

Gala Dinner Dance on June 4th to Celebrate Two Couples with Long-Term Dedication to Temple Israel

Farnaz and Mike Delafraz and Sherry and Sam Husney to be honored

by Alise Kreditor

Temple Israel's Gala Dinner Dance is a celebration that honors members who have contributed to the synagogue in a significant and meaningful way over a period of years. This year's honorees are Farnaz and Mike Delafraz and Sam and Sherry Husney.

When asked about the honorees, Temple Israel President Rachel Geula said "Farnaz and Mike Delafraz are pillars of commitment, generosity, and vision. From celebrating our heritage through Nowruz to championing our future through temple leadership and Israel advocacy, they give of themselves with sincerity and grace. Their devotion to Temple Israel is unwavering, and we are proud to honor them for all they do to help our congregation flourish."



Speaking of Sherry and Sam Husney, Rachel Geula comments "whether it's Sherry guiding our *b'nai mitzvah* students with exceptional care and dedication or uplifting us with her voice on the *bimah* or in the Shireinu Choir, or Sam offering his steady hand and wisdom in matters of human resources and synagogue life, the Husneys embody what it means to lead with heart. Their quiet strength,

generosity of spirit, and deep love for our community make them truly deserving of this honor."

Rabbi Howard Stecker added, "the Delafrazes and the Husneys are supremely worthy of being honored by our congregation. Over the years, they have brought leadership that is both pragmatic and inspirational, helping to strengthen our synagogue, the Jewish people, and the State of Israel. I look forward to celebrating their accomplishments in greater detail at the Gala, where I am confident we will have a robust turnout to show them our deep gratitude."

The Gala Dinner Dance will take place in the Grand Ballroom at Temple Israel on Wednesday, June 4, starting at 6 P.M. with a lavish cocktail hour. A sit-down dinner will follow. The evening of dancing and celebration will include a live band; a DJ will play Persian music.

Invitations were sent to congregants via email in mid-April. Journal ads are due by May 7. Reservations for the Gala should be made by May 23. Details about the Gala can be found on the invitation, on page 9 of this issue of the *Voice*, and on the Temple Israel website at <http://TIGN.org/Gala2025> where journal ad pricing is also available.

FARNAZ & MIKE DELAFRAZ

Farnaz and Mike Delafraz are both originally from Tehran, but they first met in Great Neck. Farnaz emigrated to the United States when she was 12 years old, and Mike arrived after high school to study civil engineering at the University of Oklahoma. "Landing in Norman, Oklahoma from Iran was a bit of a culture shock, but I found a home at Hillel and, believe it or not, there was a small student Persian Jewish community nearby," comments Mike. Farnaz graduated with a degree in fashion design and business from FIT and Adelphi University, and Mike has a B.S. in civil engineering from the University of Oklahoma.



After a heated game of soccer in Kings Point Park nearly 40 years ago, Mike spotted Farnaz at a Persian event at the park. Although he tried, Mike was not successful in getting Farnaz' number; a family member

► *continued on page 6*

Photos: Gala honorees Sherry and Sam Husney (above left) and Farnaz and Mike Delafraz (above right).



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from the rabbi

Rabbi Howard Stecker

rabbistecker@tign.org



Using Our Past to Soar

On the last day of Passover, I told a story about a baby bird who struggled to walk. His mother asked him what was troubling him and he replied that that he had these strange things sticking out from him and covering him that made it hard for him to walk. His mother informed him that these “strange things” were wings and feathers and that their purpose was to enable him to fly. Slowly, the bird learned how to use his wings and feathers to fly.

Too often, we as Jews relate to our past the way that the baby bird related to his wings and feathers. We feel weighed down by it, burdened by its intensity and its implicit expectations. This can feel especially true on Passover, when we tell an old story by using ancient symbols, singing traditional melodies, and eating foods made from recipes handed down from one generation to another.

Yet rather than regarding our past as a pile of obligations that weighs us down, we can view it as a moral and emotional flightpath. By telling the story of how we overcame past oppression, we ideally give ourselves hope that we can successfully fight oppression today. In the aftermath of two Passovers spent in captivity, fifty-nine hostages remain in Gaza, only a portion of whom are presumed still alive. Buoyed by the story of our ancestors’ exodus from Egypt, we must continue to cry out for the release of the remaining hostages today. We must also, in keeping with the Torah’s mandate,

“...our past can energize us to move forward and even to soar.”

advocate for just treatment of all human beings. Our past can and must motivate us to face any present situation that is unjust with courage and resolve.

Passover also relentlessly reminds us of our personal pasts. As we sat around the Seder table a few weeks ago, we were keenly aware of who is no longer present. Our losses, reminders of our personal pasts that no longer exist, can surely weigh us down. The burdens of grief are profound and cannot be wished away, not should they be.

But here, too, lies the possibility that our past can energize us to move forward and even to soar. Though we would far rather have the actual people we mourn still in our lives, we can make room in our hearts to allow our memories of them to lift us up. Not only on holidays, but all year round, I recall supportive things that my parents said and did that help me through challenging moments. Moreover, I imagine the pleasure that they would derive from the blessings in my life and, in so doing, I rise up even higher in my joy.

