


















Eden Glassman, baking hamantaschen

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## The Gift of What's in Front of Us

By **RABBI RACHEL HEAPS**

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When I was a young camper, some of my bunkmates and I had a bug bite or two that got infected. We felt itchy but fine, but it was bad enough that the *mir'pa'a* (infirmary) quarantined us. It felt like forever being stuck in a room just large enough for two bunkbeds and a dresser, even though it was probably less than a week. We spent our time watching movies, doing Mad Libs, and yelling to our friends through a closed window, but the longer we were in there and the more we saw the daily life of camp happening outside the window, the antsy we got. I think we might have driven the poor nurses to their limit.

One night, after all of camp had returned to their cabins (even the older campers, we were up late!) the nurses decided to let us have some fresh air and let the four of us play on the quad. Just stepping out of the door felt like such a freeing act. We ran and jumped, did cartwheels, and spun around till we fell over. For those few minutes, we truly rejoiced in what we had all along.

It would be easy, and misleading, to make a comparison between that experience and this pandemic. I cannot imagine a sudden release from quarantine for us today like the one I experienced all those years ago. But I do find myself thinking about those few days more and more and the pandemic continues on and on. I especially think about that night on the quad, when all burdens felt lifted and all possibilities were rediscovered. And I think about how hard that feeling is to recreate as an adult.

Children have the amazing ability to cope and thrive in situations far beyond their (and our) understanding. They see and focus on what's directly in front of them, whereas we adults can't help but see the complexity and confusion in the world at large. For a child, good things are made better because

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“ This month’s Covenant seeks to rejoice in the kindness of our members and connections they’ve fostered with each other and our shared communities.

By **KATIE BICK**  
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I’m sure you’re all familiar with Temple Jeremiah’s tagline: “The Joy of Belonging.” Temple Jeremiah prides itself on being a congregation that not only welcomes our members in with open arms, but also invites them to find support, connection, and ultimately joy in our community.

Joy is an essential part of the fabric of Temple Jeremiah. This issue of the Covenant, which is devoted to the theme of “rejoicing” celebrates the joy found in all corners of temple life.

From our Monthly Mensch article that celebrates the hard work and civic-mindedness of high school senior Claire Schwartz, to

our article praising the success of Temple Jeremiah-sponsored refugees who resettled in the United States, to our article celebrating the impact Temple Jeremiah’s donations have had on underserved elementary school students during the holiday season, this month’s Covenant seeks to rejoice in the kindness of our members and connections they’ve fostered with each other and our shared communities.

While things can feel bleak while physically distancing during this cold Chicago winter, I’m excited to celebrate these joyful stories with you. I invite all our Covenant readers to rejoice with us—we’re all a part of a joyful, kind community, and that’s something worth celebrating.

## Two Hundred Fifty Plus Reasons to Rejoice



By **DR. ANNE LIDSKY**  
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This month’s theme is “rejoicing,” and I believe, in spite of the pandemic, we have reason to rejoice – 250+ reasons, and they are your children. Would I rather be in person than in this virtual world – absolutely! But have we experienced something powerful and memorable this

year – yes, we have.

Those of you with children in kindergarten through 6th grades are well aware of the La Briut, To Your Health and Wellness, curriculum we are using this year.

It’s an exciting values-based curriculum designed specifically for learners in kindergarten through sixth grade. Via five values-focused modules, learners have been gaining a variety of tools that build resiliency and supportive strategies for better managing the challenges that life can throw their way, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Learning is anchored in Jewish texts and tales of our past, offering rich understandings of Jewish values that build resiliency and guide personal and communal health and wellness:

- *sukkat shalom* (a shelter of peace)
- *ometz lev* (inner strength)
- *g’vurah* (courage)

- *k’hillah* (community)
- *hesed* (loving kindness, tying into hope)

While developed with minimal at-home adult responsibility for learning, resources are offered to encourage informal family conversations. More than 10,000 students across the United States are engaged in this Jewish experience. And although I have focused this article on our K – 6th graders, please know that our 7th – 12th graders are immersed in powerful experiences through Jerusalem tours, guest speakers, and the RAC Social Justice Academy.

Now allow me to rave about your children. Meeting in small groups, sharing thoughts and concerns that are on their minds, these beautiful kids have touched the hearts of our teachers and one another. For me, being with them on Zoom has been the highlight of my week. During community *t’fillah* we have asked the students, if they are comfortable, to share, via the chat, the prayers in their heart. Their words continue to bring tears to my eyes. When I respond to their comments, and I tell them how they have touched my soul with their words and how proud I am of their depth and thoughtfulness, I am not exaggerating the impact they have on me. We chant the prayer *Modeh/Modah Ani* and share what we are thankful for, and the chat is instantly populated with “My family, brilliant doctors and scientists who discovered the vaccine, pets, mamas, siblings, the ability to breathe, clean air, God, nature, love,” this is what the children write! We sing the Mishebeirach prayer, and your children are praying for ill grandparents, their old dog, and all the people suffering with COVID-19. They have done you proud!

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Lastly, allow me to share a memorable *mitzvah* that our students were engaged in during the month of February. They were invited to be part of the congregation's Caring Community.

I explained to them that we have many congregants who have been struggling during this pandemic year. Some are elderly and live alone. Others have been isolated and are struggling with loneliness. Many were ill. We have a Caring Community of volunteer adults who reach out with calls and cards, but I could only imagine what it would be like for our congregants, in need, to receive sweet pictures and thoughtful notes from our students. And the children came through with heartfelt words of encouragement, best wishes for good health, and optimistic words for a better future. Drawings of rainbows, flowers, sunshine, smiling faces, and dozens of hearts, created by innocent souls covered my dining room table as I readied them for the mailing. I LOVE and ADORE these children and all the children who have

**“...I tell them how they have touched my soul with their words and how proud I am of their depth and thoughtfulness, I am not exaggerating the impact they have on me.**

grown up at Jeremiah. They are the main reason I have been in this marvelous congregation for 40 glorious years; they are also the reason that I am so sad to say goodbye.

