**Spring 2025/5785** 

# KOLEINU ( ) a ( ?)

### **INSIDE**

A Message of Tenderness, Resistance and Hope by Rav Claudia Rainbows by Rav Leah

Reflections on My Adult B'Mitzvah Experience by Kathrine Ellin



### FROM YOUR PRESIDENTS

Jen Klein and Larry Kraus

Dear Community,

Last spring, the TBZ Board voted to recommend updating TBZ's Bylaws, and TBZ members adopted the new Bylaws at the June 2024 Community Meeting. One of the significant bylaw changes was to the committee structure of the synagogue. The new bylaws reduce the number of standing committees for TBZ and ensure that Board members participate in a standing committee: the committees are chaired by Board members and composed of both Board members and non-Board member congregants. In addition, to make it easier to serve, each of the committees is staffed by a member of our professional staff (either a rabbi or executive director).

Active, productive, well-functioning committees are central to a healthy leadership structure and community. The new committee structure is intended to engage more members, increase our leadership pipeline, tap into the relevant expertise of our members, and reflect best practices for not-for-profit organizations. We hope that this new structure will create more opportunities for each of you to contribute and lead at TBZ.

Since the adoption of the new bylaws, the committee chairs have been hard at work meeting with current committee members and recruiting new members. We have an amazing start with committees of people who bring excitement and expertise to their work. A list of the committees and chairs is below. If you are interested in joining a committee, please reach out to the chair (or reach out to either of us)!!

Administration & Finance: Steve Lewis

Development: Samuel Mendoza de Fraiman

Education & Programming: Felicia Kazer

Governance & Nominating: Carol Kamin

Membership: Rebecca Blouwolff

Social Justice & Action: Susan Bookbinder

Synagogue Practice: Rachie Lewis

This is a great way for you to get more involved in the work necessary to keep TBZ the community we love. We are committed to making sure leadership positions at TBZ are inclusive and not concentrated among a small number of members. This is why the bylaws have term limits for all officers (including President) and Board members. For the model to work and TBZ to stay vibrant and healthy, we welcome and need people like you to get involved!

continued...

#### **OUR SPIRITUAL LEADERS**

Rav Claudia Kreiman, Senior Rabbi

ravclaudia@tbzbrookline.org

Rav Tiferet Berenbaum, Rabbi of Congregational

Learning and Programming

ravtiferet@tbzbrookline.org

Rav Leah Carnow, Assistant Rabbi,

Director of Community Engagement

ravleah@tbzbrookline.org

Noah Weinberg, Musical Prayer Leader

noahw@tbzbrookline.org

Akiva Nelson, Rabbinic Intern

akiva@tbzbrookline.org

Reb Moshe Waldoks, Rabbi Emeritus

rebmoshe@tbzbrookline.org

#### SYNAGOGUE STAFF

Benjamin Maron, Executive Director

execdirector@tbzbrookline.org

Sarah Ott, Office Manager

sarahott@tbzbrookline.org

Rochelle Kelman, Assistant to Rav Claudia

rkelman@tbzbrookline.org

April Ropes, Communications Assistant

aropes@tbzbrookline.org

Sandi Garcia, Custodian

#### **BOARD MEMBERS**

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Larry Kraus, Co-President

president@tbzbrookline.org

Mark Barnett

Rebecca Blouwolf, Membership Chair

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Len Fishman

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Sue Kahn

Sara Smolover Carol Kamin

Koleinu is edited and produced by the staff of TBZ. If you have any questions, or would like to submit an article, please contact koleinu@tbzbrookline.org

TBZ 1566 Beacon Street Brookline, MA 02446 617-566-8171 www.tbzbrookline.org

For over a year now, you have heard us and the Board talking about the sustainability of TBZ. Sustainability happens in many ways. Of course through financial means, but also through the commitment and engagement of our members. Leadership and committee work is a critical part of TBZ's strength. We encourage everyone to think

about what they can contribute and find a way to plug in. We are so excited to welcome all our returning and new committee members and are grateful for their service.

With appreciation,

Jen & Larry, Co-Presidents

# Supporting TBZ Together

Samuel Mendoza de Fraiman (Chair, Development Committee)

I write to you with tremendous gratitude for your generous investment in our shul. As part of our multi-year development strategy, I want to share the progress we've made so far and how you can help meet our goal of \$676,000 this fiscal year.

As of March 1, 2025 our community has raised \$509,024.48. This means we have \$166,975.52 left to raise by June 30, 2025.

This is a community-wide effort. Many of you heard the call to stretch your donations beyond dues and to make multi-year commitments to TBZ so that our professional staff and rabbinical team can continue their work with assurance.