Our communal past and our personal pasts are filled with defeat and triumph, disappointment and achievement and, in the words of the classic Israeli song, “the bitter and the sweet.” Let there be many moments when we use the various dimensions of our past to help us walk forward with strength and even, on occasion, to soar. ■

In Memoriam Temple Israel extends condolences to the families of:

FREDERICK MITCHELL BRILL (Peretz Mendel)
ex-husband of Paula Brill, husband of Charlotte Brill
father of Rebecca Klein
brother of Billy Brill
grandfather of Aaron Klein and Alyssa Klein

LEONARD PFEIFER
husband of Muriel Pfeifer
father of Lauren Miller
grandfather of Ethan Miller and Ryan Miller
esteemed member of Temple Israel

MADELINE BLONDMAN
mother of Alan Blondman and Mark Blondman
grandmother of Max, Evan, Spencer, Marissa, and Henry
great-grandmother of ten grandchildren

ROBERT BOGIN
husband of Sonia Bogin
brother of Carole Spitzer
uncle of Harriet Spitzer-Picker and Steven Spitzer

MOHTEARAM MAYOURIAN
mother of Flora Lalezarian, Eliza Sabet,
Homa Adel and Edmond Mayourian
grandmother and great-grandmother

SIMA MAHFAR HOMAPOUR
wife of Shahram Homapour
mother of Matthew Homapour,
Michael Homapour and Amanda Homapour
daughter of Sionet Mahfar and Siyoun Mahfar z”l
sister of Simin Mahfar, Sina Mahfar and Sammy Mahfar
esteemed member of Temple Israel

PHYLLIS REICH
mother of Michelle Landerer
grandmother of Sam, Jacob, Benjamin and Raquel

JUDITH BRASH
mother of Yuval Brash
grandmother of Lauren Alter, Benjamin Brash and Andrew Brash
great-grandmother of Arden and Axel Alter, Raphael Brash
and Cody and Scarlett Brash

May their memories be for a blessing.

The Power of Our Vote: Why the World Zionist Congress Elections Matter

Many members of our synagogue have recently asked me about an event that doesn't often make headlines but has a powerful and lasting impact on Jewish life in Israel and around the world: the elections for the 39th World Zionist Congress, which will convene in Jerusalem in October 2025. This is more than a formality or a symbolic exercise—it is one of the rare times when Jews from around the world, including those of us in the United States, get to cast a vote that truly helps shape the direction of the global Jewish community.

“For those who care deeply about Jewish continuity, Jewish peoplehood, and the future of Israel, [the World Zionist Congress] elections are worth paying attention to.”

The World Zionist Organization (WZO), founded by Theodor Herzl in 1897, was originally created to help establish a Jewish homeland. Today, its mission continues through the promotion of Zionist values, Jewish identity, and global Jewish connection. It serves as a guiding force in how major resources—hundreds of millions of dollars annually—are distributed to support Jewish education,

religious life, community-building, immigration to Israel (*aliyah*), and combating antisemitism both in Israel and in the Diaspora.

Every five years, the WZO holds elections to determine the makeup of the World Zionist Congress, its legislative body. Think of it as a kind of Jewish parliament: delegates gather to vote on policies, establish priorities, and allocate funding for a range of important causes. Of the 500 total delegates, 152 are elected by American Jews. That means our voice matters—and we need to use it.

The delegates who are elected don't just pass resolutions; they have a real say in how over one billion dollars in funding is allocated. Their decisions affect the kinds of Jewish educational programming that receive support, the strength and presence of different streams of Judaism in Israel (including our own Masorti/Conservative movement), and the resources that go into youth engagement, Hebrew education, environmental efforts, and religious pluralism. For those who care deeply about Jewish continuity, Jewish peoplehood, and the future of Israel, these elections are worth paying attention to.

There are many slates on the ballot, each reflecting different ideological, religious, or political priorities. As a voter, you get

from the president
Rachel Geula

president@tign.org



to choose the one that best aligns with your values and vision for the Jewish future.

Voting is already underway; it will continue through this Sunday, May 4. It's being conducted online through the American Zionist Movement (AZM), which administers the U.S. elections. To be eligible, you must be at least 18 years old, identify as Jewish, and reside in the United States. There is a small administrative fee of \$5 to participate. It's simple, secure, and takes just a few minutes—but the impact lasts far longer.

In a time when antisemitism is rising and the word “Zionism” is often misunderstood or misrepresented, taking part in this election is a meaningful way to stand up for our values and our connection to Israel. It's a reminder that we are part of a worldwide Jewish people, with a shared stake in our future.

To vote and learn more about the slates and the election process, visit www.zionistelection.org. Temple Israel has always been a community that values action, learning, and commitment—and this is a moment when all three come together. ■

Mazel Tov to

STACY & SHAHRAM YAFEH

on the birth of their granddaughter,
Arielle Mila Soleimani,
daughter of Paige and Steven Soleimani.