250+ reasons to rejoice – thank you for sharing your beautiful children with me and our dedicated staff of teachers and clergy. We have all been enriched by their tender souls.

## Claire Schwartz: Coder, Activist, and Feminist Advocate

Claire Schwartz is ready to make a difference in the world. At only 18-years-old, Claire has become a champion for various social justice causes. She co-founded her local chapter of March for Our Lives, actively volunteers with the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs (JCUA), and is a Kol Koleinu fellow. When not working with activist groups, Claire serves on the board of JeTY, Temple Jeremiah's teen youth group, and serves as the co-president of Deerfield High School's Girls Coding Club.

Recently, Claire was named one of JUF/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago-Springboard's 18 Under 18 honorees for her continued activism and impressive participation in Jewish community groups.

“There's a lot that needs to be done to make the world a better place,” said Claire. “I'm passionate about Tikkun Olam, and I want to do my part.”

According to Claire, Temple Jeremiah helped her discover her passion for social justice. “Naomi Looper [Temple Jeremiah's former Youth Engagement Director] was the first person to suggest I get involved with the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs,” said Claire.

Naomi introduced Claire to JCUA's Or Tzedek Organizing Internship, a program designed for teens who want to build concrete organizing skills and take their activism work to the next level. During Claire's time with Or Tzedek she spoke with Chicago-area community organizers about their efforts, participated in volunteer projects around the city, and learned from JCUA members about the role the Jewish community could play in the fight for economic and racial justice.

“I learned so much about the different parts and forms of activism with Or Tzedek,” said Claire. “I'm thrilled I got to do the program.” Since her time with Or Tzedek, Claire has remained involved with

JCUA. “JCUA is a great organization,” said Claire. “It looks at community organizing through a Jewish lens and really puts Jewish values into practice.”

Outside of JCUA, Claire is still actively involved with social justice causes. A little over a year ago, Claire and her friends got together to form their local chapter of March for Our Lives, a social justice organization devoted to harnessing the power of young people across the country to fight for sensible gun violence prevention policies. The chapter, which began as an impassioned group of friends, has now blossomed into a robust activist organization. The group not only holds gun control events, but also social justice talks and forums. “Recently, we got Congressman Brad Schneider to join our March for Our Lives chapter over Zoom for a Q&A,” said Claire. “He talked with all of us and answered questions. It was great to have his time.”

Claire is also a fellow with Kol Koleinu, a national program offered in collaboration with NFTY (North American Federation of Temple Youth) and USY (United Synagogue Youth). Kol Koleinu offers year-long fellowships to young, Jewish women across the United States and invites them to explore and deepen their feminist knowledge, channel their voices to share their beliefs, and use their skills to create tangible change in their communities.

“My Kol Koleinu cohort meets once a month,” said Claire. “Every time we get together, we discuss current events and how they



Claire Schwartz

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## Rabbi Heaps (continued from page 1)

goodness has become their whole world. For adults, good things are tinged with bitterness because we know that the world isn't that simple. How jealous we are of children and our younger selves who are able to rejoice in blissful naivete.

That is not to say we don't find ways to celebrate triumphs and milestones. Indeed, those moments of pride, passion, and achievement are moments that we strive for and elevate, a few moments that give us a taste of what we long for daily. But it is rare for an adult to exult in a warm, clear, summer night, in the perfect dish of ice cream, in reaching the highest ledge of the jungle gym, or even in the softest blanket. At least, I haven't noticed any of us doing cartwheels for ice cream lately.

Still, it is in this moment of our Jewish lives that we are encouraged to be especially aware of what is right in front of us, and revel in what we find there. We have nearly completed our retelling of the story of Exodus and redemption (Passover) and are on our way to reliving the receiving of Torah and the revelation of covenant (Shavuot). As we journey from one great moment to the next, as our ancestors did all those years ago, we count each and every day for what it is – an offering filled with potential. Each of these 49 days of the Omer have something within them to sustain us, sanctify us, and lift us up. We don't count one day and wonder what will happen in the next. We simply count the day, and

delight in it for its own sake. If the holidays that begin and end the Omer are the adult versions of rejoicing, then the seven weeks of counting are the child versions. In this period, we see what's right in front of us and are glad for this gift.

“..it is in this moment of our Jewish lives that we are encouraged to be especially aware of what is right in front of us, and revel in what we find there.”

As we bless each day of the Omer, our tradition provides us words to help us set our intentions: “*Hinei muchan um'zuman...*”, “I am here, I am ready, I am prepared...” We declare our mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual presence to greet and meet the day – a day filled with potential blessing, potential repair, potential nourishment, and potential journey. For 49 days the complexity and confusion of yesterday and tomorrow melt away and we rejoice in what today has to offer. *Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'Olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tizivanu al sefirat ha'omer*. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of All, who makes us holy through commandments and commands us to count the Omer.

## Look Forward to These Social Justice Events

### Feed the Hungry

Temple Jeremiah is so grateful for all the volunteers making lunches for the monthly Feed the Hungry program! Right now, we are seeking delivery drivers and families to prepare lunches on the first Sunday of the month throughout 2021.

To get involved, visit: [tinyurl.com/FeedTheHungry2020-2021](https://tinyurl.com/FeedTheHungry2020-2021). For questions, please contact Stephen Miller at [stephenmiller2854@gmail.com](mailto:stephenmiller2854@gmail.com).