During this time of intense need across many communities, please consider the impact of your financial support for TBZ. Your donations help to make possible spaces for resilience through joyous worship and spiritual growth, resources for

intentional Jewish learning, opportunities for much needed inclusive human connection, and tools for transformative social action.

We ask you to prioritize TBZ in your annual giving because without your financial support, TBZ cannot be the grounding anchor it has become for so many of us.

Looking ahead, we also hope that you will join us for our upcoming Spring Concert Fundraiser. This year we will continue our tradition of celebrating champions in our community through music on May 22, 2025.

If you have made your donation or pledge, thank you for your generous support. And if you are ready to donate or increase your donation, please visit <a href="tbzbrookline.org/give">tbzbrookline.org/give</a> or contact Benjamin Maron.

We are deeply alarmed by the attacks on the rights and dignity of many groups across the U.S. Many of us are feeling isolated, vulnerable, and fearful of what the future holds. Many of us are directly affected by changes in legislation - especially those changes that target trans and non-binary people, immigrants, and individuals with disabilities.

No matter your sexuality or gender expression, your nationality or immigration status, your physical abilities or challenges, your mental health status, TBZ has your back.

We see you, we love you, and you are always welcome here.



# Preparing for Changes for High Holidays in 5786

#### Rachie Lewis

Perhaps, like me, you look forward to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur at TBZ each year. The beautiful *davening* (praying), the heartfelt sermons from our clergy, the timely prayers from fellow community members, gathering together with the whole *kahal* (community) at once, the four walls of our *shul* brimming with *ruach* (spirit).

Our community has grown significantly over the past several years. Nowhere is that growth more clearly on display than at Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services. Maybe you have noticed, once or twice, when it feels like the building might not actually be able to contain all that *ruach*.

Maybe it's when you arrive later to Kol Nidre and can't find a seat or even a place to stand uncomfortably. Or when many of us are jumping and singing "vayitnu lecha keter melucha" at the top of our lungs and wonder if the building might be shaking too. Or when the TBZ machzor (prayer book) you're using is tattered and missing pages from the wear and tear of a decade and all of the ones in better condition have run out.

Since last fall, TBZ's re-formed Synagogue Practices
Committee,\* which I chair, has been thinking through
the challenges that have arisen alongside the blessing
of TBZ's growth. We have been researching alternative
High Holiday *machzorim*, exploring which one might
have the right mix of liturgy, transliteration, and design.
And we have been weighing various spatial possibilities
to ensure safety and enough capacity, both inside of our
own building, and outside of it as well. Our committee is
making sure that as we strategize about solutions, we also
keep the community apprised and informed. And invested.

As some elements of our High Holiday experiences may change, one thing remains the same. It is the community members of TBZ – our spirit, our generosity, our sense of responsibility to those around us – that make our community what it is. We all have a part to play to ensure that our *ruach* remains strong and we all remain safe. Which is where you come in.

TBZ has traditionally had a practice of not turning anyone away when they don't have High Holiday tickets. While we will never let a person's financial resources get in the way of community participation, given our space limitations and real concerns about capacity and security, we need to be more mindful of how many people are in the sanctuary. So our committee asks that everyone ensure that you and your loved ones come with tickets, and not spread the word that it is possible to get in otherwise.

Some things will change, but it is all in service of ensuring that the *ruach* we all look forward to each *Tishrei* is kept intact. Over the next few months, stay tuned for opportunities to explore the *machzor* we choose, and collectively ensure that, wherever we *daven*, the *ruach*, the balance of *chesed* (loving kindness) and *gevurah* (strength) that we always try to hold at TBZ, continues to fill whatever space we end up in.

\*Committee Members: Josh Blouwolff, Rabbi Josh Greenberg, Larry Kraus, Mallory Lutz, Rowan Mattox, Preston Neal, Louisa Ould Ouali, Joe Reimer, Laura Segel, Alan Weisner

## KRIPALU REFLECTIONS

Rebecca and Marianna Mapes-Harris







We had a wonderful experience at the pre-Hanukkah Shabbat retreat at Kripalu last December.

Rav Claudia, Cantor Lizzie Shammash, and Rabbi Danielle Bensimhon developed and facilitated a rich program that invited us to enjoy Kripalu's campus and its amenities within the connective tissue of Jewish prayer, song, yoga, dance, time in nature, and deep rest.

The shifting of the seasons naturally prompts us to turn our attention inwards; to commit to this inward journey while being held by Jewish community was exceptionally beautiful. We loved connecting with other TBZ community members and making new friends, some of whom have since joined us for Shabbat services at TBZ.

