

THE
CHRONICLE
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*A Snapshot in time
October 7, 2023*

At the Edge of Something Old and Something New

Rabbi's Corner

By Rabbi David Kosak



October 7th wasn't just another chapter in the Hundred Year War between Israelis and Palestinians. Rather, it represents a powerful inflection point for the two largest contemporary Jewish communities: Israel, of course, as well as American Jewry. Each community is facing an existential threat, although the nature and scope of the danger is quite different. In America, antisemitism, which had already been spiking ever since the Tree of Life terror attack, rocketed at a rate never before seen in the history of the United States. Many American Jews who had not directly experienced antisemitism before suddenly have found it a regular part of their lives. This is part of a larger phenomenon with which the world's largest Diaspora community will need to contend, so we will explore this further on.

In Israel, the existential threat is both more direct and, in some ways, less dangerous than what American Jews are facing. Without a doubt, October 7th was the deadliest day in Jewish history since

the Holocaust and would land towards the top of the most deadly days in all of Jewish history. The gruesome barbarity of the attacks doesn't bear repeating here—most of us are too familiar with what transpired and will carry those scars with us for the foreseeable future. According to some reports, one third of Israelis are suffering PTSD on account of that Black Shabbat. Israelis, even the most dovish, have spoken about a veil being lifted from their eyes as they were forced to contend with who Hamas truly is. They also quickly discovered that Israel's vaunted deterrence had completely withered away, as missiles and rockets have also been launched from the Houthis in Yemen and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Not only does Israel feel compelled to remove Hamas from the map, but the government and military also feel an absolute existential requirement to re-establish deterrence in order to protect the nation from further assaults or escalations. In some ways, despite her initial failures of intelligence and preparedness, this is a task for which Israel has a long history to draw upon. Doing so has and will cost her in all ways imaginable: the court of public opinion; the hit to her economy, which has largely ground to a stop; the trauma of warfare; the loss of optimism for coexistence, and the blood of her soldiers. Yet chances are good that Israel will weather all of this.

In America, October 7th surfaced long-buried systemic problems of identity, as well as alerting us to the fact that in some respects, Jews are the only minority who don't deserve protection. That last sentiment shouldn't be blown out of proportion; in December, Congress called three university presidents before it to inquire how antisemitism on campus was being handled. Locally, we have been bolstered

by the fact that some of our long-term allies continued to stand by our side.

Despite this episodic support, there remain important ways in which Jews indeed are a minority undeserving of protection. How did this come to be, especially given that Jews have been at the forefront of civil rights for more than the past half century? Some of that blame must be hung at our door for choices the Jewish community made in its efforts to fit in and integrate. By and large, however, most of the responsibility rests on a crisis of critical thinking that produced the ideological overreach of the current progressive movement while at the same time dismantling a liberalism designed to raise all boats. Let's look at each of these briefly.

The Cost of Being Jewish in America

Jews came to America with the same goals as most immigrant communities, seeking religious freedom and economic opportunity. In those days, American national identity consisted of different ethnicities and religions struggling to get along so that they could practice their faith while working hard to get ahead. This is the source of American pluralism. Historically, it was peoplehood that most distinguished Jewish culture; America, however, held out the notion that all of its citizens were one people (*E Pluribus Unum*) who happened to have different religions and faiths. To fit in to this view, Jews began to emphasize their religious identity, like any other, despite the fact that most Jews of the period still viewed themselves through an ethnic lens. This is why the formal aspects of Judaism, such as *halakhah* and practice, didn't particu-

Continued on next page

larly animate the average Jew. You didn't need to *do* anything to be Jewish. As we successfully integrated, the markers of our ethnicity diminished, and Yiddish and old-world Judaism faded, to be replaced by the American catechism of freedom, equality, and democracy. This in turn led to the rise of *tikkun olam* in the 1960s and 1970s, which quickly became the dominant marker of Jewish identity, particularly as the role of religious identity began to decline in American cities. Other alternatives to Jewish identity, such as peoplehood, the religion itself, or genuine Jewish values that were at odds with those of our host country became less viable outside of the Orthodox world. With the rise of intermarriage and American social changes, endogamy itself came to be seen as racist by many Jews.

The Rise of the Academy in American Society

In the midst of this, the progressive ideology of the academy was reshaping America into two camps, one that was pure and the other impure, not unlike how the dissidents at Qumran divided the world into "children of light" and "children of darkness," as conveyed in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Under this conception, all oppressed people of color fell into the pure camp, while white people came to be seen as the impure oppressor class of colonizers. As a people with a long history of oppression, this model initially appealed to a great many Jews, even though it was actually an abnegation of so much Jewish history and experience. There was just one problem, alluded to above. Because Jews had relinquished their sense of ethnicity and peoplehood to make it in America, they came to be seen as white; Jews attempted to counter this by highlighting the existence of Jews of color, essentially buying into the new narrative. Yet Jews and Judaism have no specific color, as Israel, America, and countless Diaspora communities demonstrate.

As recent facts have revealed, that strategy to align ourselves as a people of

color, rather than our own unique ethnic identity and people, failed, so all the old antisemitic stereotypes have been given renewed breath. Zionism has now become a litmus test of purity, such that only a complete rejection of Israel's right to exist, as espoused by fringe groups like A Jewish Voice for Peace or Neturei Karta, will put an individual Jew back on the "right side of history."

At the Edge of Something Old and Something New

Students of history can find many precedents for the forces plaguing the American Jewish community today. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks of blessed memory once described how antisemitism is always framed by contrasting Judaism and Jewish lives with the dominant value system of a given time. When the world was organized around religion, in Christian Europe, Jews could be oppressed for standing on the wrong side of history. So too with capitalism, socialism, or nationalism. For this reason, in today's world it has become increasingly difficult to separate anti-Zionism from antisemitism.

What does this mean for the American Jewish community? For Portland? For Congregation Neveh Shalom? I am no

soothsayer and am loathe to make predictions. But forced with an unbearable binary choice between belonging to the camp of the pure or the impure, it is not unreasonable to imagine that this fundamental rupture in our over-identification with the modern notion of *tikkun olam* will cause some Jews to leave the fold entirely. Other Jews will find a renewed sense of meaning, purpose, and identity in venerable Jewish forms of peoplehood and ritual. Finally, because this fissure came to a head so suddenly and drastically, a majority of us will try to have our cake and eat it too, hoping that we can cling to a form of Jewish identity that has served us well for half a century, while adapting to the edge of our new era.