### Antiracism Programming

In response to the growing national conversation about racism and institutionalized inequality, Temple Jeremiah has designed a series

of antiracism programming for the coming year. Most events will take place at 4:00 p.m. on the second Sunday of every month. We invite you to attend the following programs:

**Discussing “Detour-Spotting for White Antiracists” by Jona Olsson.** As we continue to learn about how to practice antiracism, we will be discussing the article “Detour-Spotting, For White Anti-Racists” by Jona Olsson on Sunday, April 11th from 4:00 - 5:00 p.m. This article outlines the ways ingrained habits and thought patterns can divert white, antiracist allies from their intended goals. It also discusses how to avoid these detours and handle them when they're encountered.

To learn about our antiracism programming, visit: [templejeremiah.org/antiracism-programming](https://templejeremiah.org/antiracism-programming).

## Weekly Torah Portions

We invite you to join us on Saturday mornings to discuss the Torah portion and how it might apply to our lives. We meet virtually at 9:30 a.m. every Saturday. To join us on Zoom, visit [zoom.us/j/132889355](https://zoom.us/j/132889355).



March 6, 2021	Ki Tisa	Exodus 30:11–34:35
March 13, 2021	Vayak'heil - P'kudei	Exodus 35:1–40:38
March 20, 2021	Vayikra	Leviticus 6:1–8:36
March 27, 2021	Tzav	Leviticus 6:1–8:36

## Spreading Kindness with Temple Jeremiah's Caring Calls

Since we began this period of physical distancing last spring, you might have received a call from a friendly Temple Jeremiah member checking in on you. Over the past year, a team of kind congregants have taken it upon themselves to make "Caring Calls," or phone calls checking in on the congregation to make sure we all have the support we need during this trying time.

"It only takes a couple of minutes a week to make Caring Calls," noted Amy Rubinstein, Temple Jeremiah member coordinating the calls. "The check-ins are a fast, easy way to take care of each other and show support to our community."

Caring Calls first began in late March of 2020. "Right after we halted in-person worship, Temple Jeremiah's Board was charged with checking up on congregants as they adjusted to this new world," explained Amy. "Board members divvied up the names of the temple's members, and we went from there."

According to Amy, these calls were immediately appreciated. "We got amazing feedback from the members we contacted. Everyone seemed touched to hear from our board members. They really valued us reaching out."

However, as the months of physical distancing went on, it became more difficult for members of Temple Jeremiah's board to come together and check-in with our 1,500+ member congregation a second time. "People were busy," Amy noted. "The pandemic shook up our day to day lives and threw all of our schedules and availabilities into disarray. Board members found themselves with less time on their hands to make calls."

Due to the challenges of life during the pandemic, the board's second round of calls proved more challenging to make than the first. However, to make sure our congregants continued to receive check-in calls during the pandemic, Amy took matters into her own hands. "I realized there were Temple Jeremiah members who were not involved with the temple board who might be able to help," said Amy. "I began reaching out to potentially interested congregants to see if I could gather a group of check-in callers." At the same time, Amy got in touch with Temple Jeremiah's Caring Committee to learn more about how it coordinated volunteers. "I wanted to get a sense of what the Caring Committee did," said Amy. "But, more importantly, I wanted to learn more about how they worked with people. The Caring Committee was a great inspiration for the group I wanted to assemble and the calls we were going to make."

To help Amy assemble a group of callers, the Caring Committee reached out to their list of volunteers looking to give back to the congregation. "I attribute so much to the Caring Committee, including the sheer number of people we were able to get to volunteer."

By the fall of 2020, Amy had assembled a robust group of member volunteers to make these calls. "I only expected to get maybe five

people interested, so I was delighted when I was able to assemble a group of about 25 people," said Amy. "We started thinking of ourselves as a kindness affinity group and we started referring to the phone check-ins as Caring Calls."

Initially, Amy's group of callers reached out to older congregants who might have found physical distancing particularly difficult. "We focused our calls on congregants who were 70 years-old and older," said Amy. "Generally, we thought the temple's older congregants would be hit hardest by the pandemic. Maybe they were lonely, maybe they were scared about the virus. We wanted to make sure we reached out to them first."

Since making the calls to older members, the group has expanded their effort to check in with every congregant at Temple Jeremiah. Since the beginning of the new year, Caring Calls have been going out to the entire congregation.

"I think our callers appreciate having the opportunity to give back in new, safe ways," said Amy. "During the pandemic, we're all eager to help each other, but it's much more difficult to do so. Volunteer work is generally done in person, but we must physically distance to keep ourselves and each other safe. These calls are a virtual way to be involved and make a difference while staying health-conscious."

Amy also noted that making Caring Calls has the pleasant perk of allowing her to feel more connected with the congregation. "While the calls were intended to let people know they weren't alone, they've also helped me and all of our callers really feel like they're a part of a strong community," said Amy. "I'm getting to know so many people through these check-ins. It lets me know that the care and kindness go both ways."

Caring Call volunteer Gary Kash echoed Amy's sentiment: "In my first round of calls, I met someone who recommended a great book to me. I decided to read the book and called him back to talk about it. We had a good time discussing the book and other topics. Now we are having a continuing conversation as it is fun talking with him."

Thank you to all of our Caring Callers: Elan Adler, Caren Brown, Katie Bushala, Beth Cohen, Shirley Craven, Geri Greenberg, Judith Homer, Fern Kamen, Gary Kash, Lori Kash, Barb Kite, Phyllis Klapman, Loryn Kogan, Roberta Mallon, Marc Mayer, Shirley Perrott, Laurel Shapiro, Carolyn Sherman, Sari Shuman, Sybil Stern, Art Sutton, Jerry Tatar, Shelly Trilling, Jessica Wayne, Amy Weintraub, and Jean Young.

Amy is always looking to expand her group of Temple Jeremiah members helping with Caring Calls. If you want to learn more about what making the Caring Calls entails or if you'd like to get involved with the effort, please reach out to Amy Rubinstein at [arubinstein5@comcast.net](mailto:arubinstein5@comcast.net).

