

THE  
**CHRONICLE**

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*Rabbi Joshua  
Stampfer, z"l*

*Dec 28, 1921 - Dec 26, 2019*

*His memory will  
always be a blessing*

**The Chronicle**  
**Special Rabbi Stampfer, z"l**  
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# Rabbi Joshua Stampfer, z"l: His Life and Legacy

**By Lois Shenker**

A “man for all seasons” fiercely devoted to his faith and tradition, beloved father, grandfather, great-grandfather, friend and rabbi, visionary, scholar, teacher, author, role model, and inspiration to all with whom he came in contact; Rabbi Joshua Stampfer died two days short of his 98th birthday on December 26, 2019. His passing leaves a gap that can never be filled, and for so many of us, it marks the end of an era. For all of these reasons, the leadership and staff of Congregation Neveh Shalom have chosen to publish this special edition of *The Chronicle* in his memory. While it is impossible to cover the multi-faceted, productive lifetime of this uniquely special human being in just a few pages, we are hopeful that this publication will honor him appropriately and acknowledge some of the highlights of his life.

Born in Israel as the son and grandson of rabbis, Rabbi Stampfer and his family emigrated to the United States when he was two years old, settling in Akron, Ohio where his father had a pulpit.

During his college years he attended Brandeis Camp, an experience in living Judaism for young adults. There he met and fell in love with Goldie. They married in 1944 and had five children. At the time of Goldie’s death they had been married for 72 years. Rabbi Stampfer is survived by four of their children, three daughters-in-law, one son-in-law, 20 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren.

In 1948, while he and Goldie were living in Israel as part of his rabbinical training at The Jewish Theological

Seminary, the War of Independence broke out. Rabbi Stampfer fought with the *Haganah* during that war, intensifying his strong support and love for Israel as a result of that experience.

Upon his ordination, Rabbi began his rabbinic career as rabbi of a congregation in Lincoln, Nebraska, where he remained until he accepted the position as rabbi of Congregation Ahavai Shalom in Portland, Oregon.

Rabbi and Goldie arrived in Portland with their three sons in time for the High Holidays in 1953. He continued to serve the congregation, (later merged with Congregation Neveh Tzedek to become Congregation Neveh Shalom) until a few days before his death. He was the congregation’s rabbi for 40 years, and Rabbi Emeritus for 26 years.

While Rabbi Emeritus, he continued to be actively involved in synagogue life. He came into the office five days a week, during which time he maintained his daily practice of making the rounds to visit with every staff member, and continued to write and prepare for the classes he taught. At the time of his death, he was scheduled to teach a class beginning in January, 2020 in which 110 people were already registered to attend!

We are told in Pirkei Avot, “*There are three crowns—the crown of the Torah, the crown of the priesthood, and the crown of kingship, but the crown of a good name surpasses them all.*”

We dedicate this issue of *The Chronicle* to Rabbi Joshua Stampfer, a man who wore the crown of a good name throughout his lifetime and will continue to do so in memory.



# A Leader I Learned From

By Rabbi David Kosak



**D**uring Rabbi Stampfer's funeral, I noted that there are certain people whose lives do not belong to them, nor their families, nor even their communities. Even though they are deeply loved and treasured by their families and communities, these special souls belong to humanity and to time itself. Rabbi Stampfer was such a one.

Yet that type of achievement doesn't come without risks. In *Moby Dick*, Herman Melville wrote, "Be sure of this, O young ambition, **all mortal greatness is but disease.**"

So many people's use of charisma, and their striving to achieve, flow out of their desire for power, or recognition, or to fill gaps in their souls left from some early psychic injury. Even for those who manage these inner forces, and are not trying to cover up their own inadequacies, leadership remains an intensely costly endeavor.

I never knew Rabbi Stampfer in his youth. I didn't have the privilege to see him manage the tremendous emotional toll that leadership imposes, or watch how

he balanced the stress of competing needs and demanding work load. I wish I could have observed him navigate selflessness and the needs of the ego. Despite all that, I saw a person who had achieved greatness and come out of it intact. That is remarkable and rare. Not all mortal greatness is disease.

Some of those who did know him over long years can talk about how much he changed over the decades. Apparently he was not a particularly good orator in his early days. It's hard to imagine that, and it's also wonderful to discover. After all, don't we all want to know that we can improve? In other words, if Rabbi Stampfer wasn't always Rabbi Stampfer, then who might each of us still become? Even over the last handful of years, here was a man willing to change.

I appreciated how we could discuss things we deeply disagreed about. For instance, I come down on the side of Jewish texts that emphasize privacy as a necessary component of a good society, and am willing to give up some security in the interests of preserving human dignity and limiting the tools of authoritarians. Security mattered far more to him. He thought if you are not doing anything wrong, then why do you need privacy? We didn't convince each other. In an age where the world is faced with increasing totalitarianism, decreasing privacy and rising risks to our physical security, we each have a point.

The man I knew enjoyed his later years. He was still active and at ease with his life and eminently appreciative for each day. Someone who was grateful that the demands of full-time active leadership

were no longer his. Yes, we spoke about that on more than one occasion. He was glad not to have to hold the reins. One area of spiritual generosity I particularly appreciated were the moments when he pulled back the curtain of his public persona, sharing with me some of the inner struggle of those earlier years. He would tell me of some of the incredibly chutzpadik things people had done or said over the years. Even then, he was never speaking out of *lashon hara*. He wanted to remind me that there's no easy way through this work we do.

Some of you may remember when Rabbi Stampfer rather publicly called me his rabbinic grandson and how happy that made him. I treasure those words, because my own grandfather died when I was 19. My grandfather was a great man, not unlike Joshua Stampfer. He too built institutions, engaged on the national and international scene. He never got to see either my cousin Susan or me become ordained. I wish he had and that we could have shared adult conversations.

Perhaps in the world of truth, Joshua is speaking to my Papa Jake. I'd like that.