Because I fall squarely in the peoplehood camp, it is my hope that we can recognize the tremendous stress we are all under and maintain compassion for all flavors of Jews, even those who ultimately turn their backs on the community. As we recite on Erev Yom Kippur, *anu matirin l'hitpalel im ha'avaryanim*—we are permitted to pray with transgressors. In other words, in a world of Jewish peoplehood, there can be no binary choices. Life is never so simple, and the love of family must always remain stronger than our ideologies. That is how we will weather this inflection point.



Dead Sea Scrolls, manuscripts found near the Dead Sea Qumran Caves

HaTikvah, The Hope

Rabbi's Corner

By Rabbi Eve Posen

It is still October 8.” This was repeated by person after person I met when I went to Israel on a solidarity mission under the auspices of the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, from December 3-6, 2023. The purpose of the trip was to bear witness to the horror and atrocities committed by Hamas in the massacre of October 7, 2023, known as “The Black Shabbat.” From the moment we touched down at Ben Gurion Airport, it was clear that Israel has been changed forever.

Within two minutes of landing, the air-raid siren went off. That was just the beginning of the changes. If you’ve gone to Ben Gurion Airport, you know the chaos that usually greets you as you enter customs. This trip, we walked directly up to the agent, no lines in sight. On the road to Jerusalem the roads were eerily quiet; the national sound of Israel, the car horn, was not heard. Everyone was quiet and polite.

Our 2.5 days on the ground were filled from morning until late evening hearing from survivors and families of hostages, agencies that are helping internally displaced people, and political and military experts. The details and stories for that were included in my daily updates, housed at www.rabbieeve.com. What I want to share here are the lessons taken from the trip, lessons that can resonate and reverberate in our actions as one people, united.

“Spread waves of good.” Osnat Sharabi, the sister of Yossi and Eli who have been held hostage by Hamas, shared that she lives each day working toward the good. “I believe in good. I do acts of kindness with the prayer, the belief that ripples

will come into the world and bring my brothers home. Bring them ALL home.” So, please, let us all go start a wave of kindness.

From immense evil can come goodness. While Hamas and their actions on October 7 and beyond are the epitome of what evil can be, Israelis are a shining example of what good can look like. Some include United Hatzallah, whose volunteer medics go to every call to try to save the lives of those attacked. There are cities outside of the evacuation area that are not waiting for government funding to take in the evacuees, creating make-shift laundry rooms and kitchens, new wardrobes, and toys. I also saw the good. We have found the helpers, as Mr. Rogers said we would. The community of Israel has come together in strength and unity to make sure *Am Yisrael Chai*. The nation of Israel will live.

The community of Israel has come together in strength and unity.

“There is a creator.” We met with a 23-year-old survivor who was injured on his way home from shul on October 7 by a missile sent from Hamas to Israel. Had he and his sister remained on the side of the street they were walking on, they would not have survived. When asked



what he feels about those moments, he responded, “There is a creator because otherwise I wouldn’t be alive. A movement left or right and I would have been killed.” When faith can wane and questions of “Why me?” are so easy to ask, faith can buoy us through.

And finally, HaTikvah, the hope. While Israel might be in a never-ending October 8 moment today, there is work being done for the future. Conversations of rebuilding abound in communal spaces. A huge emphasis on mental healthcare can be seen throughout the country because to have a future, we must heal. There is hope.

Just before we boarded our bus to head to the airport, we gathered around an Israeli flag, blowing in the gentle wind, and sang HaTikvah. This is the hope that binds us together.

American Jewry and the Paradigm Shift

By Cantor Eyal Bitton

Cantor's Corner

October 7 shocked us. October 7 scared us. October 7 changed us.

American Jews used to believe that they were fully integrated in American society. October 7 changed that. American Jews not only believed they were fully integrated, but they also often saw themselves as privileged. October 7 changed that.

The October 7 massacre is the worst and most gruesome massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Additionally, we've witnessed many in the Western world turn against the Jewish state as well as against anyone who supports it—namely, Jews. We've witnessed the normalizing of anti-semitism. We've seen that so many of tomorrow's leaders view the genocide of Israel's Jews as an act of restorative justice.

The aftermath of October 7 has shocked us. The aftermath of October 7 has scared us. The aftermath of October 7 has changed us.

If we want future generations of Jews to thrive in this country, I believe that we need to focus on three areas.

1. We need to re-examine who our allies are. If we can ask Israelis to set aside differences with their enemies in order to make peace, why can't we ask that of ourselves? Why not build alliances with groups that have stood by us? Why not identify groups that have supported us? We can appreciate their support and foster friendships while acknowledging differences in ideology or politics. There are indeed Jewish groups that are taking this approach; I believe that that will benefit the Jewish people and Israel.

2. We should demand institutional change, particularly in academia and politically. Universities that tolerate intimidation of Jewish students or that tolerate calls for genocide of the Jews should be challenged at various levels: legislatively, financially, and politically. I see that happening already, so it's encouraging.

3. We should re-evaluate Jewish education in America. What American Jewry may have needed in the past is not necessarily what is needed in the future. We should seek to teach our youth to see themselves as a people, and as members of a proud nation with indigenous roots in our ancestral homeland, Israel.



The challenges are many, yes. But we don't live in Nazi-Germany; we live in the greatest democracy the world has ever known. We have friends in the political sphere, across the aisle, and from President Biden himself. The future of American Jewry has great promise—if we act, if we demand change, if we advocate for ourselves, if we stand together as a people. October 7 has changed us. May we remember that cursed day and wake to a blessed future. *Am Israel Chai.*

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To contact us with ideas, comments, or
to become a contributor:
brohr@nevehshalom.org

Subscriptions and member news:
news@nevehshalom.org

Membership inquiries:
mcaplan@nevehshalom.org

For a full staff list go to:
nevehshalom.org/staff

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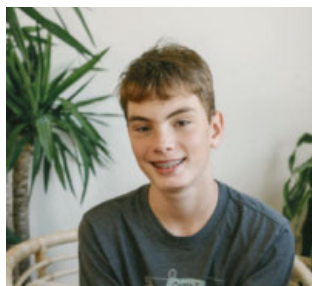
CONTRIBUTORS

Mel Berwin, Director of
Congregational Learning
Cantor Eyal Bitton
Marlene Edenzon, Executive Director
Rabbi David Kosak, Senior Rabbi
Rabbi Eve Posen, Associate Rabbi
Sara Sadfie
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Lia Yinhar

Congregation Neveh Shalom | 2900 SW
Peaceful Lane | Portland, OR 97239 |
(503) 246-8831 | nevehshalom.org



Upcoming B'nai Mitzvah



Benjamin Goldman-Levin | January 13

Benjamin Goldman-Levin is the son of Erica Goldman and Peter Levin and grandson of Robert (z"l) and Judith Goldman of Honolulu, Hawaii, and Robert and Bonita Levin of Chicago, Illinois. Benjamin's favorite thing in the world is baseball: playing it, watching it, reading about it. When he's not obsessing over ERAs, he enjoys video games with friends, crossword puzzles, pulling invasive ivy from Portland Parks, and playing with his small-but-mighty pup, Kona. Benjamin is a 7th grader at Oregon Episcopal School.