MARC KATZ

on the birth of his granddaughter,
Rena Sophie Kardon,
daughter of Amy and Jonathan Kardon.

KAREN LEWKOWITZ-MILLER & MONTE MILLER

on the birth of their grandson,
Jack Ezra (Yaakov) Miller,
son of Jordana and Jeremy Miller.

RACHEL & GEOFFREY EPSTEIN

on the birth of their grandson,
Dylan Levi Mirchin,
son of Stephanie and Ryan Mirchin.

VIVIAN & YUVAL BRASH

on the birth of their twin grandchildren,
Scarlett Faye Brash and Cody Jack Brash,
children of Samantha and Andrew Brash.

from the rabbi

Rabbi Daniel Schweber

rabbischweber@tign.org



The *Mi Sheberach*: A Prayer for Healing

Every *Shabbat*, as a community we pray to God for healing. The *Mi Sheberach*, a healing prayer for the sick, is a powerful and important prayer.

The literal reading of the Torah presents disease and healing as solely in God's purview. God sends disease as punishment for sin and, in God's great mercy, God heals and forgives. Miriam is punished for gossiping about Moses. God often used plagues to punish the Israelites and, of course, the Egyptians.

I am disconcerted by the thought that God brings about childhood disease. I cannot fathom such a God. We need a different theology and outlook on illness, God, and the Torah. The purpose of the Torah and religion in general is to help us live with life's great questions unanswered. In my opinion, religion is about the questions and responses, not simple answers.

The novel *Year of Wonders* by Geraldine Brooks explores this theme. *Year of Wonders* is narrated by Anna Frith, a very young widow and assistant to the pastor, in a rural English town as the bubonic plague ravages through.

In the book, the people in the town react to the plague in various ways. Some resort to self mutilation. Others believe the plague is caused by demons and try various rituals to rid themselves and the town of evil spirits.

The character Anna reflects on the limits of superstition and religion. "Why should this thing be either a test of faith sent by God, or the evil working of the Devil in the world?...If we balanced the time we spent contemplating God, and why He afflicted us, with more thought as to how the plague spread and poisoned our blood, then we might come nearer to saving our lives?" (Page 215, *Year of Wonders*.)

Anna, of course, is advocating using science to research and treat disease. She is not opposed to religion as she sees how the church community is bound together in mutual care for one another.

I believe Judaism as a whole offers the same wisdom as Anna. Nature and creation are God's miracles. God does not actively intervene in nature. We must live within its confines including accepting the idea of disease along with our body's great abilities to heal.

So how should we read the Torah's theology about illness? The ancient rabbis teach that Israelites in the wilderness were

subject to unrepeatable miracles. They are the exception to the rules of life. Judaism is about the rule of law where punishments are adjudicated by people and plagues are not seen as divine punishments. The Torah's lessons are to teach us what is right and wrong and instill in us the drive to do good in the world. Illness is a reality and we Jews have an obligation to celebrate and preserve life. Sanctifying life is indeed the goal of all Jewish ritual. Therefore, we have an obligation to visit the sick, to care for them, and help them heal.

"We need to preserve and continue to observe the great mitzvah of healing. Every Shabbat, as a community we say the *Mi Sheberach*, a prayer to God for healing. It is a powerful and important prayer."

When it comes to illness, we have to do what we can to ease suffering and, if possible, bring healing. *Shabbat*, *kashrut* and other ritual laws are relaxed when caring for the sick. If God is the source of healing, we are God's partners in this endeavor.

As a result, Jews and the Jewish community have busied themselves with healing for centuries. The great Maimonides was a physician in addition to being a scholar. Upon arriving

in America, the Jewish community opened hospitals like Montefiore in the Bronx to treat and combat diseases like tuberculosis.

We need to preserve and continue to observe the great *mitzvah* of healing. Every *Shabbat*, as a community we say the *Mi Sheberach*, a prayer to God for healing. It is a powerful and important prayer. Yet it is not a prayer for miracles. It is instead a prayer to give us the strength to accept that disease and illness are part of our lives. It allows us to wonder at the body's ability to heal and be grateful for so many people who devote their lives to the healing and caring arts.

Refaheinu Adonai V'neirafei - Heal us God, and we shall be healed. And let us say Amen. ■

To add a name to our
Mi Sheberach prayer
that is recited on *Shabbat*,
please email

Kathy Recckia at krecckia@tign.org

A Night to Remember: Temple Israel's First Nowruz Celebration

by Rachel Geula

On a lively evening filled with culture, community, and celebration, Temple Israel held its first-ever Nowruz celebration—an unforgettable tribute to the Persian New Year and the rich traditions of Iranian Jewish heritage.

The event was chaired by Eleanor Yomtobian-Askari, Farnaz Delafraz, Mojgan Lancman, and Neda Sedgh, whose vision and dedication brought this vibrant evening to life. Thanks to their efforts and the enthusiastic support of the community, the night was a huge success with a beautiful turnout.