# A Religious Community Transformed

By Rabbi Daniel Isaak

**W**hen I first arrived at Neveh Shalom in 1993, I was shown to my new office. The bookshelves were clear. The desktop and drawers were empty. Only in the small office closet did my predecessor leave something behind. There, neatly hung, were the robes Rabbi Stampfer once wore.

I knew that Rabbi Stampfer no longer led services in robes, and therefore had abandoned them in the closet. Conservative rabbis of my youth wore robes on the pulpit, but they left them behind probably sometime in the 1960s. Some Reform rabbis continue to wear them on the pulpit to this day.

I thought about the man who preceded me as senior rabbi of Neveh Shalom. He had served here for 40 years when I became senior rabbi at Neveh Shalom. That means he arrived in 1953 when I was only four years old!

What substantial and significant rabbinic transitions had he initiated, witnessed and supported personally over that career? Over this time, what were some of the ideas and traditions he left behind, just like the robes, and what had he adopted in favor of a more progressive and inclusive Judaism?

The role of women must be the most profound. Who in their wildest imaginations in the 1950s would have envisioned ordained female rabbis and cantors, let alone lay Torah readers, daveners, presenters of scintillating *Divrei Torah*? All this we take for granted today in our fully egalitarian synagogue.

Rabbi Stampfer officiated at the first

Ahavai Shalom Bat Mitzvah, a somewhat radical parallel at the time to the common celebration for boys. But the early Bat Mitzvah only took place at Friday evening services, because females were not yet permitted to chant from the Torah or recite a Shabbat morning Haftarah with its blessings. My, how fortunately far we have come! Our children today know no such differentiation, assuming equal male and female opportunities to engage in the religious practices of our people.

It was during the 1970s while I was in rabbinical school that the Rabbinical Assembly, the official organization of Conservative rabbis, painfully struggled through the questions of ordaining female rab-



light, Rabbi Stampfer, again ahead of the curve, had already initiated gay and lesbian outreach efforts.

Similarly, though all synagogues seek new members, during his early decades it was assumed that those who had intermarried would be disinterested in involvement in Jewish life. However, more recently Neveh Shalom has seen increasing interest among intermarried families to join Neveh Shalom and educate their children.

As I was growing up, religious services were exclusively led by rabbis and cantors with the congregation largely passive, participating primarily by listening to rabbis' sermons and singing together specified sections of prayer. Rabbi Stampfer supported the movement for ever increasing lay participation. As a result significant numbers of men, women, and teens became proficient in chanting

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***Rabbi Stampfer supported the movement for ever increasing lay participation. As a result, significant numbers of men, women, and teens became proficient in chanting from the Torah and leading services.***

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bis and cantors, which Rabbi Stampfer championed. At the conclusion of that prolonged debate, Rabbi Neil Gillman, who officiated at Carol and my wedding, told me in a private conversation that the next issue we would confront would be homosexuality! At that time, that was hard for me to imagine. However when I arrived in Portland, much to my de-





lies provide us with a steady stream of vibrant leadership and renewed energy.

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***Over the years he engaged with clergy and houses of worship of all types. Wherever I would go in interfaith circles, I would be queried about how Rabbi Stampfer was doing.***

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from the Torah and leading services. This and other factors inevitably encouraged the creation of our Downstairs Minyan, a service entirely lay-led where congregants have the opportunity to lead sections of the service.

Rivalries between synagogues and between movements did not prevent Rabbis Stampfer (Conservative), Geller (Orthodox) and Rose (Reform), whom OPB designated "The Three Rabbis," from creating the still popular city-wide Introduction to Judaism course. Over the decades hundreds if not thousands of students gathered throughout Portland's several synagogues to learn from area rabbis about Judaism, most making the course their first venture in exploring conversion. The three original rabbis have blossomed this semester into a course now involving 15 rabbis.

Rabbi Stampfer made it his business to know and be known throughout the religious community. Over the years he engaged with clergy and houses of worship of all types. Wherever I would go in interfaith circles, I would be queried about how Rabbi Stampfer was doing. He developed an especially close relationship with Rev. Rodney Page, Executive Director of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, the largest Christian Ecumenical organization in the country.

The "graying of the American Jewish community" concerns Jewish leadership throughout the country. Conservative movement synagogues in particular worry that their memberships cannot attract young Jews. An important biproduct of our Foundation School, created under Rabbi Stampfer's leadership, has been that Neveh Shalom has not experienced this troubling development as have many other congregations. These young fami-

The congregant of 1953 would probably not recognize what Neveh Shalom has become. Similarly, we would find it difficult to imagine the transformations that lie in the decades ahead.

Throughout his tenure, Rabbi Stampfer navigated the winds of change. And he taught many of us through his example how to do the same. These transformations, large and small, continue to this day in order to meet the needs of our community, to provide for authentic Jewish life and make Neveh Shalom a leading voice in the Portland Jewish community.



# Influencing the Clergy of Today

By Jenn Director Knudsen

**R**abbi Joshua Stampfer's, z"l influence endures in the physical Jewish and ecumenical institutions he created in Oregon, Washington, and beyond. His influence also endures through people, including members of the clergy who spent years, even decades, learning at Rabbi's knee and sometimes directly across from him.

"Camp Solomon Schechter had 100 percent something to do with my life trajectory, so Rabbi Stampfer is directly responsible," said **Rabbi Robert Kahn**, son of **Judith and Garry Kahn** and brother of **Steven Kahn**, David Kahn, and **Sarah Kahn Glass**. "I do remember his sermons," Robert said in an email from his home in Israel. He made aliyah there in 2008, and today he is an educator and tour guide. "But I think they were too intellectual for me as a kid."



*Rabbi Robert Kahn, speaking at "Fruit of the Vine" in 2017, an event which Rabbi Stampfer created to honor professionals who grew up at Neveh Shalom.*

As was his first Pesach experience around age 13 at the Stampfer seder table. "I don't think we were singing about 'Frogs here, frogs there, frogs just jumping everywhere!' at this seder," which was "scholarly," Robert said.

