

Events are being added. For more details and updated information, check weekly emails and www.tign.org.

July Sermon Series: USA 250 Through a Jewish Lens

Shabbat morning services throughout July

Sisterhood Summer Mitzvah Program

Monday, July 13 @ 10:30 A.M.

Knicks Celebration Party 2026

Wednesday, July 15 @ 7 P.M. to 9 P.M. • Temple Beth-El's Outdoor Rooftop (RSVP required)

Sisterhood Celebrates America at 250: Celebrating the Patriot Jews who Fought for the Revolution and Profoundly Affected the Future United States and Judaism in America

Monday, July 20 @ 6 P.M. (RSVP required)

Tish'ah Be'av Services

Wednesday, July 22 through Thursday, July 23 (see details on page 6)

How a Guide Dog Helped a Blind Israeli with his Rehabilitation: Achiya Klein and Joy, His Guide Dog

Thursday, August 13 @ 7 P.M.

BBQ & Bar'chu

Friday, August 7 @ 6 P.M.

Online Programs:

JEWISH COMMUNITY SCHOLARS PROGRAM • Dates and times vary. Check website and weekly emails.

ADVANCED HISTORY SEMINAR • Thursdays at 9:30 A.M. (TIGN Zoom)

SCHMOOZE WITH SOME JEWS ON ZOOM • following Shabbat services (TIGN Zoom)