Festivities began in the Sanctuary, where Michelle Tabaorki introduced the evening with a joyful performance by the ConfiDanZe children's dance group. Their colorful and spirited dances set the tone for a night of beauty and joy. The program continued with Soraya Saleh, who graced the audience with

a reading of elegant Farsi poetry, bringing depth and tradition to the celebration. Then, in one of the night's most moving moments, students of Sharhzad Paknia—Maytal Imani, Oren Kohen and Benjamin Malekan—took to the piano to perform stunning Iranian pieces—each note a reminder of the richness and beauty of Persian culture. Their talent was truly out of this world.

Shabbat Kol Isha, a Women-Led Shabbat Service on May 2 and May 3

On the *Shabbat* of May 2 and May 3, mothers and daughters, grandmothers and grandchildren, sisters and friends are raising their voices together in leadership and song.

Shabbat Kol Isha is the culmination of a six-month process, one that Rahel Musleah, who led the participants, hopes will be the beginning of a continued process of understanding the revelatory power of prayer.

"To be a prayer leader is a different experience than singing from your seat in the congregation," she explains.

"Some of the women have never led a prayer from the bimah before and need the company of friends and family to give them more courage. Some have struggled with the Hebrew texts and, yes, with singing on pitch. Our goal was not to become perfect singers but to own the power of prayer for ourselves."

The participants, including some young women who recently became *b'norot*

mitzvah, include: Linda Abrams, Jordana Ahdoot, Ellen Barnett, Ellen Birnbaum, Mojgan Cohanin Lancman, Cheryl Eisberg Moin, Raquella Faraz, Molly Forst, Lori Freudman, Maxine Fried, Alexis Gelb, Debby Gelb, Rachel Geula, Lesli Giglio, Kate Goldberg, Shahnaz Goldman, Madelyn Gould, Josephine Haghani, Sherry Husney, Sharon Kahn-Bernstein, Jillian Khadavi, Pargol Khadavi, Jennifer Khoda, Shira Khoda, Dara Koza, Laura Lancman, Alicia Lev, Susan Lopatkin, Rona Lupkin, Natali Matalon, Jackie Matalon, Nelly Mizrahi, Rahel Musleah, Raeann Nemiroff, Lori Oppenheimer, Leslie Popoff, Moji Pourmoradi, Rachel Pourmoradi, Lillian Rokhsar-Cohen, Adrienne Rosen, Eve Sabi, Emma Sassouni, Leila Sassouni, Rebecca Sassouni, Sarah Schweber, Neda Sedgh, Emily Shamash, Maya Shamash, Isabelle Shwartz, Nora Soleimany, Deanna Stecker, Lisa West, Ellen Widawsky, Shoshana Wintner, Eleanor Yomtobian-Askari, Gail Zahler, and Sophie Zucker.

Don't miss this very special Shabbat! ■

After the program, guests made their way to the Crystal Ballroom, where a lavish meal awaited: fried white fish, chicken kabab, fragrant basmati rice, and a spread of Persian sweets that delighted every guest. The evening continued with lively music from the DJ, and the dance floor quickly filled—including our clergy and our executive director Jamey Kohn, who danced alongside congregants with joy and enthusiasm.

The energy in the room was electric. Laughter, music, and movement filled every corner as friends old and new came together to celebrate Persian culture and community. It was more than a holiday—it was a beautiful tribute to the diversity and unity of our congregation.

From start to finish, our Nowruz celebration was a night to remember. We danced, we dined, and most importantly, we came together. What a way to welcome the new year! ■

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helped bring the two together a few weeks later. After just four dates, Mike proposed, and the rest is history.

They've lived in Great Neck for more than 27 years after first settling in Roslyn where Farnaz grew up. They are fortunate to be surrounded by extended family as well as their three children, Shauna, Elana and Eric, and granddaughter Aviva, who all live in the New York area.

"Growing up in Roslyn, my family found their spiritual home in Temple Beth Sholom, a synagogue similar to Temple Israel," shares Farnaz. Mike's family belonged to Ahavat Shalom in Great Neck, which was established following the footsteps of their sister synagogue in Tehran. When Farnaz and Mike settled in Great Neck, Temple Israel immediately became their religious center. They

felt embraced by the warmth of the community, enriched by the worship and were comfortable with the egalitarian aspects of the synagogue. "In Iran when my mother was a young woman, she was the first female to hold a Torah in synagogue. Although shocking at the time, it set the stage for our search for a synagogue that would extend opportunities to women," reminisces Farnaz.

The warm welcome they received upon joining encouraged Mike and Farnaz to become involved in synagogue

life. Mike served on the Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee, Men's Club, the Israel Affairs Committee and headed the Israel Day Parade Committee for many years. He is also involved in SHAI, the Sephardic Heritage Alliance, Inc., as a vice president.

Farnaz has served on the Nominating Committee, the Youth House Committee and was on the committee that organized the Nowruz celebration that took place in March. (See page 5.)