## Monthly Mensch (continued from page 3)

connect to our lived experiences as both Jewish people and women. We also do presentations on social change projects about topics important to us that relate back to feminism and Judaism.” Claire’s Kol Koleinu project joins her love of coding with feminist advocacy. “I’m creating a website that spotlights women in politics and their contributions,” said Claire. “I want to increase the representation of women in politics and hopefully inspire young girls.”

Going forward, Claire hopes to continue to combine her passions for coding and social justice. “In college, I plan to major in computer science,” said Claire. “After that, I’m interested in pursuing a career in the currently male-dominated field of computer science. I love programming, so I’d be following my dreams while also representing women in STEM.”

When asked about being named one of JUF/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago-Springboard’s 18 Under 18 honorees,

Claire made sure to underscore how much she admired the other honorees. “It’s exciting to be a part of such a cool group of people,” said Claire. “Recently, we all met over Zoom, and I was so impressed with all of the other teens and their passions.”

Claire also made sure to thank Dr. Anne Lidsky, who nominated her for the honor. “I was excited when Dr. Lidsky told me she wanted to put my name in,” said Claire. “It’s a very cool honor.”

As an 18 Under 18 honoree, Claire has been given the opportunity to pair up with a mentor and work on a social justice-related project. Although she has yet to pin down the specifics of her project, she knows she wants it to focus on the intersections of feminism and STEM fields.

“My message for Temple Jeremiah is simple,” said Claire. “It doesn’t matter if you’re young or old, or even just one person. If you want to make change you can, no matter who you are.”

## Navigating the Pandemic with Jeremiah’s COVID-19 Task Force

By ED SHAPIRO

COVID-19 Task Force Member

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It goes without saying – this has been a year like no other. As vaccine distribution unrolls, we continue to hope that the pandemic will begin to subside. For those who have suffered during these challenging times, please know that the Temple Jeremiah community is here for you. To that end, you may not all be aware that very early in the pandemic, Temple leadership convened a COVID-19 Advisory Task Force. From its inception, the mission of the Task Force has been to keep our community safe and connected.

The Task Force includes Temple Jeremiah President, Scott Levin, MD, Barb Miller, our Immediate Past President, Cory Franklin, MD, Charles Leuter, the Temple insurance advisor, Rabbi Cohen, Danny Glassman, and me in my capacity as Temple Legal Counsel. We have endeavored to follow the guidelines set forth by Cook County, the State of Illinois, and the Centers for Disease Control. As you know, these guidelines have changed often during the past year. When they do, the Task Force meets to discuss the new guidelines and to update Temple policies and procedures where indicated. In all decisions, the Task Force is guided by one goal:

maintaining the health and safety of our temple community.

Throughout the pandemic, as the State of Illinois has moved from one phase to another, we have revisited Temple policies regarding attendance at life cycle events; mask requirements; protection of our Senior Leadership and Staff; protection of our members and guests; sanitation procedures; temperature and health screening; and physical distancing requirements. In the discussions that have informed our decisions, we have taken special care to prioritize the health and wellness of everyone in our community – particularly those more susceptible to COVID-19. We have also done our best to remain sensitive to how new changes to our Temple policies – even though guided by the latest health and governmental guidelines – impact our members and their ability to gather for life cycle and other events.

None of the Task Force decisions have been easy. But the decisions have been made with the utmost care, with attention to the latest scientific information, and with a holistic analysis made in the best interest of our community. We look forward to the time when the Task Force will no longer be necessary. Until then, we will continue to stay on top of the latest developments and do our best to balance the needs of all concerned.



### IAC Israel Fun Fact: Did you know...

*Israel is home to the lowest point on Earth. The Dead Sea is located 1,315 feet below sea level. However, thanks to the water density and salt levels, there’s not a chance of sinking any further. So grab a bathing suit and sunscreen, lather yourself with the abundant mineral-packed mud, and just float away!*

# Stories to Warm Your Heart: Holiday Giving for Whittier Families

By **LORI KASH**

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Whenever asked, Temple Jeremiah members have helped Whittier Elementary School children and their families in a myriad of ways: donations of school supplies, winter outerwear, uniforms, and coloring books, volunteering personal time in classrooms, and even building a library and playground. There was no “ask” this time. The following temple members made the holidays a little warmer for families in need simply because they wanted to bring a little sunshine to those who needed it most. We hope these stories bring a little warmth to your heart, too.

## CONGREGANT DONATING A THANKSGIVING MEAL

Marci Carl was searching for a restaurant or organization where she could buy a Thanksgiving meal for her family and she also wanted to donate a holiday meal to a family in need for Thanksgiving. Though she searched, Marci did not find an organization that could do what she wanted for Thanksgiving. Then, she had an idea! Having participated several times in Feed the Hungry with Hayden, her daughter, she reached out to co-chair, Stephen Miller, to help point her in the right direction. Stephen referred her to Lori Kash, who coordinates temple programs for Whittier Elementary School in Waukegan.

Lori reached out to Whittier’s social worker, who immediately thought of a family with a household of eight, who was in great need this holiday season. So, Marci, along with a personal friend and a Whittier teacher, who has one of the kids in her classroom, joined together to give this family a special holiday. Marci ordered a complete Thanksgiving dinner for eight, picked it up and personally delivered the holiday feast to the very grateful family in Waukegan. The social worker was moved, saying “This is amazing. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your kindness and generosity!” Marci said “I am glad we did it and we would be glad to bring another meal to the same family for Easter!”

Enjoy the cute videos the Whittier students’ mom sent of two of her children saying thank you, which you can watch on the Temple Jeremiah YouTube channel at: [tinyurl.com/ThankYoufromWhittierElementary](https://tinyurl.com/ThankYoufromWhittierElementary).