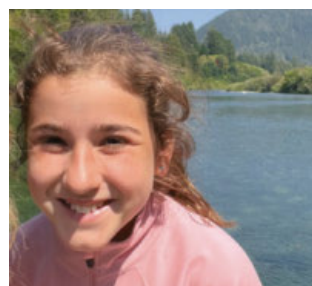
Julia Rapport | January 20

Julia Rapport is the daughter of Sarah Larkin and Joshua Rapport, younger sister to Ava Rapport, granddaughter to Judy and Les Holt, and Robin and Leon Rapport. Julia plays the alto saxophone and is on the dance team at her local studio where she spends most of her time. She is an 8th grader at Neil Armstrong Middle School.



Rony Dolev | January 27

Rony Dolev is the daughter of Eleanor and Eyal Dolev, amazing sister to Ido and Jonathan, and granddaughter to Nava and Arie Dolev (daughter and son of Holocaust survivors) and Yosef (Holocaust survivor) and Dodi Shahr of Israel. Rony is in the seventh grade at Skyline School. She is an avid and fierce saber fencer, leading the charts at PNW division and national levels. Rony participates in an entrepreneurship Israeli-American program and enjoys spending endless time with her many devoted friends. She loves going to BB Camp every summer, playing with and taking care of her dogs, and keeping the connection to her family in Israel strong.



Anna Rogosin | February 17

Anna Opal Rogosin is honored to be called to the Torah as daughter of Dr. Shane Rogosin and Dr. Elizabeth Super, little sister to Steven Rogosin, and granddaughter of Dr. Steven Roy Rogosin (z"l) and Cathy Rogosin, Sandy Resis, and Marlene and Jack Super. While a 7th grader at Sellwood Middle School, she is a fierce lover of animals (especially her dog, Frank Potato), and is a wild competitor in softball, soccer, and skiing.

Securing Our Community

President's Corner

By Marlene Edenzon, Executive Director

Today I reach out to you, driven by a shared sense of responsibility and unity that binds our community.

As a Jewish communal worker, I am acutely aware of the reality of potential harm to local Jewish institutions. I am often asked how I continue to get up each morning and go to work at a synagogue. I tell those who ask that I feel a mix of emotions—concern, fear, and perhaps even frustration that places of worship and community, which should be sanctuaries, are vulnerable to acts of hostility. It is often an emotionally challenging and sobering experience to prepare myself for the workday. My decision to persist in my role, despite these challenges, reflects a deep sense of responsibility and a belief in the resilience of community.

I find that it is essential to acknowledge and address these emotions. I seek support from colleagues, friends, and community members who understand the unique challenges I face. Sharing my experiences and feelings can help build a sense of solidarity and mutual understanding. Additionally, staying informed about the best practices in security measures and participating in relevant training can contribute to a greater sense of preparedness and empowerment.

Many of you have shared with me that you have had similar thoughts as you bring your children to school or participate in activities at Neveh Shalom. By continuing to show up and contribute to the well-being of the community, you are actively countering the intentions of those who seek to cause harm. Your dedication sends a powerful message that the strength of the community

transcends the challenges it faces.

Ultimately, your role as a member of Neveh Shalom and a member of the greater Jewish community is crucial, not only in times of adversity but also in fostering a sense of unity, support, and resilience within the community. Your commitment to these values is a testament to the enduring strength of our *Kehillah*.

On October 7th, the devastating attack orchestrated by Hamas shook the foundations of peace and security in Israel. The impact of this heinous act has reverberated across our community, leaving us with a heightened awareness of the need for enhanced security measures to protect our people, our institutions, and our way of life.

In response to these escalating threats, we are taking immediate action by establishing a Security Fund dedicated to bolstering the safety and resilience of our community. The fund will contribute to our ability to engage consultants for ongoing vulnerability assessments; updating and maintaining our security systems; hiring trained personnel, and fortifying our communal spaces. I have received requests for exact details about our security and surveillance procedures. The decision not to share the exact details of security and surveillance systems is grounded in the principle of maintaining the effectiveness of these measures and safeguarding the security of the protected areas.

Security Effectiveness: Revealing specific details about security measures could potentially compromise their effectiveness. When security protocols, camera placements, access points, or alarm sys-



tems are publicly disclosed, it provides potential bad actors with valuable information that they could exploit. Keeping these details confidential enhances the element of surprise and maintains the integrity of the security infrastructure.

Adaptability and Upgrades: Security threats evolve over time, so it is essential to be able to adapt and upgrade security measures in response to emerging challenges. Keeping specific details confidential allows for the flexibility to implement changes without broadcasting them to potential bad actors. This adaptability is crucial for staying ahead of evolving security risks.

While transparency is important in many aspects of community life, when it comes to security and surveillance systems, a balance must be struck between providing assurance to the community and safeguarding the effectiveness of protective measures. By adopting a policy of limited disclosure, we prioritize the safety and well-being of our community members and the integrity of our security infrastructure.

Continued on page 19

Jewish Education in this Moment in History

Mel's Corner

By Mel Berwin, Director of Congregational Learning

From the time of the October 7 attack on Israel on Simchat Torah, we have each faced heart-wrenching daily decisions: How much news do I consume? How much do I tell my kids? What's the balance between being informed and involved and losing our own ability to cope? How do we hold our concern for our loved ones in Israel, and the hostages who are still in captivity yet also live our lives? How do we balance our desire to speak up about our concern for safety given the increase in antisemitism in our communities? When and where is it worth challenging the anti-Israel or antisemitic rhetoric around us?

As an educator, I feel we are facing existential questions as well, relating to what, how, and when we teach about Israel, antisemitism, and Jewish identity. I have written before on how we imbue our curriculum with connection to the people, language, land, and history of Israel.

Here are two questions for our educational approach to teaching Jewish pride AND antisemitism in a post- October-7 world, and how I would respond:

How and when do we teach about antisemitism?