All three of their children attended Beth HaGan and the religious school, and all celebrated their *b'nai mitzvah* at Temple Israel; Mike recently became a *bar mitzvah* as part of the Temple Israel Adult *B'nai Mitzvah* Class. Today, their two married daughters incorporate much of what they learned at Temple Israel into their own family life.

Farnaz recalls that she never felt like a stranger at Temple Israel and enjoyed many activities with and through her children. "It was not unusual for me to come to Temple Israel several times in one day either ferrying the children or participating in one activity or another." Soon Farnaz's siblings became members of Temple Israel, too.

Mike and Farnaz viewed Rabbi Mordecai Waxman, z"l (Senior Rabbi of Temple Israel from 1947 to 2002) as the bridge that drew them in, always making them feel that they were an important part of the congregation. "I remember a Jewish Theological Seminary event when Farnaz and I were being honored, and when I rose to greet Rabbi Waxman, he told me to stay where I was as he was coming to us as we were the honorees." Beth HaGan was also a natural connecting point, and their children are still friendly with their nursery school acquaintances.

Farnaz and Mike have always enjoyed the diversity of the congregation. "While there are many different groups at Temple Israel, whether based on where you are from or the stage in life you are at, the synagogue serves to bring us all together in prayer and in our support for Israel," states Mike. He credits Rabbi Howard Stecker with fostering that strong connection to Israel. Like many in these uncertain times, the Delafraz family turns to Temple Israel for a sense of calm and hope for the future of Judaism. Mike feels that this year's Gala Dinner Dance theme, "We will sing and dance again" embodies that hope both for Temple Israel and for Jews around the world.

SHERRY & SAM HUSNEY

Although Sherry and Sam Husney grew up only four miles apart in Brooklyn, their meeting was a "set up" arranged by Sam's brother who was dating a friend of Sherry's. Since Sherry's family was Orthodox and *Shomer Shabbos*, their dates took place on

Photos this page, top to bottom: The Delafraz family through the years: two bat mitzvahs, a bar mitzvah, and the baby naming of their granddaughter, Aviva.



Gala Dinner Dance Honorees, continued from previous page

Saturday night or Sunday. After a short time dating, Sam was invited to Sherry's home for an enlightening Shabbat dinner.

"I still remember that first *Shabbat* at Sherry's home, filled with singing, music and so much joy," reminisces Sam. "I didn't realize what I was missing having come from a fairly secular Syrian Jewish home."

Music blended with Judaism was always a part of Sherry's upbringing as her father was a cantor in Monroe, New York, where they had a country home, and her mother was a classically trained opera singer. Her paternal grandfather was a *hazzan* on the Lower East Side where her father grew up as part of a choir that consisted of his three brothers and him. Sherry's maternal grandfather was a *hazzan sheni* (second cantor or assistant cantor) at the original Temple Beth El of Boro Park.

When Sam and Sherry met, Sam was a college graduate with a job while Sherry was just about to start at Brooklyn College. Lucky for Sherry, when college calculus became a bit challenging, Sam was the perfect tutor. He would also accompany her to Hillel activities on campus, which Sherry saw as an indication of his kindness and intelligence.

In 1978, the Husneys were drawn to Great Neck; Sherry's extended family was already living here, and there was a vibrant Conservative synagogue, Temple Israel, where Sam could sit with Sherry during services. They joined in 1979 and Temple Israel became an immediate community for them.

Sherry and Sam's initial point of entry was the Couples Club, the cornerstone of their Great Neck social life; at one point they held leadership roles in the group. Sam joined the Men's Club, served as co-president, and continues to be active with the group.

Coming from an Orthodox background where women did not participate in services, Sherry felt uncomfortable the first time she had an *aliyah*. Sam saw something in her face: "I could tell Sherry was struggling at that moment as it went against everything she was accustomed to."

Eventually, she learned Torah trope before deciding to

become a *bat mitzvah*. "When I was able to chant from the Torah, it was truly life changing. When I *daven* (pray), I feel as if I'm speaking to G-d; as I chant Torah, I feel G-d speaking to me."

Over the years, Sherry helped countless religious school students prepare for *bar/bat mitzvah*, teaching reading and liturgical chanting of their Torah and *haftarah* portions. Many of her students thank her publicly from the *bimah* for helping them achieve something so important in their lives.

The Husneys' two daughters, Adrienne and Rachel, attended religious school and the Waxman Hebrew High School and both became *b'not mitzvah* at Temple Israel. They were also involved in USY and went on pilgrimages to Israel. Many of their friends date back to their early days at Temple Israel, and their children and their friends' children are friends, representing *l'dor v'dor* (from generation to generation.)

When the Husney children were young, they attended services as a family; however, there were no age-appropriate services for young children. Along with the Langsner and Katz families—close friends they first met at Temple Israel—they visited a synagogue in New Jersey to observe a toddler service which

inspired them to start one at Temple Israel. As their older child, Adrienne, aged out of the toddler service, Sherry started a service for children 4 to 6 years of age. Sherry also created a High Holy Days service for that age group so everyone had a place to go at Temple Israel.