## RESULT OF CONGREGANT SHARING WHITTIER STORIES

Monica Hirschhaut has purchased holiday gifts to fulfill Whittier kids’ Christmas wish lists for the past five years as part of a program supported by several current and past Whittier volunteers from Temple Jeremiah as well as several members of our Social Justice Committee.

As the holidays approached Monica received a call from her mom, Anne Moran, who said she wanted to help a family in need this holiday season. Monica told her mom about her experiences volunteering at Whittier Elementary School and how she has been helping some Whittier families at Christmastime. Hearing these

stories resulted in Anne wanting to donate a gift card to a Whittier family who was struggling this holiday season.

“Wow! That’s amazing,” said the Whittier social worker, who immediately thought of a school family of seven dramatically impacted by COVID; the mom had been out of work for three weeks and the children’s grandmother was in the hospital on a ventilator. This family had a great need for assistance, financially as well as emotionally, during a time of year that is normally happy for them. The gift card was purchased and upon hearing the story a matching gift card was donated from another temple family along with two bags of groceries. When everything was delivered to the Waukegan family by a Jeremiah member, she reported the father having tears in his eyes as he kept saying “thank you” over and over and over again as he humbly accepted the gifts for his family.

Monica said about her mom, Anne, “She was so happy she could help a family in need.” None of this would have happened had Monica not shared her experiences giving to Whittier Elementary students and families.

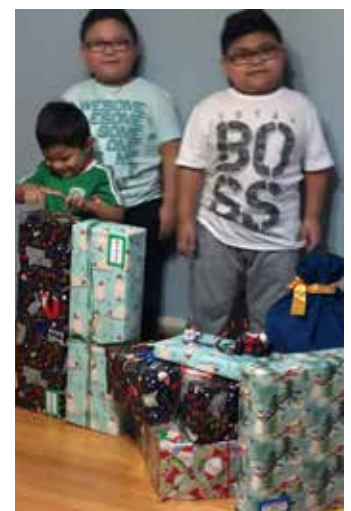
## HELPING “JUST BECAUSE”

Susan Isenberg was in the holiday spirit when she started thinking about all the different collections temple congregants hold for Whittier families during the year. Then she wondered what needs Whittier’s families may have for the holidays. So she emailed Lori at the end of November asking how she could help this holiday season. The request came in at the same time that several past and present Whittier volunteers, along with some members of the Social Justice Committee, were buying gifts to fulfill 18 wish lists for Whittier kids. Lori reached out to the school’s social worker who (sadly) quickly identified another family in need. The timing was perfect for Susan to bring joy to another Whittier family! “Once again, we are so grateful for your generosity!” emailed the social worker.

The appreciative mom, touched by Susan’s generosity, sent a video of three of her children saying thank you, which you can watch on the Temple Jeremiah YouTube channel at: [tinyurl.com/ThankYoufromWhittierElementary](https://tinyurl.com/ThankYoufromWhittierElementary)

Temple Jeremiah is a community that truly makes a difference in peoples’ lives. It warms your heart.

To find out how you can help Whittier Elementary School families, contact Lori at [lorikash12@gmail.com](mailto:lorikash12@gmail.com).



*Thankful Whittier Students*



## Diving Into the Harlem Renaissance as a Congregation

According to Ruth Adler, a retired teacher and Temple Jeremiah member, the best kind of learning is holistic.

“My educational philosophy is that nothing exists in a vacuum,” Ruth explained. “To understand a work, you have to know its cultural context. For example, what were the political concerns when this book was written? What were the fashion trends when this song was composed? What music was the painter listening to on the radio when he made this painting? If you look at a work within its period of creation, it can come alive for you.”

At Temple Jeremiah, Ruth Adler has developed a reputation for making famous texts come alive for congregants. From her Adult Learning series Back to School, which invited congregants to read and discuss books like *To Kill A Mockingbird* and *Frankenstein*, to her more recent digital courses that explore the seminal moments and movements from the early 20th century, Ruth has spent large parts of 2020 and 2021 renewing our members' relationships with culture.

**“I was so excited to discuss Langston Hughes... His work is delicious, and we have so much to learn from it.”**

Ruth cites one of her graduate school instructors, the University of Michigan's Victor H. Miesel, for teaching her to engage with art and literature in this unique way. “Although Professor Miesel was technically an art instructor, he made a point to reach across disciplines to give us a greater understanding of the periods we were discussing. We would never just look at the art; it was always accompanied by poetry or music. He wanted us to learn the period so we could see the pieces of art from the perspective of the artists who made them.”

This emphasis on historical and cultural context followed Ruth into her own classrooms when she began teaching. “I wanted students to engage with the theatrical form of *Julius Caesar*,” said Ruth. “So, when I taught the play to my high school students, we wrote a *Julius Caesar* musical. Similarly, there is so much food featured in *To Kill A Mockingbird*, so my students and I made a cookbook of Southern foods Scout, Atticus, and Jem might have eaten.”

In the winter of 2020, Ruth spearheaded a series of two courses about the Harlem Renaissance for Temple Jeremiah. “Langston Hughes is my favorite American poet, so I always think it's a good time to talk about the Harlem Renaissance,” said Ruth. “However, at the end of a year featuring major civil rights uprisings and at a temple with a robust antiracism programming schedule, it seemed like the right time for us to dive into this major moment in American culture together.”

During the first part of the course, Ruth explored the work of

poets like Langston Hughes and James Weldon Johnson in depth. Notably, she juxtaposed Langston Hughes' “I, Too” with Walt Whitman's “I Hear America Singing” and his famous line “I sing the body electric.” According to Ruth, “looking at Whitman with Hughes not only allowed us to explore the American poetic tradition leading up to Hughes' time, but also provided us with a historical perspective of how blind we were as a country to racism oppressing black Americans.”