Rather, Rabbi Stampfer and Goldie z"l had put a different hagaddah at each attendee's place. "It was hard to even figure out what page we were on," he said. "But did it make an impression? For years, when it was my turn to host sedarim, we made sure everyone around the table had a different hagaddah to add to the richness of the experience."

As a young adult, Robert served for a time as director of Camp Solomon Schechter, and it was then, he said, "our relationship became more like colleagues, with mutual respect in both directions." He continued, "After becoming a congregational rabbi [for 16 years at Beth El Synagogue in St. Louis Park, Minn.] and making aliyah, [Rabbi Stampfer] and I could talk about everything, and I could pick his brain all the time."

Coincidentally, native Portlander **Rabbi Alexander Davis**, **Anna Davis'** brother, became rabbi of Beth El Synagogue after Robert made aliyah. While Alexander grew up at Congregation Beth Israel, once he decided to attend rabbinical school, he connected with Rabbi Stampfer.

"To gain entrance, I needed to pass a 10-page Talmud exam," Alexander said. He spent an entire summer studying the 37 volumes of the compendium of the Mishnah and the Gemara one-on-one with Rabbi Stampfer. He said, "It was



*Rabbi Alexander Davis in his rabbinic student days.*

my first introduction to Talmud and really my first introduction to Rabbi Stampfer."

Alexander continued, "I was amazed that he seemed to know the text of *Bava Metzia* [one of the tractates of Talmud] by heart. With great patience, he guided me line by line, page by page. I still remember fondly the Gemara that I can now recall (mostly) by heart. And when I do, I think very fondly of my gentle, wise teacher."

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***"Camp Solomon Schechter had 100 percent something to do with my life trajectory, so Rabbi Stampfer is directly responsible."***  
***—Rabbi Robert Kahn***

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**Rabbi Joe Menashe** ("or as Rabbi Stampfer called me, Joey," he said) credits his teacher for his profession.



“Rabbi Stampfer at my bar mitzvah correctly recognized that *hazzanut* (cantorial music) was not a likely professional pursuit, but he did say that maybe I would become a rabbi,” said Joe, son of **Bette Lynne** and **Albert Menashe**, whose wedding was the first Rabbi Stampfer officiated in the newly merged Congregation Neveh Shalom.

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***“We should have continuity of our principles and beliefs, but we should always be exploring and wrestling and evolving spiritually. Rabbi Stampfer was a genuine role model for exactly that.”***

***—Rabbi Shawn Fields-Meyer***

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Joe, executive director of Ojai-based Camp Ramah in California, recalls, “I applied for a fellowship trip to Israel as a teenager and asked Rabbi Stampfer for a letter of recommendation. No question that his effort to help me get this fellowship influenced my overall trajectory of life including the decision to become a rabbi.”



*Rabbi Stampfer, Rabbi Joe Menashe, and Deborah Musher at the Tenaim Ceremony in November 2001.*

Rabbi Stampfer influenced him beyond career; Rabbi Stampfer’s intellectual curiosity encouraged Joe to becoming a more-flexible thinker in his mentor’s mold.

“I recall as a young teen, when Rabbi Stampfer was evolving in his perspective on Israel,” Joe said. “While his

love for and commitment to Israel never wavered, his expression of those commitments changed.... I aspire to similarly evolve and grow and keep in mind his example of his ability to learn anew, challenge long-held beliefs,

and be open to new insights and understandings.”

This influence is echoed by **Rabbi Shawn Fields-Meyer**, who grew up at Neveh Shalom and today is Director of Spiritual Learning at Milken Community Schools in Los Angeles, and Instructor of Bible at the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies. She is the daughter of **Sandey and Del Fields** – whom Rabbi Stampfer married – and daughter-in-law of **Jim and Lora Meyer**.

“I often teach my students that if your spiritual life is the same now as it was five years ago, you’re not doing it right. ... [W]e should have continuity of our principles and beliefs, but we should always be exploring and wrestling and evolving spiritually,” Shawn said. “Rabbi Stampfer was a genuine role model for exactly that. His position on gay marriage evolved. His views on Israel and the Palestinians evolved. He welcomed new innovations in the synagogue rituals. In those ways, he was evolving spiritually -- even into his 90s.”

**Rabbi Howard Siegel** met Rabbi Stampfer when he was a Schechter camper. Writing in early January in a blog published in the *Houston Chronicle* online



*Rabbi Shawn Fields-Meyer*

edition, Howard eulogized the “Lion of Torah” who was a father figure and inspired him to attend rabbinical school.

Howard, founder of the Jewish Information Center of Houston, shares with his readers that Rabbi Stampfer quietly infused the Rabbinical Assembly with new blood.

He was with Rabbi Stampfer in the mid-1980s when Rabbi Alex Shapiro, then-president of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, “turned to Josh and asked, ‘Why haven’t you been involved with the Rabbinical Assembly on a national level?’ He responded with his signature laugh and said, ‘Take a look around this camp and at some of the rabbis sitting here (pointing to me!). I have been involved with the Rabbinical Assembly on a national level.’”

There are others in the clergy and those very active in Jewish life who were encouraged and remain inspired by Rabbi Stampfer to work for and toward the roles they play today. Perhaps Rabbi Shawn Fields-Meyer best sums up for herself, her colleagues, and untold others: “He was a role model to me, reminding me through his actions to be a lifelong learner and teacher.”

# Travels with The Rabbi

*By Toinette Menashe*

**A** long-held dream, to visit Israel, was realized in the spring of 1967. Happily, our family's year-long sabbatical in Denmark coincided with the Stampfer family's sabbatical year in Israel, providing us with the incentive to plan a three-week trip to Israel when offered a comprehensive tour around the country with, best of all, Rabbi Stampfer at the wheel. Who could ask for a better guide than our Rabbi, grandson of two rabbis in Israel, Rabbi Zvi Frank, then chief rabbi in Jerusalem, and Rabbi Yehoshua Stampfer, Israel pioneer and founder of the city of Petah Tikva, Israel?