Sam and Sherry both served terms on Temple Israel's Board of Trustees and Executive Committee. Sherry chaired the Religious School Education Committee and co-chaired the Waxman Hebrew High School Committee. For many years, Sherry was onstage performing with Temple Israel Players; she now helps the cast with makeup.

Professionally, Sam is a human resources consultant and Sherry is an occupational therapist.

Sherry credits Ruth Waxman, z"l, Rabbi Waxman's wife, with opening the door to more participation among women in the *Shabbat* services. It was only fitting that ► [continued on page 15](#)



Photos this page:
Lasting friendships formed over the years. Above, Sherry with Ronnie Katz, z"l; left, Sherry celebrating with Temple Israel women; right, Sam at a Men's Club event several years ago.

B'NAI/B'NOT MITZVAH IN OUR TEMPLE ISRAEL FAMILY

MAX AARON HAKAKIAN will be called to the Torah as a *bar mitzvah* on May 17. He is the son of Ana Karina and Babak Hakakian and the grandson of Temple Israel members Nader and Shahin Hakakian and Luisa E Neri. Max has a brother, Mikael (9) and a sister, Mia (10). Max is a seventh grade student at Great Neck North Middle School where he is on the basketball team. He is also part of two travel teams. Max visited Israel last summer with his family and looks forward to visiting again. ■



BRANDON MAZER will be called to the Torah as a *bar mitzvah* on May 24. He is the son of Nicole and Gary Mazer and the grandson of Temple Israel members Marni and Ron Kriss. Brandon has three brothers, Sam (16), Tyler (15), and Dylan (8). Brandon is a seventh grade student at Great Neck South Middle School where he is on the soccer team. He also plays soccer with the Great Neck Soccer Club travel team. Brandon and his family visited Israel two years ago. ■



ALIZA WISE will be called to the Torah as a *bat mitzvah* on May 24. She is the daughter of Rozalin and Michael Wise. Aliza has a sister, Leila (10). She is a seventh grade student at Great Neck North Middle School, where she sings in the chorus. She enjoys playing volleyball and baking. Aliza attends the Waxman High School and Youth House and plans to attend next year. Aliza spent summers at Camp Zeke, a Jewish summer camp program, where she developed a strong connection to her Jewish identity by connecting with Jews of many backgrounds and cultures and participating in meaningful experiences. ■



NATHAN ELI SARRAF will be called to the Torah as a *bar mitzvah* on June 21. He is the son of Tal and Ronen Sarraf. Nathan is a seventh grade student at Great Neck North Middle School where he is on the cross country team, the swim team, the track team, and the wrestling team. Nathan plays the trombone in the school band and enjoys playing pickleball, ping pong, video games and anime. He currently attends the Waxman High School and Youth House and plans to continue next year. He has visited Israel twice and hopes to visit again soon. ■



Hay Class Wedding

Our Hay class presented a Jewish wedding as the culmination of their study of the Jewish lifecycle. They enacted the rituals and described the different customs of Jewish communities throughout the world.

Temple Israel Donation to AFINS Helps IDF Soldiers with PTSD

by Miriam Kobliner, Editor, with Robbie Brenner, AFINS

On October 7, 2024, the first anniversary of the horrific massacre and the start of the Iron Swords War, the Israel Affairs Committee of Temple Israel hosted a conversation with members of Shayetet 13, Israel's Navy SEALs, through a partnership with American Friends of Israel Navy SEALs (AFINS). With 350 congregants and community members in attendance, Bobby Bakhchi, chair of the Israel Affairs Committee, announced the Temple Israel community's pledge of \$40,000 to sponsor an AFINS Buddy Line group for an entire year.

This is the first in a series of updates from AFINS on the group.

AFINS' Buddy Line program pairs Israel Navy SEAL volunteers with soldiers and veterans of other Israel Defense Force (IDF) units for a transformative year of sailing, surfing or scuba diving. For individuals with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), who have seen the worst of war and for whom other forms of therapy have not succeeded in providing relief, this program changes lives and even saves some. (AFINS reports that this has been independently evaluated twice.)

The Buddy Line group that Temple Israel sponsored sails once per week from Jaffa Port. It includes 34 members— that is 17 pairs of one Israel Navy SEAL volunteer and one soldier or veteran of another IDF unit with severe PTSD. The participants in this group alone served in infantry units including Golani, Kfir and Nachal, armored units including the tanks and tractors as well as the Air Force, Oketz (K9 dog unit) and the police. They range in age from 23 to 73. At the time of this update, the group was exactly halfway through the program, having had 20 weekly sailing sessions. Their planned midway overnight retreat in the Negev Desert of Israel was postponed due to rocket fire from the Houthis in Yemen.

Progress in the battle with PTSD happens quickly for some participants and more slowly for others. We look forward to providing additional progress reports as the group gets further along.