“I was so excited to discuss Langston Hughes,” said Ruth. “His work is delicious, and we have so much to learn from it.” To augment the experience of reading Hughes' poetry, Ruth played jazz music as she taught. “The Harlem Renaissance was a period of jazz and Langston Hughes is a jazz poet. If you read his poems, you'll notice that he doesn't have normal rhythms—he'll start with one sound then play and riff to another. You get a sense of his musicality when his work is accompanied by jazz.”

To further bring the Harlem Renaissance to life for Temple Jeremiah, Ruth enlisted the help of other temple members. Charles Laurito led a section of the course that discussed the 1876-1877 election that paved the way for the Jim Crow era while Trudy Bers shared her research on James Weldon Johnson's political work as the first black Executive Secretary of the NAACP. Similarly, Sara Turover led a section of the course that outlined W. E. B. Du Bois' founding of the NAACP and his popular writings. Notably, Charles Laurito led most of the second session of the course, which was largely devoted to discussing the art of the Harlem Renaissance.

“Charles brought a remarkable approach to analyzing the art,” noted Ruth. “He didn't come to art as a pedagogical art historian, but rather as an observer. He talked to us about what he saw in the paintings we discussed and asked us to share our own observations.”

When asked about his approach to engaging with art, Charles echoed Ruth's sentiment. “For me,” said Charles, “it's not what do you see, but how you see it.”

According to Charles, his unique method of analyzing art is fundamentally collaborative. “When I'm looking at a piece of art with someone, I've found that if I share what I'm seeing in the

### I, Too

Langston Hughes, 1902 - 1967

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,  
I'll be at the table  
When company comes.  
Nobody'll dare  
Say to me,  
“Eat in the kitchen,”  
Then.

Besides,  
They'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

*continued on next page*



piece, it encourages whoever I'm with to look at the piece more critically and share what they're seeing, too. It allows both of us to gain deeper understandings of the work we're looking at." During Charles' section, he discussed the work of prominent Harlem Renaissance artists like Jacob Lawrence and Aaron Douglas. However, much of his discussion centered on Archibald Motley's painting "Nightlife."

"To me, Nightlife captures the spirit of the Harlem Renaissance," said Charles. "It's an exuberant bar scene that shows people celebrating. In the context of the violent history of slavery and racism we discussed earlier in the class, it's uplifting to see a painting featuring black people unapologetically celebrating, being empowered, having agency."

"Art defines who we are. It's a shared language and culture that allows us to relate to each other in ways we can't put into words," noted Charles. "I am thrilled when I can learn something new from art."

Notably, both Charles and Ruth drew connections between the Harlem Renaissance and Jewish life. "Judaism is such a social justice-oriented religion," said Ruth. "I couldn't help but read Jewish values into calls against injustice present in works from the Harlem Renaissance."

"The connection between Jewish history and the Harlem Renaissance feels very direct at times," noted Charles. "Take, for example, Jacob Lawrence's 'The Migration' series, which parallels the Great Migration with the story of the narrative of Exodus." Both Ruth and Charles also encouraged congregants to come to future Adult Learning classes. "If you don't at least attend a few of these sessions, you're missing quite a bit," said Charles. "They give you a chance to learn something and meet more people."

Ruth echoed this sentiment. "The 'synagogue,' when broken down etymologically, means 'to bring together' and 'school.' Our temple is a place for us to come together and learn, and I look forward to coming together to learn with all of you soon!"

## Staff Highlight: Julian Chin

Julian Chin is a performer and educator from the Chicago area, where he has established himself as an eclectic musician competent in a wide variety of styles. Since the summer of 2019, he has served as Temple Jeremiah's Musical Director.

"Working at Jeremiah has been a great opportunity to expand my knowledge of Jewish music, and to share my talents with the community," said Julian. "I've particularly enjoyed working on the High Holy Days with the Choir, performing in our concert series, and of course getting to work with our incredibly talented Cantor Friedman every week."

When not leading our choir or accompanying our clergy, Julian helms the Julian Chin Jazz Trio, an acclaimed group that has performed at esteemed Chicago-area venues including The Green Mill, Andy's Jazz Club, and Beat Kitchen.



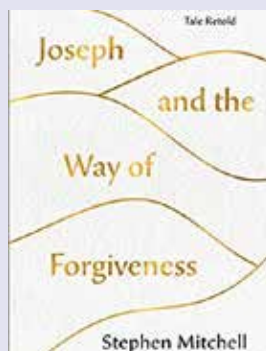
Julian Chin

## Sisterhood Book Club

**NOTE:** We will be meeting through Zoom! Join us online at [zoom.us/j/3417454169](https://zoom.us/j/3417454169).

Thursday, March 11, 2021 ~ 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.

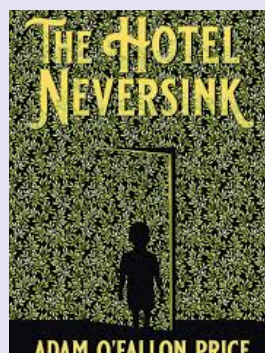
***Joseph and the Way of Forgiveness***, By Stephen Mitchell



"Evoking the ancient Jewish art of Midrash, Mitchell has now novelized this timeless story... Richly imagined and told in bite-size chapters, the story is compulsively readable and inspirational. It's a timeless tale retold in a timeless fashion." — Booklist

Thursday, April 8, 2021 ~ 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.

***The Hotel Neversink***, By Adam O'Fallon Price



Thirty-one years after workers first broke ground, the magnificent Hotel Neversink in the Catskills finally opens to the public. Then a young boy disappears. This mysterious vanishing—and the ones that follow—will brand the lives of three generations.

Contact Vicki Siegelman at [vsieg@gralynn.org](mailto:vsieg@gralynn.org) for more information or to join.