This was to be the first of decades of travels with Rabbi Stampfer as our leader and as we traversed the then 19-year-old state, beginning with the wonders of Jerusalem, we motored through Israel from north to south and east to west enjoying Rabbi's unique commentaries elucidating the significance of each new site visited. Most amazing to us was our awareness that although we realized that all places visited had been seen before by the Rabbi, i.e. the Chagall windows, Israel Museum, Masada, etc., each site was made to come alive and its relevance, historically and religiously, explained in great detail.



*Stampfers visiting the Menashes in Copenhagen, on the way to Israel - 1966*

Wherever we travelled during those memorable weeks in Israel, someone knew the Stampfer name, so pervasive had the family's history and impact been in the establishment of the State of Israel. In looking back, it was, and is, our fondest hope that in the approximately 30 trips that Rabbi Stampfer led to Israel, that those hundreds of participants retain the same joy and pleasure as did we in 1967.

In the ensuing years, in addition to the many trips to Israel, Rabbi Stampfer's seeming insatiable interest in seeking out "lost" Jewish communities led him to take tour groups to Kaifeng, China; Belmonte, Portugal; Birobidzhan in the former USSR; and the Ringatus in New Zealand.

Although each trip was unique in its way, two experiences stand out, still so clearly etched are they in our memory: that of our visits to Christchurch, New Zealand; and Belmonte, Portugal.

Rabbi Stampfer had noted prior to our arrival in New Zealand, that we would be spending the holiday of Purim in Christchurch, and had notified the congregation that we'd be appreciative of spending the holiday at the synagogue there. Little did we know just how happy the small congregation was to learn of our impending arrival, for once there, we were warmly greeted by the quite elderly Rabbi who informed Rabbi Stampfer that he would appreciate it if he would do the Megillah reading, something they had not had in recent years.

So we quickly pooled all our caps and hats, and Rabbi, in his own inimitable fashion, donned



*Stampfer and Menashe families in Israel, 1967*

each to represent the major Purim characters, treating us all to the most memorable of Megillah readings, one filled with joy and punctuated with lots of laughter.

Our visit to Belmonte, Portugal was of quite a different nature. Having visited Belmonte twice, Rabbi had already established a relationship with the small group of crypto-Jews who lived there, and whose ancestors had fled the Inquisition centuries earlier, and were now living somewhat isolated lives from the outer Jewish world. The "congregation" welcomed us with open arms and generously shared their meals with us, and the manner, at that time, in which they still worshipped (going down trap doors to light Shabbat candles) and excitedly telling us of their plans for building a synagogue, a dream that we saw realized when we re-visited the community some years later with a group of Neveh Shalom congregants.

Although it is impossible to measure the impact of these visits on the participants in those travels, it is our fondest hope that they, like we, have been able to retain, cherish, and feel blessed for the opportunities that were offered to all of us, to have been able to "travel with Rabbi."



# Rabbi Stampfer: Of Politics and Politicians

By Arden Shenker

From the bima and in his institutional rabbinic role, Rabbi Stampfer abjured politics and politicians. Political issues, however, were another matter; on those he never failed to take a stand. His personality and stature led many of Oregon's politicians to share their admiration of one they called a "prominent" Jewish leader, activist and spokesperson.

It was natural that his congregation would host the prominent local and national politicians of our times. When Senator Robert Kennedy, campaigning for the presidency, stopped in Portland, Rabbi Stampfer introduced the senator to a capacity crowd at Neveh Shalom; Kennedy gave such a stirring explication of U.S. and Israel interconnectedness, that some say it led to his assassination shortly thereafter in Los Angeles.



Rabbi Stampfer shaking hands with then Senator Mark Hatfield

leading the governor to speak to the effort to increase giving by noting "Baptists always pass the hat twice."

Another Oregon Governor, Ted Kulongoski, spoke at Neveh Shalom when Rabbi Stampfer was away, leading the governor to complain that he missed being with the rabbi with

whom the governor had shared many meaningful experiences.

When Les AuCoin was the senior member of the Oregon congressional delegation he spoke (and later wrote) ad-

miringly of Rabbi Stampfer's communal leadership and prominence. Later, when Ron Wyden became the senior member of the Oregon delegation, he too commented on the roots dug deeply into the Jewish communal soil, which he said grew to nourish him personally.

When invited to the Oregon Legislative Assembly to give an invocation, Rabbi Stampfer wrestled with crossing the line between religion and the state. He consulted with Jewish communal representatives and institutional scholars and ultimately chose to accept the invitation. He delivered a non-denominational prayer for the legislature. He may not have realized that it was his persona, not his prayers, that had been invited. His remarks were extremely well received.

Many of the rabbi's congregants, family, fellow Jewish community leaders, local and national, found strong relationships with elected and appointed officials. He regarded these folks as his—and the Jewish community's—"ambassadors." They seldom were ministers plenipotentiary, but they often were envoys extraordinary—the two roles of an ambassador. Rabbi Stampfer derived substantial satisfaction from the representations to and from these envoys. They were engaged in the Jewish people's business, he emphasized, and that was a sacred task.