For a personal window into the program and its impact, please view the story of Shlomi, an alumnus of the Buddy Line Sailing in Jaffa program: <https://vimeo.com/1073349273> ■

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From Shushan to the Seder: A Joyful Beginning to Spring in the Beth HaGan Early Childhood Center

by Yve Fouladi, Director, Beth HaGan Early Childhood Center

March and April have been filled with exciting celebrations and meaningful milestones. We've journeyed from Purim's spirited festivities to the cherished Passover



traditions, all while marking a special academic achievement—the 100th day of school!

Our Purim celebrations transformed classrooms into the ancient town of Shushan, where children engaged in imaginative play using puppets and costumes to act out the Purim story. This dramatic play brought the narrative to life, nurtured creativity, and supported social-emotional development. The 100th day of school was happily celebrated with music, art, and cake, and gave us a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the students' growth across various academic areas—a tangible and heartwarming reminder of their progress as well as the coming of spring. Adding to the excitement, the children also enjoyed our annual Purim Magic Show with Mr. Phish. They got to act silly, be awestruck, and have lots of Purim-related fun during this favorite festive tradition!

Following Purim, we seamlessly transitioned into Passover preparations. Our students eagerly immersed themselves in learning about Moses, Pharaoh, and the Exodus, expressing their understanding through hands-on projects like Haggadahs, Seder plates, *Afikoman* bags, matzah covers, and Elijah cups. We celebrate each child's unique artistic expression in these creations, recognizing that these are more than just crafts; they serve as meaningful anchors to memory, deepening children's emotional connection to family traditions and embodying our program's commitment to fostering *I'dor v'dor*—the passing of values and knowledge from generation to generation.

In addition to their creative work, the children also had exciting, hands-on experiences that brought the Passover story vividly to life. Morah Baz brought five real frogs to visit the school and introduced them to every classroom. The children absolutely loved singing their "Frog's Here, Frog's There, Frogs are Jumping Everywhere!" song—especially while watching the frogs up close in their habitat. Observing their big eyes, long jumps, and silly, swollen movements brought this plague to another dimension!

The children also learned all about matzah—drawing, cracking, tasting, and even experimenting with it in our science-of-the-month project comparing matzah, challah, and water! But perhaps the highlight was a visit from The Matzah Factory, where every child got to speed through 18 minutes of making their own matzah after hearing the story and songs from our favorite matzah rabbi.

The Passover Seder especially highlights the power of Jewish ritual to unite families and communities. We see this daily in school, as children joyfully learn Passover songs, act out the Exodus, and participate in symbolic reenactments. During the week before Passover, the children got to show off their knowledge during our annual family classroom Seders, where parents and Morahs alike got to kvell a bit! But, perhaps the most rewarding part is watching them bring this learning home, proudly sharing their handmade treasures, explaining their significance, and retelling the story of—for this holiday—Passover in their own charming and heartfelt ways.

I hope all of you experienced a sweet, meaningful, and joy-filled Passover, and I wish you a bright, blooming, and happy spring! ■





by Connie Reichman,
Director, Congregational Schools

As *Ma Nishtanah* was heard throughout the school, our children were preparing to participate in our school-wide *Seder* as well as their family *Seders*. Matzah covers and trays were painted, props were created, placemats were decorated, and *Haggadot* were assembled. Our Matzah Factory was an amazing experience where children learned the process of making matzah and practiced it firsthand by making their own dough and baking it within 18 minutes. Our school wide *Seder* was an interactive learning environment where each class played an integral role. Students entered a room decorated with backdrops of Pharaoh's palace and Moshe parting the Red Sea. Tables were set with 10 plague plates and matzah placemats. Gesher, Nitzanim and Alef led *Ma 'Nishtanah*, Bet class led the song *Avadim Hayinu*, Gimmel recited the steps of the *Seder*, Dalet sang "Who Knows One," Hay led all the blessings and *Kiddush*, Vav dressed in costumes and acted out the story of the Exodus. Candy and toy plagues were a huge hit as children had sprinkles for lice and mini marshmallows for hail, Oreos for darkness and cranberries for boils. They loved the styrofoam balls and plastic frogs raining down on them and smacking each other with celery sticks for *Dayenu* to symbolize the beating of the slaves. Hazzan Shamash led the final song, *Le'shana Haba'a Bi'Yerushalayim*: Next year in Jerusalem! ■