Upon our arrival on Thursday afternoon, the notion of enjoying three yoga classes per day—in between songs, Jewish learning, and Shabbat preparation and celebration—felt luxurious and quite welcome after a chaotic and busy few weeks leading up to the weekend. By the end of the retreat, we felt truly grounded, and it felt natural to move through a day designed around multiple, intentional opportunities to "drop in" on ourselves and reflect.

Over the course of the weekend, the group had organically cultivated a joyful and authentic energy, which was really quite restorative for us both, especially at the end of such a difficult year for us and our communities. Another participant even asked Marianna incredulously if Rebecca was always so lighthearted and happy, which reflected how transformative the retreat had been for her!

The pinnacle of the retreat was a joyful Shabbat morning service, where we each had the opportunity to *leyn* (chant) from the Torah, gathered around a *mizbeach* (altar) that all of the retreat participants had helped to adorn, followed by restful movement, lounging in the sauna, and an exuberant *havdalah* (end of Shabbat) under the starry Berkshire sky.

We are already looking forward to going back next year! Save the date for the next Kripalu retreat, December 4-7, 2025.

## Reflections On My TBZ Adult B'Mitzvah Experience

#### Katherine Ellin

In the beginning, I wanted to have an adult b'mitzvah at TBZ mostly so I could learn to read Torah. When I had my bat mitzvah at age 13 (February, 1971 at Chizuk Amuno in Baltimore, MD), girls did not leyn (chant) Torah. Instead, we did read a Haftarah (selection from the Book of Prophets) at the Friday night service. Over the years, I came to feel that I had missed out on learning and experiencing something that was central to the Jewish experience. Torah is foundational to Judaism, and yet I had never read from the Torah on a Shabbat morning the way generations and generations of Jewish men have. So, when I heard that TBZ was offering an adult b'mitzvah class, I gratefully joined, happy to finally have the opportunity to learn to chant Torah along with a group of my peers.

I encountered so much more than I had expected. In addition to deepening my understanding of Torah and learning more about Judaism, I had the opportunity to get to know more people in the TBZ community. The learning that we did together as a group and in *chevrutah* (partners) was so meaningful. Our conversations were personal and deep and, over time, I developed heartfelt connections to members of our group. Along with learning more about Torah, and how to chant, I developed a deeper sense of connection and belonging to our wonderful TBZ community.

When I did read Torah on the day of the b'mitzvah, I had an amazing, powerful, and somewhat surprising experience: I felt that many generations of women who had never read Torah were with me as I read. I read for myself, and I read for them. It took my breath away.

Since that day, I think more about how I live both for myself and for the women who didn't have the opportunities we have now. When I put on my *tallit* (prayer shawl), a b'mitzvah gift from my brother, I feel so grateful that I can engage fully in Jewish life



in whatever ways I choose. When I wrap myself in the shawl, a gift from my sister, I feel the love of my family and so many generations all wrapped around me. When I see the shofar in our home, a gift from my son, I think about how each generation carries, passes along, and then shapes and influences our Jewish practice. L'dor v'dor – from generation to generation – my connection to past generations feels stronger, and I hope that my example of living a fulfilling Jewish life is received by the younger generations of our family. And, when I arrive at TBZ, I feel a deep and meaningful connection to so many individuals in our community because of the experience we shared learning together and becoming b'mitzvah together.

I have read Torah twice since our class's adult b'mitzvah in February, 2024. It is hard for me. It takes a week for me to learn one verse; I practice daily for weeks and weeks. Then, I feel anxious while I'm reading with so many people counting on me to get it right. But, when I finish, I am filled with gratitude and appreciation for being able to do it, for the warmth, support, encouragement, and love I feel from this community, and awe that I am a link in the chain of people who can experience and transmit Judaism in this beautiful way.

Join us in celebrating the next adult b'mitzvah class on February 7, 2026!

# Dismantling Racism Together at TBZ, an Ongoing Practice

Ellen Krause-Grosman

A few days after MLK weekend, 12 members of our community gathered in person and online for TBZ's second series of Dismantling Racism from the Inside Out classes (DRIO). Last time I was one of the participants. I loved learning with Rav Tiferet and Rabbi David Jaffe how to do the ongoing work of dismantling structural racism, day by day, moment by moment, using accessible Jewish practices from the *Mussar* wisdom tradition.

I learned that we each have our soul curriculum, which means that when we focus on a character trait like humility (anavah) by chanting a targeted phrase like "No more than my place, no less than my space" for a few minutes each day, some of us will be strengthening our courage to take up more space than is comfortable, while others, like me, will be strengthening our awareness to take up less space than is our habit or our training. We also learned the balance of care framework, which asks us to balance care for 1. Self; 2. Others targeted by anti-blackness; and 3. Opponents, within the context of our relationship to Hashem (G-d).