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***"He may not have realized that it was his persona, not his prayers, that had been invited. His remarks were extremely well received."***

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When Governor Mark Hatfield was a keynote speaker at the annual fundraising appeal for the University of Judaism (now American Jewish University), his affection for the rabbi was palpable,

# The Institutions Rabbi Stampfer Built

**By Judy Margles**

*Rabbi Stampfer, z"l founded institutions that have served the region's Jewish community for decades. Below are just a select few that capture the scope of his influence.*

## Camp Solomon Schechter



*Gimmel session staff, Camp Solomon Schechter, 1972*



*Rabbi and Goldie Stampfer, z"l, in front of their living quarters on Whidbey Island, 2004*

The year after becoming rabbi of Congregation Neveh Shalom, Rabbi Stampfer fulfilled his dream to create a summer camp for Jewish teens. Goldie was equally enthusiastic and, together with Rabbi Joseph Wagner from Seattle, in 1956 they offered the first session of camp in a rundown motel north of Seattle. Twenty-five high school students from Portland and Seattle attended for a summer week filled with sports, Jewish learning, and kosher food. Three years later a more permanent home was found on Whidbey Island and the program expanded to a more encompassing summer experience. In 1968, the camp moved to its current location near Olympia. For years, Rabbi and Goldie spent as much time at camp as they could. Even as he faced declining health, Rabbi Stampfer always counted his trip to Camp Solomon Schechter as the highlight of his summer.

## Jewish Historical Society of Oregon



*Shirley Tanzer interviewing Dora Levine for the JHSO Oral History Project*

The Jewish Historical Society of Oregon (JHSO) was founded by Rabbi Stampfer and other community leaders in 1974 “to foster and encourage research into the history of Oregon Jewry.” Thus was the beginning of the archives of Oregon Jewish families and individuals and agencies and businesses. In 1987, JHSO published *The Jews of Oregon*, by Steve Lowenstein. Under the direction of Shirley Tanzer, the JHSO collected over 150 oral history interviews of Jews recalling life in south Portland before urban renewal decimated south Portland in the 1960s. There were also interviews done with Holocaust survivors. These collections became the core of the archival collection at the Oregon Jewish Museum when – with Rabbi Stampfer’s blessing – the two organizations merged in 1995.



## Oregon Holocaust Resource Center



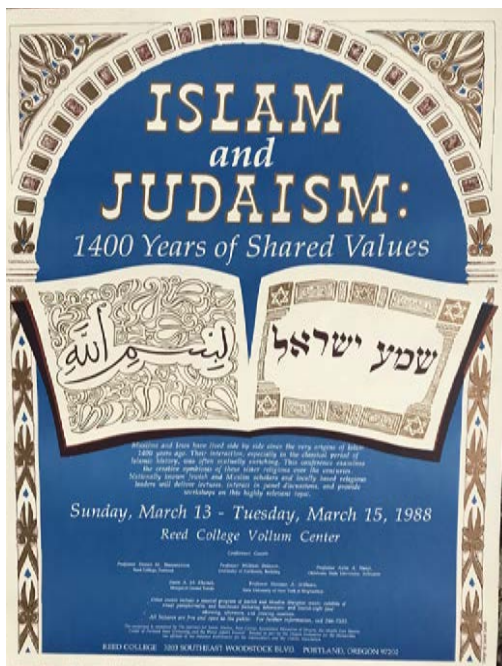
Rabbi Stampfer with Holocaust survivor Jakob Kryszek, z"l



Oregon Holocaust Memorial, Washington Park, Portland

The Oregon Holocaust Resource Center (OHRC), established by Rabbi Stampfer in 1983, supported and promoted Holocaust education to teachers, students, and Oregon and southwestern Washington audiences. The OHRC created and supplied teaching resources and curriculum materials, managed a repository for documents, photographs, letters, and other Holocaust artifacts of survivors and their families, and sponsored the Holocaust Speakers' Bureau. In 2004, the Oregon Holocaust Memorial opened in Portland's Washington Park. When the Oregon Jewish Museum and OHRC started talks about a merger in 2012, Rabbi Stampfer's wise counsel proved to be essential. The merger was completed two years later.

## Institute for Judaic Studies



IJS conference, Islam and Judaism, 1400 Years of Shared Values, March 15, 1966

Together with Jewish community leaders, Rabbi Stampfer created the Institute for Judaic Studies (IJS) in 1983. Presidents of Reed College, Lewis and Clark College, and Portland State University supported the Institute's primary goal to establish chairs in Judaic Studies at Oregon colleges and universities. By 2011, IJS helped support four full-time academic positions at PSU.

IJS also offered conferences featuring world renowned scholars, scholar-in-residence programs and Elderhostel. IJS served the wider community as well: the Portland Jewish Film Festival, offered in partnership with the Northwest Film Center, began in 1992; in 1984, IJS launched a biennial Law and Ethics Conference with Lewis and Clark Law School, named for the late Jonathan Newman; the Writers and Scholars Lecture Series began in 1998; and in 2007 the first Weekend in Quest was held at the Oregon coast.

The Institute also created the Rabbi Joshua Stampfer Community Enrichment Award to honor those who made a lasting contribution to the cultural life of the Oregon Jewish community. In 2002, Rabbi Stampfer was the first recipient of the award, which today is sponsored by Congregation Neveh Shalom. IJS is currently in the process of dissolution and OJMCHC will soon steward the film festival and Weekend in Quest.

**Continue on next page**

## **Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education**



*Rabbi Stampfer dances at the opening of "The Jews of Greece," OJM's first exhibition, 1990*



*Rabbi Stampfer in his office examining papers to donate to the OJMCHC archives, 2019*

In 1989, Rabbi Joshua Stampfer led a community conversation concerning the need for a museum focused on Jewish cultural life. The community members that gathered for that conversation became the founding board of the Oregon Jewish Museum (OJM). Over the next decade the museum "without walls" brought exhibitions of Jewish interest to Portland, hosted at a variety of area venues. A 1995 merger with the Jewish Historical Society of Oregon resulted in OJM taking stewardship of the archival materials, artifacts, photographs, and oral history interviews the organization began collecting in 1974.

In 1999 the museum moved into its first public space at Montgomery Park, with modest room for exhibitions and collections storage. As the need for a more permanent space became urgent, OJM relocated in 2000 to a storefront in Old Town. Nine years later as membership and community attendance continued to grow, OJM moved to a much larger building in NW Portland. In 2014 OJM merged with the Oregon Holocaust Resource Center, taking on an expanded mission as the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education (OJMCHC). In 2017, OJMCHC purchased a permanent home on the NW Park Blocks. From its humble start OJMCHC has become a vital part of Portland's cultural landscape.