Unfortunately, I don't believe we have the option of ignoring antisemitism in our communities, which means we must teach about antisemitism from a Jewish communal perspective, create space for our children and families to discuss the antisemitism we're encountering, and support one another in responding to it. Over the past two months, we've offered programs and resources

for our K-12 families, partnering with Jewish Federation, ADL, and Stand With Us. Our goals are that children and parents alike learn to recognize and define antisemitism, know the options for responding when we encounter it, connect to other people and organizations for support, and learn the skills of emotional regulation and coping so that we can take care of ourselves even during these challenging times.

As David Hartman says in *A Different Light*: "The major question... is whether the Jewish people can develop an identity that will enable it to meet the outside world without feeling threatened or intimidated. The choice, hopefully, need not be ghettoization or assimilation."

How do we balance teaching fear-inducing subjects with Jewish pride and positive connection?

The week before Chanukah, our 6th grade families learned the "True Story of Chanukah." We gathered and I read from a lively, scripted version of the Chanukah story featuring the broad strokes of political history and in-fighting between Greeks, Hasidim (observant Jews), Hellenists (Greek-assimilating Jews), and Maccabees (Hasidim who distinguished themselves by being willing to fight for Jewish self-determination). At the end of each short explanation of the unfolding events of this narrative, I paused and asked: Which group do you most identify with, and why? As the story unfolds, our youth and parents alike align and re-align with the different factions: the conversation was thoughtful, passionate, and playful. Yes, we saw the con-



nection to our own time. And yes, we talked about where we would draw our own lines: where we stand up, where we identify more closely with our Jewish community, when we feel like hiding or blending in... yet the message is also that we have been here before, we will continue to survive, and we can enjoy ourselves while we're learning.

Yes, there are risks to identifying with the Jewish people. There is a reason that we ask potential converts to Judaism: "Are you sure you want to throw in your fate with ours?" Many times in our history, putting up a *mezuzah* or lighting a *Chanukiyah* in the window is an act of courage or even defiance. We can teach that too—there is strength in knowing that we have overcome and outlasted existential threats throughout our history.

But also saying Yes to celebrations, food, lighting our candles, and singing our songs! Yes, to our Hebrew language and the rich Jewish cultural traditions around the world. Yes, to attending

Continued on next page

Leading and Following

Cory's Corner

By Cory Willson, Foundation School Director

We are a strong Jewish community; however, October 7, 2023, changed us. We're used to spreading the message of unity, inclusion, courage, and connection to others. This is something we usually offer in an outward and measurable way to those we love, to those in need. Now we need to lean on these attributes ourselves as a community. This is what our community is doing now: we are all showing up for each other.

As a non-Jewish member of this community, I have always been grateful and blown away by the inclusion I have felt when I've needed it most. When we traversed the new Covid-19 terrain together, I had so many people to lean on. When I had wildfires at my doorstep, I had people offering to take in my children and me if needed. These acts of loving-kindness brought me to my knees to know that I belong to a community that cares, gives, and loves, regardless of spiritual likenesses or differences. I have not always had that in my life. It is something I brag about on tours with prospective families, something I hold near and dear to my heart. "If you want your child and family to be a part of a strong and beautiful community, you've come to the right place," I've been heard saying on many a tour. Most families respond by stating how they can feel it in the building.

When the terrors of October 7th unfolded, I immediately knew that I had an opportunity to return all that has been given to me here. Our people need a safe place to be Jewish, surrounded by ritual, and not to have to explain anything. I have taken seriously the ways in which I can create that, and the ways in which we can do this together. I also realized that I wasn't sure how to do that because there was no training for this moment in history. I did not panic, though. Instead, I began to think about *Kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh* (community responsibility). I have heard it said that each of us must act and inspire others to create a community in which we can all take pride. I looked into the eyes of my Jewish and Israeli educators and community members. I saw and felt their pain because the connection between us cannot be denied. They showed me what they needed to be able to feel safe, heard, and cared for. I followed them and their wisdom. I became a listener and a speaker, a student and a teacher as I watched my colleagues do the same.

Together we have created a space where Jewish and non-Jewish members can see and hear each other with compassion. We have created a space where those who need this are held up by those who can do the holding. I think sometimes about how the children show us

this naturally every day, how we adults also naturally choose community over division, and how leaders could learn so much from our efforts.

This year we took on the synagogue-wide theme of Lev Shalem. I cannot think of a better example of loving with your whole heart than the acts of love I have seen during this trying and horrible time. Everyone has shown up with their whole heart, willing to listen and act as one. The way in which we normally see differences in each other has dissolved as we have all pulled strength and support from each other.



Jewish Education *Continued from previous page*

b'nai mitzvah and feeling pride in what our kids learn and lead.

The last thing we want in our Jewish

education program is to instill a sense of doom and gloom about being Jewish. The experience of *being* and *doing* Jewish should provide us all with a strong

sense of pride and groundedness in who we are, the people and history we belong to, and the traditions that bring meaning and community into our lives.

My Grandfather, October 7, and Me

By Lia Yinhar

My grandfather was a Holocaust survivor. I grew up hearing his stories from a very young age. It was never sad or scary; he always made a point of sharing “funny” memories, odd moments that held him up or kept him alive.

He did not believe in God. “What God would let such evil exist,” he’d say, and I’d answer, “It’s OK Saba, I’ll believe for you.” Then he would smile, and his eyes would spark for a moment. As a spiritual person to this day, I want to know in my heart that I’ll always believe, even for those who simply can’t. My grandfather’s motto was always, “Find the good,” but behind those soft eyes, the pain lived on. He’d warn that such a thing as the Holocaust could repeat itself. “Hatred doesn’t just vanish,” he’d say.

My grandfather passed away at age 95, four years ago, on October 7.

I grew up religious. I was taught to trust in God, love, and respect, and most of all

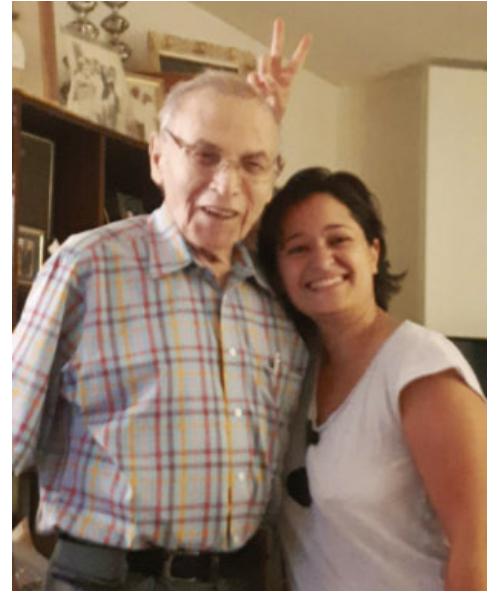
to have faith, even when it gets so very dark. Since my family back home keeps Shabbat, I couldn’t contact them when I heard about the terrorist invasion. I just had to sit with it. As I lit a candle for my Saba, I found myself lighting another one and another.