The honest sharing in class brought me closer to new TBZ friends. In between each class, I checked in with my assigned study partner (*chevruta*) on how our commitment to a few minutes of daily practice was going, so-so for me. We discussed all that we were learning and its effect on how we showed up in our lives around structural inequality.

"Yes," I responded to Rav Tiferet's request to take the DRIO leader's training so we could co-teach the next series of classes at TBZ, because this was the right next step in my anti-racism journey. A year earlier, in Alabama at the Zen Peacemakers Bearing Witness to Racism Retreat, a black activist asked me, "What are you going to do with this experience?" I answered, "Share my experience with my community and encourage people I know to take the next step on their anti-racism learning journey."

"Why are you taking DRIO now? What has been meaningful so far?" I asked the class.

"I am concerned by what appears to be a rising tide of hate in this country, and saw this class as a way to explore opportunities to confront that hate in fruitful ways...One of the key insights for me is the concept of caring for the opponent who supports what I view as racist policies. A particularly helpful practice ... was to learn more about why those with whom I disagree believe what they believe." (Mark)

"The class is a catalyst to learn to be more aware of our actions and thoughts when we meet people different from us. I wanted to hear things I could do besides donating to organizations that are bringing lawsuits. I decided to stay after the intro because both of you spoke about how all things in class are transferable and can be applied to different groups in addition to black individuals." (Hilda)

"I have always wanted to be involved in dismantling racism. I was curious about what exactly 'from the inside out' meant, except I was sure it would involve internal work with the support of the group...*Chevruta* is definitely a plus, even a relief from struggling to learn alone. Coming together with a thoughtful, open group of peers, each of whom shares their insights, provides the best learning for me." (Ma'ayan)

"What brought me to DRIO is you two teaching it and the current climate. I love having chevruta. I like looking at this from a Jewish perspective. It helps build community." (Elise)

We are already planning for the 2026 TBZ DRIO cohort and hope you will join us!

# Remembering Naomi Cotter z"l

Suzanne Gelber

Naomi Cotter was a longtime TBZ member, who passed away January, 2025.

The original Wise Aging Group has been meeting for ten years. Naomi was an important member of the group, attending monthly meetings, first in person then on Zoom during the pandemic, and after that by phone when she was feeling up to it.

Naomi and I became close personal friends though TBZ, even before we were in the Wise Aging Group together. Although we met only occasionally in person, we spoke frequently and at length on the phone. We shared reciprocally in deep, personal ways. During our last conversations, we had a chance to share how much our friendship meant to each other. I will miss her more than words can convey.

Naomi's passing was a shock to all who had the opportunity to know her. The group honored her by sharing their memories of Naomi, including:

"Naomi and I had a chance to say a beautiful goodbye to each other. I am deeply grateful for the more than forty years of friendship we shared." - Muriel Heiberger

"I will miss her wisdom and spirit." - Susan Farber

"I have learned so much life wisdom from Naomi Cotter. In our discussions as part of the TBZ Wise Aging Group, she would often be quiet. Then, with much sensitivity and thoughtfulness, she would share in a very engaging, insightful, loving, and humorous way. I learned SO much from what she said, how she said it, and how she lived her life." - Steve Lewis

"I learned a great deal from Naomi." - Len Fishman

"She was a great contributor to Wise Aging and we will miss her." - Matt and Ellen Weiss

She will certainly be missed. We hope by sharing what Naomi meant to us, her memory will truly be a blessing.



Since the writing of this article about Naomi, two members from our TBZ community at Hebrew Senior Life have also passed away:

Miriam "Micki" Marcus z"l and Gerald "Jerry" Nadler z"l.

May their memories be a blessing. They will be missed.





## Beit Rabban Shabbat

#### Rav Tiferet

"I've never experienced this parasha (Torah portion) like this before!" said a joyful participant in the Red Sea crossing led by Beit Rabban during Shabbat morning services on February 8th. For the first time, we were able to celebrate Beit Rabban Shabbat during the morning service, which allowed us to be consistent with what our children are learning and made it easier for families to participate.

At our first Beit Rabban staff meeting of the year, we discussed our own experiences of Jewish education; having early experiences of confidence and achievement resonated with our educators. We set as a meta-goal that we would create opportunities for our learners to feel confidence and a sense of achievement in their Jewish learning this year, and feel that we succeeded with Beit Rabban Shabbat!