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## **And Many More**

In addition to the five organizations featured above, Rabbi Stampfer was also involved in creating Hillel Academy, predecessor to Portland Jewish Academy in 1961, the Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East in 1989, and the Society for Crypto Jews in 1991.

These and all of the other institutions that Rabbi Stampfer was involved with, including his congregation of Neveh Shalom, have been deeply influenced by his unique perspectives, interests, dedication, generosity, and love. We are forever grateful.



*Rabbi Stampfer hanging a mezuzah on the door frame of the Stampfer Chapel at Congregation Neveh Shalom, 2008*



# Stories from Our Community

After Rabbi Stampfer's passing, the editorial staff of this issue put out a call for people's personal memories and stories about him. We received many sweet sharings and have sent all that we received to the family. We have included a select number of these stories, which you can find over the next three pages. Thank you and we hope you enjoy these stories of this remarkable man.



## Beverly Eastern: "We'll Try Again Next Year"

When I was Sisterhood president, I was asked to hold the Torah for Yom Kippur. A few of the male congregants objected, so I was not allowed. I remember Rabbi saying "Beverly, we will try again next year." And we did. I was the first woman to hold the Torah.

## Lisa Lieberman: A Compassionate Person

Here is my most powerful memory of Rabbi Stampfer. Many years ago my brother, who suffered with mental illness, took his own life. Since several family members were buried at Neveh Zedek, my dear Aunt Gladys, of blessed memory asked Rabbi Stampfer if my brother could be buried in Neveh Zedek, given the way he had died. Without hesitation,

his poignant and precious response was, "Gladys, hasn't he suffered enough?" I will never forget the deep compassion embedded in that statement.

## Selma Duckler: IJS and a Remarkable Mensch

I was very closely involved with Rabbi Stampfer at the very beginning of the Institute for Judaic Studies. I chaired the first program, which launched the Institute as an organization. It was on Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and was held at the University of Portland. I chaired the programs for many years. I became the third president of the Institute, and the first woman president. I remained very involved with the programming for at least three or more decades after that, and Rabbi Stampfer was my close personal friend for close to 50 years until his death.

In those early years, I met daily with Josh, or if we couldn't meet we talked on the phone. The energy level was very high. I wanted to do a program on Freud and he suggested we do it as a dual: Theodore Herzl and Sigmund Freud, as they both lived in Vienna at the same time. I don't believe they knew each other, probably not; but they both were singularly important to Judaism. I suggested a Viennese Ball as a fundraiser for that program.... I had never heard of a German club in Portland

but there was one, a large one. When they heard of this, they bought tickets en masse and came in elaborate period costumes, top hats, ball gowns and magnificent jewelry, with long white gloves for the ladies. It made the newspapers. Freud and Herzl would never have been invited to a Viennese ball in their native city, so it gave me great satisfaction to have the German club buy so many expensive tickets and deck themselves in these beautiful costumes for an activity of the Institute for Judaic Studies.

I read a book by Jacob Timmerman, *Prisoner Without a Name*, that was very moving to me. In Argentina's dark years, Timmerman, a journalist and a Jew, had been imprisoned. This book is about his feelings of injustice. There are chapters in which he attacked the war in Lebanon. I called Josh and said I thought we should bring Timmerman out to speak and I gave him the book. He read the book and called me back. He was very firm. He did not want Timmerman. He didn't want to bring him here or his



Rabbi Stampfer surrounded by his children: Meir, Elana, Nechama, and Shaul

ideas. Josh knew I never crossed him. I was very easy about it. We always had many ideas for programs. I forgot about it. So much was going on and I frequently gave him many books to read. Many months later, he called me one evening. He said "Selma, I was mistaken. You were right. We should have had Timmerman." I said, "Josh, I don't mind at all. I have forgotten about it. You didn't need to call about this." "No," he said, "It is very important to me that I tell you. You were right and I was wrong and I have changed my mind." I could not get that out of my mind. He was a revered Rabbi. I was his friend and co-worker. He didn't have to explain to me. I thought what a remarkable mensch he is. Rarely does a great person say they are wrong and have the courage to announce their change of mind.

I saw him about two weeks before his death. I was coming to his home to spend several hours talking about how we both felt about life. He was on a drive for me to write my life story and he would be the editor. This was his plan. We talked about Israel. I said to Josh, "I think it is insoluble." He said, "No, Selma. All things are solvable. There is resolution for everything. But sometimes it isn't the solution you and I want." Maybe he was talking about Israel, and maybe he was talking about a coming death. We kissed goodbye. I didn't realize it was really goodbye.



### Jeffrey Druckman: Two Exceptional Qualities

My family belonged to Neveh Shalom from the early 1980s until about a year after Rabbi Stampfer's retirement. I have many memories of Rabbi Stampfer's decency and kindness. I would like to share two. First was his extraordinary ability to recognize an individual's very best quality. Whether he was telling the congregation about a young man or woman who had just become a bar or bat mitzvah, introducing a speaker, or honoring a congregant, he seemed always able to ferret out the person's strongest point and call attention to it. In doing so, he made us better people. Second was something that is a true hallmark of *menschlichkeit*: how he took pleasure in the joy and accomplishment of others. Rabbi Stampfer had many other exceptional qualities, but these two alone make for a life well lived.

### Erica Goldman: Letter to Rabbi Stampfer (after Goldie's death)

Dear Rabbi Stampfer,

Ever since Goldie passed away I've been thinking about you and the influence you've had on the direction my life has taken. I wanted to thank you for it, and so will offer a few words of deep appreciation for what you've done for me.

When you started formulating plans for the Institute, you called me in and asked if I would teach a college course on Jewish music. I believe my reply was "Yes, but I'll have to learn something about it first!" The invitation came at a momentous time – I had just completed my doctorate, Micah was born, and there was no prospect of a teaching job at any



of the local colleges/universities.... So I gained both academic and practical knowledge. And you gave me opportunities to further that knowledge in other teaching venues, such as the Jewish Elderhostel programs.