I could hear my grandfather’s words: “It could happen again.” There was a lot of pain and I felt it. It was weakening me: it was as if I could feel the mothers begging, the women hurting, the kids screaming. I felt it all. So I sat with it, in it, breathing, overcoming.

Then the guilt took hold of me. How dare I feel safe and drink my morning cup of coffee while my people are bleeding? How fast can I get there? How can I make sure they know I’m with them, fighting, and mourning with them? They need to know that I’m feeling everything with them. I felt helpless.

My brothers were drafted, my dear friends waiting to hear about their loved ones. I searched inward. Throughout the years my yoga practice became not just a tool that grounded me, but one that also reminds me how to breathe in moments like these. My meditation and mindfulness practice are focused on letting go of anger and fear of what I cannot control to find purpose through the pain. It did not fail me now.

My connection to Judaism growing up in Israel was tribal and spiritual. I felt and knew there were people that hated me and wanted me gone, dead, but the strength of our nation made me feel safe. I don’t



Lia with her grandfather

pray from a Siddur or prayer book; I pray silently all the time. I light candles and they connect me to my home, to my people.

Do I take pride in being Jewish? Am I different because of it? I wouldn’t go so far. I get to pass on a gift, a light to my children. We share our ancestors’ stories and create our own so that one day they can be told as well that we’re part of something bigger.

I don’t feel hatred towards anyone or anything. It’s as if I have a shield around my heart. The secret to my inner peace has always been to find my people, stay connected, be part of a community, and grow, grow, grow.

I’ve learned a lot about myself since October 7. Mostly I learned that I’ve filled my life with such amazing people since I moved here. The support, love, compassion, and strength I received from my people has shown me that while I still call Israel home, I’m in the right place at the right time and I’m very grateful.



Lia and her family

An Israel-Shaped Hole in My Heart

By Emily Yeomans

I have been to Israel only once.

In 2011, my dad made Aliyah. It was his life's dream to fill an Israel-shaped hole in his heart by returning to our ancestral homeland and devoting his time to studying Torah in the mystical city of Tzfat. At the time, I could not fathom how any parent could abandon their children and grandchildren for the sake of devoting oneself to Torah. It seemed an antiquated, idealistic notion that left my secular Jewish family with deep emotional wounds.

Each spring, my dad would visit us. First, he would go to Yuma, Arizona for several weeks to watch the wheat fields used to make Passover matzo, which was a great honor for him. When he was done, he would fly to Portland for a few days; then, he was off until the next year.

Year after year, I expressed my desire to visit him in Israel. But year after year, life got in the way. Too expensive, another baby on the way, buying a new home, Covid. "Maybe next year," I'd say, wishing he'd regret his decision to leave us and move home. Couldn't he see we were more important than Israel?

In March 2022, I finally made it to Israel. Just two months earlier, my dad had died unexpectedly in his sleep. Although he was gone, I felt I needed to experience the Israel he loved so dearly. My solo visit was fragmented, lonely, and deeply emotional. I thought I would feel a magnetic pull of energy while there, the same one he had felt his whole life—but I didn't.

On the morning of October 7th, something deep inside my soul shifted. When I woke up that morning and saw the first



Emily at the Kotel in Israel

brutal headlines, I felt something unfamiliar. It was an Israel-shaped hole in my heart. My soul longed for Israel in a way I'd never known. I desperately wanted to be there at that moment, with my people, wrapping our arms around each other in a soulful embrace that required no words.

All at once, I felt fiercely protective of the land I had visited only a single time in my 43 years. I understood I was part of a global Jewish family that could never be unbound and that our strength as Jews, united together, is powerful and infinite.

And I *finally* understood the magnetic pull that Israel had had on my dad and why he *had* to make Aliyah, even at the expense of our relationship. In that moment, I realized being Jewish means making sacrifices greater than your-

self to defend everything you love, and could ever love, for all eternity so that it can continue existing.

In this excruciatingly bittersweet time, we go to work each day pretending not to be affected by the news. We refresh the news constantly. We wipe our tears to attend Zoom meetings. We say our week is going well. We smile, as if it's a regular day. But when we cross paths with a fellow Jew, we give each other a knowing nod and instantly feel a spark of solidarity in our souls. Because deep down, we are one. We put aside our differences. And we innately know, like our ancestors who endured so much before us, we *will* get through this, even stronger than before. Israel's heart will beat in synchronicity with our own hearts forever, filling a hole that maybe we didn't know existed until October 7th.

No Words... Yet

By Emily Silverman

As I write this, I am sitting at a pool on the beach in Cancun, Mexico. We're here for a family vacation that we planned long before October 7, long before we could ever have imagined how necessary and welcome a ten-day vacation to the tropics might be for our family. We're also here visiting my brother-in-law and his family; they relocated to Cancun from Caracas ten years ago after the situation in Venezuela became untenable. My husband and his siblings were born and raised in Caracas, Venezuela, because their father and his family had been expelled from Egypt for being Jewish when my father-in-law, Sammy, was a teenager. Sammy was born and raised in Egypt after his grandparents were expelled from Odessa over a century ago. We used to joke that our family history was a typical "wandering Jews" narrative. Now that joke feels eerily prescient.

At dinner with friends the other night, someone asked us when we left Israel for the States; when we told him it's been nearly a decade, he marveled at how well our eldest seems to remember living there. That moment filled me with pride and deep sadness at once. My children have never lived in Israel. Now I worry they never will.

Israel is our home. It always was, and always will be. It is the only home we have. Our families are eternal immigrants; we have been wandering from country to country, unwelcome, often in mortal peril, for centuries. For years, Israel was a dream. Then it became a reality. Then it became our home. Now... what is it? Are we still immigrants? Or, like our parents and grandparents, are we now refugees? Where will we go if we can't go home?



Emily's husband, Ariel, and son, Ori, at a Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration in Portland, 2019

My conversations with friends and family in Israel since October 7 begin and end with the same sentence: there are no words. We have no words to describe what we are experiencing, what we are feeling, what we think. I have no words. I didn't know if I would be able to write this article. What can I say if I have no words?