Our Ilanot ("trees," 4th and 5th grade learners) have been exploring hierarchies of power and power dynamics in our Torah stories and have been working specifically with the book of Sh'mot (Exodus). They led the community in *Mi Chamocha*, the Song of the Sea, which served as a culmination for this unit of study, and which happened specifically on Shabbat Parshat Beshalach, the Sabbath when we read the Torah portion that contains Mi Chamocha. Our Mechina ("preparation," 6th grade) and Rimonim ("pomegranate," 7th grade) groups learned Torah trope in the first half of the year and were able to apply that learning to be able to chant one verse from the Torah. They did a wonderful job! This achievement served to demystify the chanting experience for their upcoming b'mitzvah ceremonies and also give them the confidence that they can master their Torah portions (something many preteens worry about).

Our youngest learners, *Shorashim Alef* ("roots A," kindergarten and 1st grade) and *Shorashim Bet* ("roots B," 2nd and 3rd grades) helped our entire community experience what the Israelites may have experienced when they crossed the sea! As we all walked through the split walls of the Sea of Reeds, their beautiful glittering fish swimming around helped us imagine the hope that gave the Israelites the courage to go on.

This Shabbat was a meaningful experience for the TBZ members who came, for the Beit Rabban learners, and for their families. It would not have been possible without our incredibly strong team of teachers and parents who jumped in to support. We are already planning for next year!









# A Message of Tenderness, Resistance, and Hope for Passover

#### **Rav Claudia**

As we approach Passover, I find myself reflecting on the timeless themes of liberation and redemption. This holiday is not just about recalling a historical event; it serves as a reminder that the journey from bondage to freedom is ongoing, one that continues to unfold in our world today. It feels more relevant and urgent than ever. It also feels frightening.

On the seventh day of Passover, we will mark the moment the Israelites crossed the Sea of Reeds, finally escaping centuries of enslavement. As they inhaled their newfound freedom, they erupted in song. But just moments before, they were filled with fear and doubt, asking Moses, "Was it for want of graves in Egypt that you brought us to die in the wilderness?" Their doubt in the face of liberation reflects the complexity of freedom itself. Liberation is never simple; it carries the weight of trauma and the anxiety of an unknown future. It comes with fear and doubt.

This year, as we approach Passover, that complexity feels even more pressing. We live in a time when justice, freedoms, and democracy are under threat in our country. Each day seems worse, and, at times, it's hard to believe. It's easy to become disillusioned, to forget

that redemption is possible. Is it? We may ask. But our tradition teaches us that redemption is not a singular event; it is a continuous process, one that we must all contribute to.

I've been particularly moved by the idea that tenderness—compassion, empathy, and love—can serve as a form of resistance, drawing us closer to redemption. At a time when hate and division are so prevalent, tenderness becomes a radical and transformative force. Margaret Renkl, in a recent piece for *The New York Times*, captured this beautifully:

"In these difficult times, tenderness is a radical act of resistance. It is a force that reminds us that we have the power to build a better world, one act of love at a time."

This call to tenderness lies at the heart of our Jewish values. As a community, we know that love is not an abstract concept but a tangible, active force. In these times, we must show tenderness to all, especially those on the margins–LGBTQ+ people, immigrants, people of color, and all those who are made to feel invisible.

We see you, we love you, and you are always welcome here.

As we prepare for Passover, we remember that the journey from slavery to freedom is ongoing, fraught with challenges. A powerful midrash (commentary) sheds light on the complexity of this moment, especially as we continue witnessing the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. As I write this, 59 hostages remain in captivity in Gaza by Hamas, and there is no permanent ceasefire or leadership with a vision for a future where Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side, in security and peace. When the Israelites crossed the sea and began to sing, the angels in heaven joined in. But God stopped them, saying, "The work of My hands, the Egyptians, are drowning at sea, and you wish to sing songs" (Megillah 10b:26)? In this moment, God acknowledges the Israelites' hard-won freedom while reminding us of the cost of salvation. This well-known *midrash* teaches us that those who are not suffering directly-like the angels-have a unique responsibility. They can see the situation from a distance and, in doing so, they are called to recognize the suffering of all, even those who once oppressed us. This lesson is not easy and is especially important now, as I feel it speaks directly to us as American Jews today. From here, we have a greater responsibility to act with compassion, fight for justice, and stand in solidarity with those who suffer. All who suffer. Israelis and Palestinians. We cannot remain passive bystanders in these times.