That initial practical knowledge was a portal into the world of *tefillah* and Torah study. It gave me access to a world I had long wanted to enter but did not have the skills nor the knowledge.

Obviously everything I've done since, except for a brief stint in academic general music, has been the result of your "tapping me" for this work. Teaching at PJA, the many years of bar and bat mitzvah instruction, davening and leyning at Neveh Shalom and at the Women's Tefillah, and all of the adult education, have their roots in the initial work I did to justify your belief in my ability and competence.

This recognition of human potential is one of your many legacies. I saw it in operation during the years we were at Neveh Shalom, and it is obviously one of the reasons you have been such a successful builder of institutions. It is a marvelous trait; it enlarges others and makes them want to help and be involved.





You are a fount of wisdom, good cheer, and *Ahavat Yisrael* [Love of the People of Israel]. But I particularly wish to thank you for the role you played in my life, which affected not only me, of course, but my family, and all for the good.

With gratitude and fondness, Erica

### **Marty and Sharyn Schneiderman: "Say it Everyday"**

When talking about life's blessings, Rabbi Stampfer said, "Say *Modeh Ani* every day!" And, we do, always thinking of him!

### **Elaine Cogan: Producing a New Prayer Book**

It began inauspiciously one day when I asked the Rabbi if we could replace our well-used prayer book with one that was gender-neutral and written in language more in keeping with today's worshippers. He answered that that was a good idea but none existed. "So, let's just write our own," he suggested, with no hesitation.

Thus began a year of intense activity. I was chair of a small committee of interested congregants that met with the Rabbi every Monday evening. We set as our goal to review the entire text in our current prayer book and translate each word and phrase to be more in keeping with current thought while being faithful

to the Hebrew. Rabbi worked beside us the entire time. Naturally, he had the final word on the Hebrew translation, but he didn't flaunt his knowledge. There were several Hebrew scholars in our group who didn't hesitate to suggest other ways to look at the text, and after some discussion, there were times when the Rabbi accepted their translations. The new prayer book was launched in 1989, winning positive acceptance from the congregants and used until this year.

I believe this is a sterling example of the Rabbi willing to work with lay people while not being overbearing with his knowledge or position.

### **Howard Shapiro: Healing Soup**

Many years ago after Shabbat services Rabbi Stampfer and Goldie would ask me to go back to the house with them where Goldie would give me a large bowl of chicken soup to take back to my wife who had a stroke! And the act was often repeated!

### **Norman Chusid: "Not bad..."**

I was a high school junior in January, 1972 and was the first team goalie on the Cleveland High School soccer team. The conflict was we played or practiced almost every Sunday at 11 AM.

I was never a great "Sunday School" student. I attended because my parents told me I had to and I enjoyed the social element. I decided that I would go talk to Rabbi Stampfer about no longer attending on Sundays.

I went into his office Sunday after classes ended and explained my situation. He got up and asked me to follow him and we went in to the sanctuary. We walked up the steps to the ark and he then turned towards the pews and waved his arm as he questioned "You are telling me that you are going to give all this up to play soccer?"

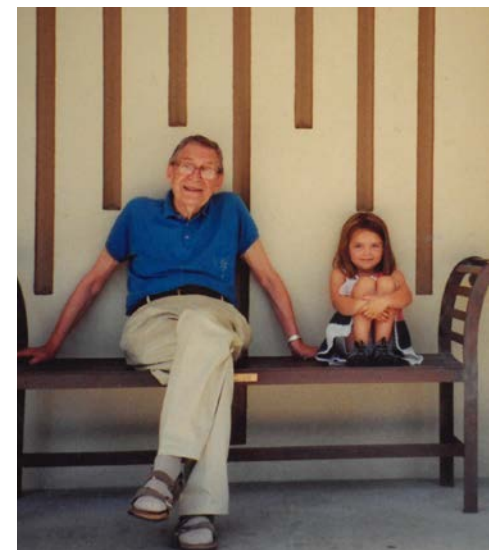
I was a typical stubborn, headstrong high school student and felt I was being

pressured. I answered the Rabbi's question "Guess you won't be seeing me anymore on Sundays."

Fast forward to December 15, 1981 and the *brit milah* of my wife Kathy's and my first son, Bradley. Rabbi Stampfer did the ceremony and Dr. Larry Veltman did the circumcision. As he was leaving a while later, I went up to thank him for his assistance. He looked around the room at all of Kathy and my family and friends and said with a smile "I guess you turned out pretty well...for a religious school dropout."

It kind of became a private joke between us. I've been the Rosh Hashanah *Hagbah* for many years. When I would see him at the conclusion of services, he would shake my hand and say "Yasher Koach... not bad for a religious school dropout."

About a year or so ago I saw Rabbi Stampfer at a CNS event. I went over to say hello and wish him well. After a few minutes of talk, the Rabbi with the wonderful memory said "I seem to remember that you quit religious school to play high school soccer. How did that end up?" I was amazed that he remembered as it was almost 50 years ago. I told him that we won the Oregon state championship. Then we both said at almost the same time, "Not bad...for a religious school dropout."



*Rabbi Stampfer with granddaughter,  
Tali Emlen*

# Counting the Ways Rabbi Stampfer Served our Congregation

By Donna Jackson

**H**ow do you count the many ways and days Rabbi Stampfer served our Congregation? Well, to begin with, he was a Rabbi at Neveh Shalom for 66 years, that's 792 months, approximately 289,080 days, and an amazing number of Shabbats.

Always generous, he shared those Shabbats with over 1000 Bar and Bat Mitzvah students while he was senior rabbi. He encouraged young men and women in the Congregation to seek the rabbinate, encouraged an active program of Judaic studies at Portland

State University and, oh yes, there's that place up north called Camp Solomon Schechter.