## Geogette and Edwina's New Lives in the United States

By ELAN ADLER, MARCIA OSHER AND DEBBIE LORIG



Geogette & Edwina  
arriving at O'Hare

It has been four years since Temple Jeremiah joined with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and St. Francis Xavier Church of Wilmette in welcoming two refugee sisters to Chicago. On February 3rd, 2017 Geogette and Edwina arrived at O'Hare National Airport during a temporary halt of a national immigrant travel ban. They had spent the last 18 years living in a refugee camp in Zambia with their parents

and six siblings after fleeing their home in the Democratic Republic of Congo to escape war and violence.

Much has happened in the past four years. The refugee camp was located in a highly rural, all-African community where food and housing were provided without cost, there was little, if any electricity and cooking was done over a fire pit in the open air, there was limited public transportation and no shopping centers. Geogette and Edwina moved to Rogers Park, a bustling multi-ethnic, highly commercial section of Chicago. They immediately began learning English, our monetary system, the CTA, the types of foods we have, and other elements of urban American culture. They learned quickly and began working at O'Hare airport cleaning planes and slowly becoming financially independent. The sisters were committed to paying off their individual \$4,000 travel loans within a year to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Learning life here was a daunting task requiring them to trust the American systems. For example, explaining that the bank would hold their money safely and they could access it using a "card in a machine on the wall" (ATM). Also, understanding why their phone costs \$100 but they must pay \$108 "with tax." To the ladies' credit, they were appropriately suspicious of being scammed. Striking a balance between American assimilation and preserving their African heritage was and continues to be a challenge.

The first six months were marked by desperate loneliness and homesickness for their family. They were entirely dependent on the Temple Jeremiah volunteers and were afraid to be out of their apartment alone. But Geogette and Edwina learned about living in

their new country and the mentors too, were enlightened, seeing their first-world America through the eyes of two third-world immigrants.

In October 2017, Geogette and Edwina's parents and sisters from Zambia finally received their immigration clearance and joined another daughter in Salt Lake City, Utah where they continue to live. This was an enormous relief knowing their entire family was now all in the same country! Around that time, Geogette became re-acquainted with John, a man from her refugee camp who was living in Rockford.

After several months of courtship, she moved to Rockford and married John according to African tradition: John paid a dowry to Geogette's parents and they went through a commitment ceremony. Geogette and John were blessed with twin daughters born September 21st, 2018 and rented a home in a quiet residential area of Rockford where the children can walk to school.

After Geogette moved to Rockford, Edwina continued to live in Chicago and was able to afford her own apartment working for Koch Foods and the Breakers Senior Living Facility in Edgewater. The sisters were able to visit their parents and siblings in Salt Lake City on several occasions and their mother came to Rockford for a month to help when the twins were born.

During the summer of 2019, Edwina met a Somalian refugee online named Ollie (we learned that there is quite a robust online network for refugees in this country!) After several months of corresponding, they met in person and soon had an "African Union." They currently reside in Louisville, Kentucky near Ollie's mother and brother and are the proud parents of a daughter born in June 2020.

We are pleased to report that the sisters are leading happy and productive lives here in the United States and they often talk about how very grateful they are for the enormous support provided them from Temple Jeremiah.



Geogette & her  
husband, John

## Shabbat Across Jeremiah

Join us on **Friday, March 12th** for a pandemic version of one of the temple's favorite events, Shabbat Across Jeremiah! Join us either before our Shabbat service at **5:30 p.m.** for challah and wine/juice or following Shabbat worship at **7:30 p.m.** for dessert and conversation. Rabbis Cohen and Heaps, along with Scott Levin and members of the temple board and committees will host the Zoom session, and they're looking forward to connecting with you all in a smaller group setting.

We will match participants based on what you tell us-by common interests, your children's ages, neighborhoods, and more! While we wish we could be physically together to enjoy this Oneg, at least we can be together forging connections online in the meantime.

To register for Zoom Shabbat Across Jeremiah, visit: [tinyurl.com/ShabbatAcrossJeremiah2021](https://tinyurl.com/ShabbatAcrossJeremiah2021).





Mara and Eva Franken celebrating Tu B'Shvat



Skylar Crane having a stuffed animal tea party



Sarah Mendel after her COVID-19 Vaccination

## Send Us Your Home Photos!



**TYPICALLY** we showcase activities and events happening lately around Temple Jeremiah on a full page. While the physical building is not filled with everyone's smiling faces, we know the warmth and connections amongst our congregation still exist. How about taking a photo of what's going on at home as you stay in touch with Temple Jeremiah? We'd love to see you celebrating Shabbat, your kids interacting online with youth events, or the challah that you baked. Please send your pictures our way so we can continue filling these pages with the images that remind us all what a wonderful, vibrant, and caring community we have created.

Email your photos to:  
covenant@templejeremiah.org



The Crane Family at the Botanic Garden Light Exhibit



Cantor Friedman, Abigail, and Zev celebrating Tu B'Shvat

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**Bill and Norma Brown Fund for Lifelong Learning**  
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**Whittier School**  
-Ellen and Alan Toban

## IN APPRECIATION OF

**High Holy Days**  
-Judith Sontag and Mike Pollak

**Rabbi Paul F. Cohen**  
-Ilene and Gerson Field  
-Myrna and Mickey Hammerman

**Rabbi Rachel L. Heaps**  
-Ilene and Gerson Field

## IN HONOR OF

**Cameron Alan Barg**  
Grandson of Karen Gitles, *on the occasion of his birth*  
-Alene Frost

**Bill Brown**  
*On the occasion of his 92nd birthday*  
-Sara and Alan Turover

**Noah Julian Chardell**  
Grandson of Emily and Jeff Chardell, *on the occasion of his birth*  
-Emily and Jeff Chardell