Another image from the Exodus story that resonates deeply is when the women dance with timbrels at the shore of the Sea of Reeds. Miriam leads them in song and dance, celebrating their freedom (Exodus 15:20-21). But how did they have timbrels, given the haste with which they left Egypt? I once heard that the answer is that they packed them with hope. Though they didn't have time to bake bread (which is why we eat *matzah!*) or prepare their belongings, the women (of course,

"We see you, we love you, and you are always welcome here."

it was the women!) knew exactly what they had to bring: they carried instruments for song and celebration, they carried hope!!! The women's actions remind us that, no matter the circumstances, we must carry hope. Hope is not passive; it is an active force that sustains us through difficult times and gives us the strength to continue on our journey toward justice.

But I struggle with the idea of hope, especially when it's just seen as an optimistic view of the future. It is hard to be optimistic now, so how do we hold onto hope?

Maybe hope is not about the certainty that everything will be okay, but simply the opposite of being paralyzed. Hope may come from the simple act of noticing—acknowledging that we continue to breathe despite the pain.

Israeli author David Grossman, during a speech he made at the Frankfurt International Book Fair in 2020, during the Covid 19 Pandemic, offers that hope "contains a verb that propels it into the future. Always to the future. Always with forward motion." He continues, "When we dare to hope, we are proving that there is still one place in our soul where we are free."

And writer Rebecca Solnit, in her book, *Not Too Late:* Changing the Climate Story from Despair to Possibility, echoes this idea of hope as a verb. She writes: "Hope is not like a lottery ticket you can sit on the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky... hope is an ax you break down doors with in an emergency... Hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope."

continued...

As we sit at our *seder* tables this year, let us remember that the work of redemption is far from over. We are all called to continue the work of building a world of justice, compassion, and tenderness. Liberation is not just a historical event; it is an ongoing process that requires our active participation. It requires daring to hope. It requires breaking down doors.

Let us hold fast to the lessons of Passover: the importance of compassion, the responsibility of those who are privileged to stand up for justice for all, and

the need to carry hope, even in the most challenging times. As we retell the story of our ancestors' liberation, let us renew our commitment to the ongoing work of liberation for all people. May this *Pesach* be a time of deep reflection and renewal, reminding us that even in the darkest moments, tenderness has the power to heal and transform.

Chag Pesach sameach, wishing you a meaningful Passover, a time to deepen our trust in our capacity to hope, to show tenderness, and to pursue justice.



# NBARC: You Can Make A Difference

Fiona Epstein & Jenny Berz

February 15th marked TBZ's fifth annual observance of HIAS Refugee Shabbat. In addition to hearing from TBZ member Doug Starr about his work as an NBARC volunteer, NBARC hosted a panel discussion after Kiddush. Entitled, "Keeping our Local Immigrant Communities Safe," it was moderated by Jen Klein, Director of the Immigration Impact Unit at the Committee for Public Counsel Services and TBZ's co-president. Panelists included TBZ member Aimee Mayer-Sailins, Managing Appeals Attorney at the Amica Center for Immigrant Rights; Marjean Perhot, Vice President for Refugee and Immigrant Services at Catholic Charities Boston; and Jeff Kaneb, DOJ Fully Accredited Representative with Catholic Charities of Boston Immigration Legal Services. Panelists explained that the best antidote to the fear that is being deliberately stoked by ICE and the current administration is to educate our communities about immigrant rights and to learn about and volunteer with immigrant service organizations, especially as their caseloads swell while funding dwindles and staff is furloughed.

We are in difficult times. Each daily assault on our organizations and basic dignity and freedom is devastating and impactful on every level. As Rav Claudia stated in her sermon that Shabbat, we cannot do this work alone. At this time more than ever, we need to find ways to contribute to helping our immigrant friends and neighbors.

NBARC offers just that opportunity! In the words of Doug Starr, who together with his wife Monica Sidor volunteer as the Family Coordinators for Stephanie and Celia (not their real names) from Haiti, "Our job is to provide hands-on guidance to mom and her nine-year-old daughter... to get them set up with health care, English lessons, job training, housing, and whatever else they need to settle in. We have been meeting every week-to-ten days, helping fill out forms, focusing on next steps, and generally keeping the process on track... The highlight of the experience was moving Stephanie and Celine into their new apartment in Cambridge last week."

NBARC stands for Newton Brookline Asylum Resettlement Coalition. We are an all-volunteer interfaith group of seven congregations working together to provide community-based support to refugees and asylum seekers in the Newton and Brookline area. We work with clients from the time they submit their asylum application until they find employment and become self-supporting.

Most recently, we have been working with a family of six from Afghanistan (who spoke at TBZ's refugee Shabbat one year ago). Since that time, we have been working with two Haitian families. Our latest news is that we have begun a partnership with Jewish Family Services (Metrowest) to assist three additional Brookline refugee families including one from Syria, one from Nicaragua, and one from Guatemala.