Of course, he also presided at baby namings and *britot milah* (ritual circumcision). He always had time to set eager mothers straight. When one mother was reciting the full menu for her son's *pidyon haben* (redemption of the 1st born son) he reminded her that all she really needed was wine for *Kiddush* and a 30-day-old Jewish baby boy.

His first wedding in Portland was Beulah Menashe and Sam Schaffer, z"l on June 15, 1953. The last wedding he par-

ticipated in was Beulah's great nephew Alex Menashe and Nadine Astrkahan, on September 8, 2019. Who can count the beautiful brides and nervous grooms he faced between those two dates? I wonder how he felt creating a marriage and all that it means.

There's no number on the Friday afternoon phone calls he made to those who had lost a loved one, just to say "Good Shabbos – I'm thinking of you."

We can talk about the number of his accomplishments, but there's no way you can count the number of lives he has touched.





# A Day in the Hospital

By Shaul Stampfer

Years ago, my father used to go every Friday morning to visit all of the Jews who were in the Portland hospitals. This was a time where there were fewer Jews in Portland – and when privacy practices were different. He would get a list at the entrance of all the hospitalized individuals who had declared their religion as “Jewish” and he would visit them, one by one. They were short visits but he tried to encourage them with a few words and wish them a good Shabbat. Over the years, he developed good relations with the staff of the hospitals and many of the nurses and doctors knew him and would greet him. My father visited all of the Jews, whether or not they were members of Ahavai Shalom (this was before Neveh Shalom) or not. If someone was in the hospital they were in need of a warm word and they got it, whether or not they were on a membership list.

One Friday, he came to a hospital – I don’t remember which – and he went through the usual routine of getting a list and going from room to room. At one point he came to a room, entered it and was warmly greeted by the nurse who was inside. He did not recognize the patient, a middle-aged man, but as usual, my father introduced himself and asked how he was doing. The patient also did not recognize my father but he noted the warm welcome that



Rabbi Stampfer with son Shaul

the nurse gave him and concluded that he was somebody important. Therefore, when he heard the question, he began to give a very detailed and precise description about how every part of his

body felt. He began with his head and continued, slowly, to his toes. My father who was usually good at navigating a conversation, could not stop him. The patient was totally intent on providing an exact picture of how he felt. Clearly, he thought that my father was a special-

ist who was called in to provide an expert analysis.

Finally, with his description of how his feet felt, he came to an end. At that point, he looked up to my father and said: “Well, what can you do for me?” This was one of those rare moments where my father was caught off guard. Without giving it a second thought, he replied: “Well, we can say some Psalms.”

The patient turned white and said with a pleading voice “Doc, please, please – you have to do something for me.” As my father said, he was lucky that the patient was not hospitalized with a bad heart because that

would have been the end. My father explained what were the areas of his competence and the conversation ended on a friendly note. The next week he was not there and apparently he was discharged and went home happily. He probably forgot about the conversation in a matter of days. My father did not. That was a mistake that he did not repeat.

In looking back on this story, it says something about my father’s concern for the general

Jewish community beyond the circle of the synagogue, about the unexpected price of friendliness with staff people each of whom was an individual for him, and also the price of honesty. Actually, Psalms are not bad.

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***"It says something about my father's concern for the general Jewish community beyond the circle of the synagogue."***

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# A Generous Soul: The Rabbi Joshua Stampfer Education Fund

By Fred Rothstein

This past year, in April of 2019, the Congregation honored our dear Rabbi Stampfer, z"l on the occasion of his 70th year in the rabbinate. The program, entitled "Seven Decades of Rabbinic Impact: Honoring Rabbi Joshua Stampfer – His Life and Legacy," included several elements – all important to Rabbi... *tefillah* (prayer), letters and guests from his (and our) past, reflections and learning with community rabbis, a *D'var Torah* by Rabbi Stampfer that all who attended will long remember, and the establishment of the "Rabbi Joshua Stampfer Education Fund" here at Neveh Shalom.

The establishment of this fund was a particular priority for—and request by—Rabbi Stampfer. As a lifelong teacher, he believed strongly in continuing education for adults in general, and for our professional and lay leadership in particular. It was his goal that this fund would allow both staff and lay leaders to participate in professional development and lay

leadership training through attendance at conferences, seminars, webinars, access to speakers, etc. Rabbi Stampfer was convinced that participation in these sorts of experiences would strengthen our congregation and, by extension, the quality of Jewish life and community here in Portland.

The Stampfer Education Fund is already in use and fulfilling its mission and Rabbi Stampfer's vision. This past December, CNS had 11 delegates (seven lay leaders and four professionals) attend the USCJ Biennial Convention in Boston. Ideas and insights gained from our attendance in Boston are already being introduced here at CNS.

The continuing growth of the **Rabbi Joshua Stampfer Education Fund** will continue to provide new and enriching experiences for our staff and lay leaders, and certainly redound to the benefit of our *kehillah kedosha*, our sacred community here at Neveh Shalom.

**Neveh Shalom, along with the family, thank everyone for the generous contributions to all of the various funds in memory of Rabbi Stampfer, z"l**

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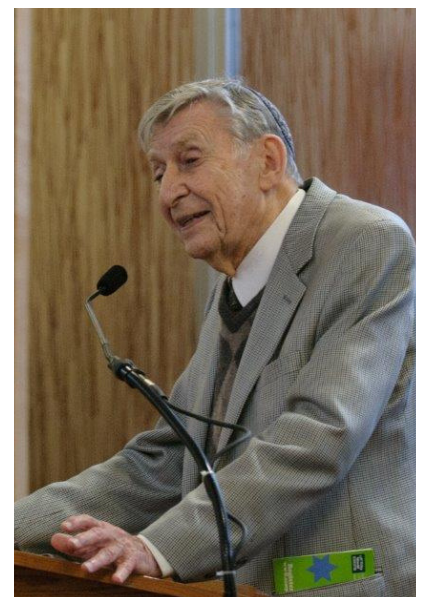
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