In the absence of words, I see others around me turn to action. In Israel, the civilian war effort is enormous, efficient, and magnificent. It serves the recipients and the volunteers in equal measure. We Israelis have always been good about unifying in times of crisis. But today, those actions don't just serve to unify—my people are scared, they feel helpless. Acts of service are the drug that numbs the innate sensations of dread and powerlessness.

In the States, my community has galvanized on social media, fighting a fight I cannot even engage with or acknowl-

edge if I am to preserve my own sanity. They come together to support Israel in song, words, and community gatherings. They talk and talk. It gives them strength; it brings them together. I cannot bear it. I am not ready for words.

I am living through a moment of history. I cannot see what caused it. I cannot see where it leads. I see my friends and family building the fabric of the story that will one day be told. But I cannot see myself in this historical moment. I cannot tell my own story, at least not just yet. All I can do is look to my ancestors, to my forefathers, to the history they lived through, built, and created. I remember the stories of their courage, their hope, their persistence, and their faith. I prayed I would never need to draw on that level of faith. I never thought I would. I have no words, I have no thoughts, I do not know how the story ends. But somehow, by some miraculous inheritance, I have that faith.

Busy Advocates

By Sara Sadfie

The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland (JFGP), a vital part of Portland's Jewish community, encompasses areas as diverse as education, lobbying on climate change, aiding refugees, and providing information about events, services, and holiday celebrations in Portland's synagogues and community centers. After the horrific events on October 7, I wanted to know how, if at all, the events of that dark day had affected its work here.

Bob Horenstein and **Rachel Nelson** generously shared time out of their extremely busy schedules. Bob is the Director of Community Relations and Public Affairs, overseeing the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), made up of members of congregations, including Neveh Shalom, and other agencies to "discuss, debate, and advocate on issues of importance to the Jewish community," including the general community since there is interfaith dialogue. Rachel is the Director of Educational Initiatives and Associate Director of Community Relations. Besides her involvement with the JCRC, she works with Jewish educators in the community, including professional development, and manages "all of our great programs for the JFGP."

I asked if their responsibilities or workload had changed since October 7. Rachel remarked that they sometimes work together; since the volume of calls to JFGP has so dramatically increased, they respond separately now but receive help from community-wide volunteers. They rely on the community to reach out to them; it's difficult to keep track of so many fires breaking out at once. *See contact information below.*

Bob thought his responsibilities hadn't changed so much as "pivoted." "We are



Rachel and Bob leading a workshop

emphasizing more now the work we have been doing around antisemitism, which has really exploded." Eighty to ninety percent of their time is spent "working on combatting partisan advocacy that's being done by organizations that shouldn't even be taking a position on this conflict," often crossing into antisemitism.

He mentioned three teacher unions "that have taken positions—or worse." The Beaverton Education Association (BEA) posted a "one-sided, ill-informed statement," which elicited complaints, so they took it down. Rachel and he met with their leadership who were "apologetic and just didn't understand the implications of what they were doing."

The Portland Association of Teachers (PAT) was on strike, but picket lines included Palestinian flags or signs "accusing Israel of genocide." Both were in touch with its leadership about that and social media postings "promoting at least one of the pro-Palestinian rallies." They have been trying to meet with leadership, but as of this writing, no such meeting has been scheduled. PAT wrote a "balanced" call for a cease fire,

but that didn't matter since they were promoting pro-Palestinian rallies including "antisemitic chants or slogans."

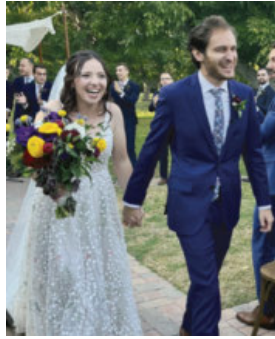
Rachel added a Portland climate group that JFGP has a working relationship with. That group had sent out a "very one-sided" statement not related to their climate work, taking sides against Israel. A week later, the board sent out a "quasi-apologetic" email, but two days later, a list of pro-Palestinian rallies was emailed. She held another meeting with the board: it turned out that a staff member had been responsible for the two emails. After meeting with the group's board, such emails stopped appearing.

Bob noted that the war has nothing to do with other group's agendas. Tualatin Hills Parks and Recreation District had a member sending out emails about pro-Palestinian rallies "even though their mission has nothing to do with this conflict" as those groups are supposed to be "welcoming and inclusive." They don't understand the "ripple effects," causing Jewish students, their parents, or other parts of the Jewish community, to feel unsafe.

Continued on page 19

Member News

Mazel tov to Kelly Gould, daughter of Valerie and Tom Gould of North Bend, Washington and Noam Fields-Meyer, who were married in Los Angeles on November 12. Noam is the grandson of **Lora and Jim (z"l) Meyer** and Sandey and Del Fields of Los Angeles. Kelly is the granddaughter of Miriam and Stan Zisser of San Diego and Elizabeth (z"l) and Hal (z"l) Gould of Los Angeles.



Mazel tov to Carter Daniel Honigstock who became a Bar Mitzvah at Beth El Synagogue in St. Louis Park, Minn. on October 28, 2023. Carter is a grandson of **Susan Honigstock and David Honigstock, z"l**. He is the son of Gerald Honigstock and Pamela Wolfe Honigstock. The theme of the weekend was a sports motif. Carter plays football, basketball, and baseball. He continues to be involved with his Kadima group, too.

Mazel tov to **Michelle Caplan and Marlene Edenzon**, who were featured in an article on the front page of the October 18, 2023, issue of the *Jewish Review*, sharing their breast cancer experience for breast cancer awareness.

Mazel tov to **Myra Siegel** whose picture appeared in the Nov. 1, 2023, issue of the *Jewish Review* as part of the Schmoozapalooza article.

Mel Berwin, CNS Educational Director was interviewed by **CNS member Dan Rothenberg** on his video podcast, *OneYou Coaching & Counseling*, on what she has learned from parenting kids with severe mental health challenges. The episode is called "Parenting with Radical Acceptance."

Mazel tov to **Lois and Arden Shenker**, who appeared in an article about them called "The Spice of Life" in the November 14, 2023 issue of *Moment Magazine*.

Mazel tov to **CNS Member and Staff, Brian Rohr**, who recently launched a poetry project that has garnered international attention. The **Stafford Challenge** is a commitment to writing a poem every day for a year, starting on January 17, 2024, inspired by the legendary poet William Stafford. Guest poets include Kim Stafford, Naomi Shihab Nye, Emmett Wheatfall, Lauren Camp, Jessica Jacobs, and more. More at: staffordchallenge.com



We are excited to announce **Cantor Eyal Bitton's** new podcast, *Proudly Jewish*, featuring special guests in conversation on Israel and Jewish identity. Find it on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and various other platforms.