The Religious School Prepares for Passover with Matzah Baking, Songs and Plagues



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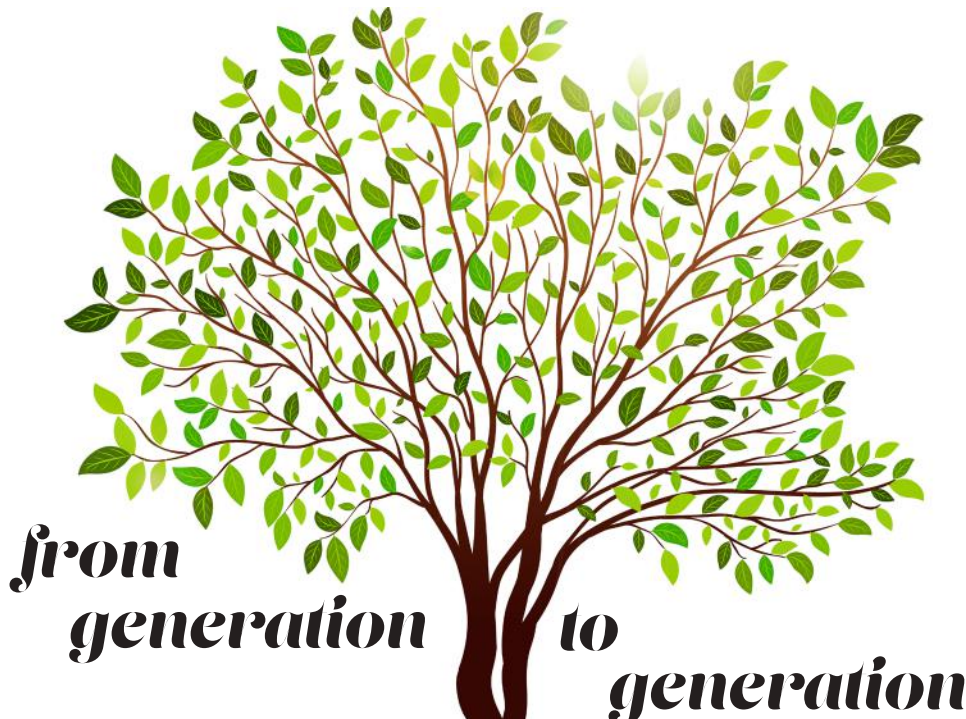
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ppreciation is expressed by the Temple Israel officers and Board of Trustees to members who have generously sponsored and enhanced the Sabbath *kiddush*.

Contributions toward the *kiddush* on March 8 were made by Jeanette and Nader Ohebshalom on the occasion of the *yahrzeit* of her mother, Marcelle Sivia Sameyah, and Sofia Sohayegh in memory of her father, Ayoub Farhadian.

The congregational *kiddush* on March 15 was sponsored by Kate and Boris Goldberg in honor of their son, David, becoming a *bar mitzvah*.

Contributions toward the *kiddush* on March 22 were made by Sepideh and Pedram Delijani in honor of the *auf ruf* of their daughter, Talia, and Matthew Fine, and by Janet and Kombiz Kahen in honor of the *auf ruf* of their son, David, and Asal Zargari. ■

Gala Dinner Dance Honorees, continued from page 7

15 years ago, along with Rebecca Sassouni, Lori Oppenheimer and Susan Lopatkin, Sherry approached Cantor Rafael Frieder, then Temple Israel's cantor, about having a women-led *Shabbat* service which became *Kol Isha*, a tradition that continues at Temple Israel. (A *Kol Isha* service will take place on May 2 and May 3, with Sherry chairing the steering committee.) "Cantor Frieder was extremely supportive of women leading services, and learning from him was a continuation of the education I received when I was growing up," explains Sherry.

Both Sam and Sherry have seen the congregation move from being almost entirely *Ashkenazi* to a multi-cultural community that appreciates and shares one another's backgrounds.

The Husneys both feel that going to services gives them a continuing sense of community where they share their own lifecycle events as well as those of others. "Being part of Temple Israel is so important whether you are celebrating a *simcha* or suffering the loss of a loved one and you never feel alone. Everything we have become is in some way related to our relationship with the synagogue and the wonderful people we have met along the way. Our connection to Temple Israel has most definitely helped us become the Jews we are today," finishes Sam. ■

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

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

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

Join us for these events:

Shabbat Kol Isha • Friday, May 2 @ 6:15 P.M.

Shabbat Kol Isha • Saturday, May 3 @ 9:15 A.M.

Book Discussion with Joan Leegant, author of Displaced Persons (hosted by Sisterhood) • Monday, May 12 @ Noon

Book Discussion: Night by Elie Wiesel (hosted by the Shoah Remembrance Committee) • Monday, May 12 @ 8:15 P.M.

Lag B'Omer BBQ (hosted by Men's Club) • Tuesday, May 13 @ 6:30 P.M.

Breast Cancer Awareness Panel • Tuesday, May 13 @ 8 P.M. (off site)

Ongoing Mental Health Initiative: Postpartum Depression • Wednesday, May 14 @ 7:30 P.M.

All Hands on Deck: How an Israeli Arts & Culture Journalist Pivoted Post 10/7 • Thursday, May 15 @ 7:30 P.M.

Israel Day on Fifth—the Israel Day Parade • Sunday, May 18 @ 11:30 A.M.

Family Retreat at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires • Friday, May 30 through Sunday, June 1

Shavuot Observances • Sunday, June 1 - Tuesday, June 3

Gala Dinner Dance • Wednesday, June 4 @ 6 P.M.

Fuel for Truth: Social Media and the Israeli Conflict • Sunday, June 8 @ 11 A.M.

And join us weekly for:

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