Whether you take on a long-term Family Coordinator role as did Monica and Doug, or choose to take on a specific task like helping someone apply for a job, get a drivers' license or Mass ID, navigate a specific affordable housing challenge, or register for school, there are so many ways to volunteer. We are also always seeking Spanish, Arabic, and Haitian-Creole interpreters and translators to support our refugee and asylum-seeking clients' social integration. You can make a difference!

To learn more, please go to our website at www.nb-arc. com or email nbarc@tbzbrookline.org.



# Science Training Encouraging Peace

Allen Taylor and Kim Kronenberg, Co-Directors and TBZ members Kobi Russell, Outreach Coordinator



STEP Fellows with Allen and Kim

In mid-January, we embarked on a trip to Israel with plans to meet all our students and faculty and host the Annual Convocation for our nonprofit program – Science Training Encouraging Peace (STEP). STEP Fellows are Israeli and Palestinian (from the West Bank) health sciences graduate students who work in pairs for 2-4 years at Israeli universities, becoming trusting, accomplished lab partners, community leaders, and enduring friends.

There's a saying we often repeat in conversations about Israel/Palestine: "On the one hand...but on the other hand..." This trip embodied that phrase. On the one hand, Israelis are in a constant state of grief. In every Israeli household we visited, we found the family glued to their TV, watching as hostages were released week by week. Everyone had a connection with someone – whether to a hostage or through a story of someone they'd lost.

When we spoke to our Palestinian friends, their stories were heartbreaking in similarity. They told us about friends and family that they knew – or had lost – in Gaza, and others facing violence in the West Bank. There is a heaviness that can be felt throughout the whole region. We were glad to simply be there and listen.

On the other hand, the Convocation is a bright light in the darkness! The Convocation is a celebratory event where

STEP students, alumni, faculty, and honored guests gather to network, share science, and address personal, professional, and political challenges, bolstered by music and food. It was no easy feat; STEP was among few programs to secure Israeli entry permits for Palestinians during the war. Throughout the event, we were deeply moved by what we heard from all. One faculty member told us how inspired they were, writing afterwards, "Events like these provide real hope and strengthen the essential values of coexistence and science."

We also heard the powerful story of two young men, one Israeli and one Palestinian, who both recently lost loved ones. Each loss, in turn, shook them to their core and threatened their identities as believers in a shared future. Separately, even miraculously, they both realized that they could not allow themselves to live the rest of their lives hating "the other side" – but instead, they decided to seek connection with "the enemy." Now, these two men are scientific research partners – as part of STEP!

Clearly these are unprecedented times. We are home in Brookline – but our hearts are still there. Like all of you, we are feeling the pain and the loss. At the same time, we are proud to say, because of the steadfast resilience of STEP Fellows and faculty, we remain hopeful! If you would like to learn more, visit www.step-qtp.orq.



#### Rav Leah

Last summer during Shabbat lunch at a retreat at Isabella Freedman, the skies opened into an incredible downpour, rain crashing into the dining tent and drenching the earth. A few participants at the retreat, inspired by such an awesome display of nature, bolted into the rain to dance and frolic. As the sky began to clear almost as quickly as the rain had begun, a rainbow emerged. The entire community (of predominantly queer Jews) rushed to see, delighting in nature's pride flag displayed in the sky.

It is not every day we see a rainbow.

In Judaism, the rainbow is the symbol of the first ever covenant that God makes with people.

At the end of the flood that nearly destroys the entire world, God says to Noah (Genesis 9:13-15):

I have set My bow in the clouds, and it shall serve as a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, I will remember My covenant between Me and you and every living creature among all flesh, so that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

The rainbow is a symbol of promise and of hope. That is why when we see a rainbow, we make a blessing:

#### ַבָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֶלוֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם זוֹכֵר הַבְּרִית וְנֶאֱמָן בִּרוּרְ אַתָּה ה' אֶלוֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם זוֹכֵר הַבְּרִית וְנֶאֱמָן בָּבְרִיתוֹ וְקִיָם בְּמַאֲמֵרוּ

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who remembers the covenant, and is faithful to God's covenant, and keeps God's word.

I am so blessed to be returning to work at TBZ after three months of parental leave—blessed both to have had a baby and also blessed to serve this incredible community. After terminating my first pregnancy for a medical reason, I wasn't sure if I would ever have a healthy baby.

In the pregnancy loss community, babies that are born after loss are known as rainbow babies.