**Charles Gurian**  
-Alene Frost

**Judy Homer**  
*On the occasion of her special birthday*  
-Marci and Michael Homer

**Iggy Ruth Isaacson**  
Granddaughter of Kathy and Marc Mayer, *on the occasion of her birth*  
-Lori and Gary Kash

**Sandie Morgan**  
*On the occasion of her birthday blessing*  
-Sandie and Bob Morgan

**Chloe Emerson Ross**  
Granddaughter of Susan and Gary Ross, *on the occasion of her baby naming*  
-Amy and Kevin Ross  
-Susan and Gary Ross

## IN MEMORY OF

**Richard Abelson**  
*Father of Debra Abelson*  
-Donna Abelson

**Charles Bleich**  
*Father of Deborah Cogan*  
-Karen Gitles and Michael Jablo  
-Randi and Charles Gurian

**Lillian Brandfon**  
-Frances Brandfon McTague

**Dylan Buckner**  
*Son of Karen and Chris Buckner, brother of Ethan Buckner*  
-Doris and Ron Cohen  
-Kim Pollak  
-Ros Wolfe

**Dr. Irwin Chaiken**  
*Father of Paul Chaiken*  
-Mara, Paul, Taylor, and Carly Chaiken

**Les Cohen**  
*Brother of Ron Cohen*  
-Doris and Ron Cohen

**Jack Cohen**  
*Father of Ron Cohen*  
-Doris and Ron Cohen

**Cary Feldman**  
*Brother of Bonnie Horn*  
-Jeanne and Gabe Angres  
-Linda and Jerry Bernstein  
-Joan Golder  
-Judy Homer  
-Susie and Roger Fein  
-Ellen Magit

**Morris Ferdman**  
*Father of Seymour Ferdman*  
-Seymour Ferdman

**Gerald Goldblatt**  
-Ellen and Alan Toban

**Sam Goldman**  
*Husband of Bobbie Goldman*  
-Maxine and Larry Speyer

**Miriam (Toody) Goodman**  
*Mother of Debbie Holzman*  
-Ivy Baruch and Cary Green  
-Debra and Gary Holzman  
-The Kleiman Family  
-The Schurgin Family

**Frederika Halski**  
*Mother of Joyce Frank*  
-Joyce and Gary Frank

**Irving Hirschfield**  
*Father of Allen Hirschfield, grandfather of Jill Meltzer*  
-Nancy and Allen Hirschfield

**Charles "Chuck" Karp**  
-Kathy and Marc Mayer

**Morris Klapman**  
*Father of Jim Klapman*  
-Phyllis and Jim Klapman

**Jacob Kotz**  
*Grandfather of Mark Kotz*  
-Mark Kotz

**Carl Lewis**  
*Grandfather of Cantor Susie Lewis Friedman*  
-Hershy Pappadis  
-The Schurgin Family  
-Sara and Alan Turover

**Daniel Lipschultz**  
*Son of Leslie and Stephen Lipschultz*  
-Leslie and Stephen Lipschultz and Family

**Dick Maeglin**  
*Father of John Maeglin*  
-Mara and Gerry Lane  
-Sara and Alan Turover

**Arthur Marks**  
*Husband of Sandra Marks, father of Patricia Lurie*  
-Sandra Marks

**Shirlee Mayer**  
*Mother of Avrie Jacobs*  
-Avrie and Alan Jacobs

**Janet Miller**  
*Mother of Stephen Miller*  
-Mary and Mark Casner  
-Nancy and Arnee Eisenberg  
-Alene Frost  
-Krystal and Danny Glassman  
-Lori and Gary Kash  
-Amy and Scott Levin  
-Susan and Ken Lorch  
-Ellen and Alan Toban

**Betsy Mosak**  
*Sister of Art Sutton*  
-Diane Stumpf and Art Sutton

**Angeline O'Connor**  
*Grandmother of Jill Patano*  
-Randi and Charles Gurian

**Tobi Palmer**  
-Ivy Baruch and Cary Green

**Teena Parrish**  
*Sister of Carol Fishbain*  
-Carol and Arnie Fishbain



**Marian Peters**

*Sister of Rachel Siegel*  
-Rachel and Marvin Siegel

**Arthur Phillips**

*Husband of Marilyn Phillips*  
-Jeanne and Gabe Angres

**Louis Schubert**

*Father of Ernie Schubert*  
-Linda and Ernie Schubert

**Harriet Schwartz**

*Mother of Cheri Grossman*  
-The Schurgin Family

**Herbert Seligmann**

*Father of Babette Sanders*  
-Babette and Jeffrey Sanders

**Jerry Silverman**

-Joyce Landau

**Helen Slotnick**

*Mother of Sherrill Slotnick*  
-Sherrill Slotnick

**Edith and Morris Sutton**

*Parents of Art Sutton*  
-Diane Stumpf and Art Sutton

**Andrea Zinn**

*Mother of Danielle Ruben*  
-Danielle and Brian Ruben

**FOR THE SPEEDY RECOVERY OF**

**Jessie Abrahams**

-Sara and Alan Turover

**Joe Cohen**

-Kathy and Marc Mayer

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**Save the Date for the temple-wide *Not Your Average Seder***  
**Sunday, March 28th at 4:00 p.m.**

**Stay Up to Date on Events with our Calendar**

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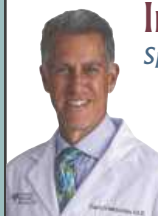
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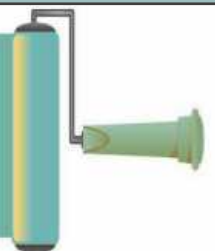
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# SAVE THE DATE

## ANNE'S RETIREMENT CELEBRATION

After 40 years as Temple Jeremiah's Educator Extraordinaire,  
Dr. Anne Lidsky is retiring.

Please join us **Friday, June 11th - Sunday, June 13th** as we celebrate  
Anne and all of the ways she has helped us grow.

Details to follow.