Mazel tov to **Jenn Director Knudsen**, who helped edit and place an article in the November 21, 2023 issue of *The Forward*, written by one of Hungary's biggest literary lights, Miklós Vámos, and his translator, Ági Bori.

Yihi Zichram Baruch – Our condolences to CNS members who have recently lost loved ones.

We regret to inform you of the passing of Shelli Stern, z"l on Sunday, November 12, 2023 at the age of 74. She was predeceased by her parents, Sol Stern, z"l and Sylvia Stern Jackson, z"l, and **Hy Jackson, z"l**, and is survived by her stepmom **Myra Jackson**; sisters **Abby (Rick) Menashe** and **Suzi (Bob) Fiore**; stepbrothers **Todd Coblens, Ross, z"l (Sarah) Coblens**, and **Glen (Mia Birk) Coblens**; cousins **Tom (Mary Jane) Stern**, **Eve (Les Gutfreund) Stern**, and **Sharon (Steve Rallison) Stern**; and many nieces and nephews.

We regret to inform you of the passing of CNS member **Elizabeth Christine Feves, z"l**, on November 25 at the age

of 74. She is lovingly remembered by her husband, **Michael Feves**; her sister, **Victoria Leary**; her children, **Victor Feves, Leira (Rolando) Rodriguez, Margot (Adrian) Pearmine, Jordana (Ryan) Levenick**; and three grandchildren.

We regret to inform you of the passing of CNS member and past-president (1982-86) **Allan Jerome Sherman, z"l**, on December 5 at the age of 92. He is lovingly remembered by his wife, **Marjorie Sherman**; his children **Laura (Barry) Davis, Karen (Bill Wasserman) Sherman, Kenneth (Jennifer Strada) Sherman**, six grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.

Neveh Shalom Happenings

Please enjoy this sampling of what is being offered at Neveh Shalom. The best way to get the latest information is through our weekly eblasts. You can sign up at: news@nevehshalom.org. Please visit the website for links at: nevehshalom.org/calendar.

Young Adults (20's-30's) L'Chaim & Laughter Wed., Jan. 3, 7-9pm, EJC

Comedy & Cocktails w/ the Sklar Brothers. \$36.
jewishportland.regfox.com/lchaim-and-laughter

Sisterhood BIPOC meeting

Wed., Jan. 3, Feb. 7, 7-9pm, Zoom

Women of different backgrounds discuss questions of faith and confronting social justice issues. Contact: smallfryeterp@gmail.com

Shabbat on the Plaza in the Vestry

Fri., Jan. 5, 5:15pm, Vestry/Stampfer Chapel
Embrace the spirit of togetherness, comfort, and fun as we gather for Shabbat in the Vestry. We'll be serving up a delightful baked potato bar for dinner, followed by a soulful Kabbalat Shabbat service. Afterward, unwind and connect over a cozy hot chocolate bar.

Tikkun Olam: Volunteering at Project Lemonade - Sunday, Jan. 7, 10am-12pm, 1008 Lloyd Center, Floor 2 next to Visionworks

Volunteers ages 12 and up are needed to sort through donations at Project Lemonade, an organization that supports youth in foster care. Contact: Irichmond@nevehshalom.org

Grades 2-6, Lunch & Cooking for Hesed Sun., Jan. 7, 12-2pm, Atrium/CNS Kitchen

Join your Youth Activities friends in making tasty meals for community members in need. A light lunch will be served.

Shroud Crowd

Sunday, Jan. 7, Feb. 18, 2-4pm, Room 102

Help create traditional burial clothing for use by the *Chevra Kavod haMet*. Contact: sandyaxel@msn.com

Queer Movie Night: *The Birdcage*

Thurs., Jan. 11, 7-9:30pm, Stampfer Chapel

Join your LGBTQIA+ *Kehillah* as we share one of the finest features in flamboyant film, *The Birdcage* (1996), along with fresh popcorn, beer, cider, and more. \$5 members/\$7 non-members Register: nevehshalom.org/CNSKeshetMN24. Contact: Irichmond@nevehshalom.org

Cooking for Outside In - Sunday, Jan 14, Feb 11, 12-2pm, CNS "Marla's" Kitchen

Cook a meal to feed homeless teens. Contact: 8888octopus8888@gmail.com

Wise Women Social Brown Bag Lunch

Thurs., Jan. 18, Feb. 15, 12-1:30pm, Rm 102

Pack a lunch and join this friendly group of women to schmooze and empower one another. Contact: jenkal@comcast.net

Kids' Night Out (Grades 1-6)

Sat., January 20, 6-8:30pm, Birnbach Hall

Join your Youth Activities friends in Grades 1-6 for *Havdallah*, dinner, and a movie.

Men's Club Brunch & Speaker: Rabbi Kosak

Sunday, Jan. 21, 9am, Birnbach Hall

Brunch and discussion with Rabbi Kosak. Contact: elovitzclan@comcast.net

Sharaka Delegation Presentation

Mon., Jan. 22, 7pm, Main Sanctuary

Sharaka ('partnership,' in Arabic) is working to shape a new Middle East, built on dialogue, understanding, cooperation, and friendship. Five delegates will share real experiences coming out of the Abraham Accords and represent various Middle Eastern countries working together.

Red Cross Blood Drive

Thurs., Jan. 25, 12-5pm, Vestry

Sign up to give your much needed donation.

CNS-ORA: Art, Heart, and Soul Workshop

Thurs., Jan. 25, 7-9pm, Room 102

Learn to needle-felt with artist Simcha Shields as part of our ongoing art workshop series. Register: nevehshalom.org/AHSZK24. Contact: Irichmond@nevehshalom.org

Men's Club Night Out - Thurs., Jan. 25, Feb. 29

Join the CNS Men's Club for a fun evening out! Contact: elovitzclan@comcast.net

Sisterhood Book Group - 7:00pm

- Jan 29: *Tangled Up in Blue* by Rosa Brooks
 - Feb 26: *Trust* by Hernan Diaz
- Contact:
- otrbanana@comcast.net

Wondering Jews: A Talk w/ Bob Horenstein

Wed., Jan. 31, 2pm, Stampfer Chapel

Join the Wondering Jews and Bob Horenstein as he discusses hot-topic issues in Jewish PDX.

Grades 3-4 Lunch and Games

Sunday, Feb. 11, 12-1:30pm, Birnbach Hall

Join your Youth Activities friends.

Adult Challah Bake Happy Hour

Thurs., Feb. 15, 5:00-6:30pm, Birnbach Hall

Enjoy baking Challah w/ other adults.

Grades 5-6, Lunch and Solve a Mystery!

Sun., Feb. 25, 12-1:30pm, Birnbach Hall

Join your Youth Activities friends.

Morning Minyan and Shabbat Services

Please visit the website for more info

Morning Minyan

Monday-Friday, 7:15am (7:00am Jewish holidays and Rosh Chodesh; 9:00am US holidays); Sundays, 8:45am

Sisterhood-Led Kabbalat Shabbat Service

Fri., Jan. 19, 6:15pm

Celebrate Sisterhood as they lead our evening services.

Kabbalat Shabbat Service

Fridays, 6:15pm

Kol Shabbat

2nd Friday, 7:15pm

Lay-led, voices-only service.

Saturday Morning Shabbat Service

Saturdays, 9:30am

- First Saturday: Meditation Shabbat

Downstairs Minyan Shabbat Service

2nd, 4th, 5th Saturdays, 9:30am

Tot Shabbat (Ages 0-5)

1st and 3rd Saturdays, 10:30am

Join young families as we gather together for some Tot Shabbat fun.

Kiddush Club (K-3rd Grade)

1st and 3rd Saturdays, 10:30am

Morah Sarah Rohr and Moreh Gershon Liberman alternate leading Kiddush Club.

4th Friday Shabbat w/Rabbi Eve

4th Fridays, 5:15pm

Rabbi Eve leads Shabbat for families (ages 0-10), with singing, a story, and blessings.

PJ Havdallah

Sat., Jan. 13, Feb. 24, 5:15pm

Join Rabbi Eve for Havdallah, dinner, and fun. (Jan. 13 is movie night!)

The congregation gratefully acknowledges the following contributions:

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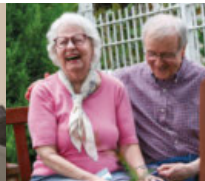
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Securing Our Kehillah *Continued from page 7*

We understand that these are challenging times for everyone, and we appreciate the various ways in which members of our community contribute. Your support, whether through financial contributions or volunteering your time as a greeter, is crucial in ensuring the success of this initiative.

Here's how you can get involved: Financial Contributions: Your generous

donations will directly fund security enhancements for our community. Every contribution, regardless of size, makes a significant impact. We have set up a dedicated account to streamline this process.

Volunteer Opportunities: We are actively seeking volunteers to join our Greeters Program for Shabbat and other programming.

Spread the Word: Share this message within our community and beyond. Awareness is key to mobilizing support; your advocacy can inspire others to join our cause.

Please join us in ensuring the safety and well-being of our community. Together, we can overcome these challenges and emerge stronger and more resilient than ever before.

Busy Advocates *Continued from page 13*

College campuses, especially PSU and Reed, are concerning. Pro-Palestinian rallies across campuses "demonize" and threaten the safety of Jews. In those cases, they are "not responding effectively enough, if at all." Bob and Rachel met with the president of PSU along with Hillel, Judaic Studies, and three Jewish students after October 7. The students were "dismayed" there was no statement condemning Hamas's actions, *and* they noted how unsafe they felt.

They have heard from non-Jewish teachers who have concerns for their Jewish colleagues and students. For over two years, JFGP has been working to educate people, government bodies, and groups about antisemitism. They recently held a workshop for the Westland-Wilsonville School District.

Prior to the pandemic, they built relationships with interfaith and interethnic communities, including Black and Hindu ones. They worked with an interfaith group addressing homelessness with a Muslim partner. This laid the groundwork for current conversations, like in Beaverton, where they didn't have previous connections.

Bob felt their most positive engagement was with the BEA because they "listened and understood." Rachel added Western State Center, a pro-democracy organization, with whom they have a longstanding relationship. Unfortunately, the most disappointing one was with the PAT leadership.

I asked about their personal feelings during the current moment. Bob noted that since he's married to an Israeli, it's been "exasperating," both personally and profession-

ally. "It never stops. You deal with one and then there's two others." He also mentioned the "vitriol" due to antisemitism. "I never thought I would feel in this country the way I do right now."

Rachel, who made Aliyah when she was 13, finds the situation "deeply personal, deeply emotional, deeply exhausting." Responding for the community "has been hard because we're all still processing and dealing" with the situation. "We're trying to find pockets of hope where we can."

Rachel and Bob have been working hard to increase those pockets. *Am Yisrael Chai!*

Rachel is at rachel@jewishportland.org
Bob is at bob@jewishportland.org
JFGP Israel Hub: jewishportland.org

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Read Around the Feldstein Library: An Invitation to Explore an Amazing Resource

By Leora Troper, Librarian of the Feldstein Library

It's been almost two years since I started working at Neveh Shalom, and I'm still hearing people say that we have the largest Judaica library in the Pacific Northwest. I'm not in a position to confirm that since I haven't surveyed them all. What I can confirm is that it's an impressive library all on its own. Folks unfamiliar with the Feldstein might imagine all of the books are about Judaism. They would be wrong: that's what makes this such an amazing library. Yes, of course, we have a very large and impressive selection of books with Jewish religious content—we have several different translations of the Talmud, for example, books about *Kabbalah*, over sixty unique *Haggadot*, not to mention a wide range of thoughtful texts exploring many different aspects of Judaism.

But we have a great deal more than that. We have over 1500 novels for adults and several hundred for middle grade and young adult readers. There is an extensive history section covering Jew-

ish history from our beginnings to present day that spans the globe. We have poetry, science, art, philosophy, education, and sociology, all as seen through a Jewish lens. This doesn't begin to discuss the children's section! While I wouldn't recommend having to re-catalog an entire collection to anyone, being forced to do so has given me a profound appreciation for this library.

I've been searching for a way to invite the Neveh congregation to join me in exploring this wonderful collection. Whatever congregational life was like pre-Covid, I know things have changed, or maybe that's just life today in general. Regardless of the reasons, I decided to challenge our community to come



and “read around the library.” From now until May 31, congregants are invited to read from different library sections. Prizes will be drawn. But the real reason to do this is for the pleasure of discovering a wonderful book you hadn't known we had. So, pick up a reading challenge passport from the library or the front desk, and register at the link below. After all, it's your library; you should enjoy it.

Register at:
nevehshalom.org/readaroundthelibrary.