Though I went into labor during Simchat Torah and thus the week we read *parshat Bereshit* (the first Torah portion in Genesis), my baby took his time coming into the world. He was born the week of *parshat Noah*, the rainbow Torah portion. In the early morning hours on October 30th, with light rain tapping on the windows of my home, I became a mother to my rainbow baby.

There is a tradition to say a blessing upon the birth of a baby. In the haze of birth, I don't think I actually said any traditional blessings that day. But if I had said a blessing, I may have said the blessing for seeing a rainbow. Or I may have said the *shehechiyanu*, the blessing that is said upon arriving at annual holidays, momentous occasions, and doing things for the first time, like eating a fruit for the first time in a season (and also traditionally for the birth of a girl).

The *shehechiyanu* can also be said when seeing a friend you haven't seen in over a month. As I return to work at TBZ, though I did see many of you over the course of my leave, I am seeing many of you for the first time in well over a month. *Shehechiyanu*, what a blessing to re-connect! And for those of you whom I have not yet seen or even met, I look forward to meeting you. Please reach out for a Zoom call, an in-person meeting, or a coffee date. My door is open. I want to hear your ideas, your dreams, and your stories.

And most importantly, in my role as Director of Community Engagement, I look forward to helping you connect with the TBZ community so that TBZ becomes a place you can be your full self, where you can be seen and known by others, and where you can connect to spirituality, to learning, to social justice, and to tradition.

It is good to have arrived at this moment to begin anew this work of connecting and engaging with you. *Shehechiyanu*.

# TBZ WOMEN'S RETREAT

#### Rabbi Carol Glass

The 13th Annual TBZ Women's Retreat took place on Sunday, March 3, in true bat mitzvah style. After *davening* (praying) that ranged from joyous to broken-hearted and back again, we were treated to a day of celebrating Jewish women's herstory, women's text interpretation, women's community building, and Jewish women's spiritual self-exploration. It was a day created to encourage each woman to let go as well as take in, to shed layers as well as fill up, to use her body as well as her mind, to attempt something new as well as revisit the familiar, and to connect with others as well as get to know herself.

After services and breakfast, we studied Jewish texts in *chevrutah* (as study partners). We then had the opportunity to hear personal responses to the texts from each of our three rabbis, Rav Claudia, Rav Leah, and Rav Tiferet. We also heard from TBZ member Diane Balser who reminded us of American Jewish women's struggles to have our voices heard over the past 5-6 decades. Thank you, Diane, for helping pave the way over those years.

It was quite special to hear our rabbis share their individual faith/spiritual journeys and their personal stories about stretching to fit (or not) into their respective communities, as strongly identified Jewish women. I was particularly taken by Rav Tiferet's teaching concerning the capacity to trust,

which was based on her understanding of a 13th century Kabbalistic text written by Joseph ben Abraham Gikatilla. This teaching, and those of the others, set the groundwork for a day of gratitude, joy, and curiosity.

Study was followed by workshops designed to help us explore our spirituality somatically – either through the modality of "Soul Dance" (led by Allison Talis) or through a workshop employing the Feldenkrais Method (led by TBZ member Nancy Lipman).

After using our bodies to deepen our spiritual explorations, we met Ariella Darsa Amshalem, a Sephardic chef who taught us about foods from her background and who deepened our gastronomic explorations with tastes of her creations!

The afternoon provided the choice of a writing workshop, facilitated by TBZ member Jordan Namerow, or study of "Masquerade Stories of Jewish Gender Performance," led by TBZ member Lori Lefkovich. Both choices were impressive and supported my ongoing awareness of how blessed TBZ is to have so many wonderful teachers in its midst!

Finally, the day ended with music, gratitude, and appreciation for the amazing gift of this retreat! I left feeling buoyed by connections and new energy.





# A Jew By Choice

#### Simeon Atha

Prior to beginning my journey of choosing to convert to Judaism almost three years ago, my relationship to religion could be divided into two distinct periods. The first and probably most formative period was growing up as the son and grandson of Methodist ministers (my father and his father before him). Being the child of clergy meant that whether I liked it or not, when I entered a church, I felt watched. For most of my childhood, church was a place where we had to make an appearance and be on our best behavior. While I credit my upbringing with imbuing me with a lot of the values I carry with me in my Jewish life today, it felt challenging to form a connection with a higher power in that environment. The choice, to a certain extent, had been made for me by the expectations of those around me.

The second and more recent period involved a lack of a choice in another way. After leaving for college, I declined to choose any religious practice at all. While my newly found autonomy felt good in some ways, as the years went on I began to realize that by choosing to not engage in a spiritual life I was still experiencing the same alienation from the divine that I had felt before. Only this time, I felt like I finally had the space to make my own choice.

For years, I had been interested in learning more about Judaism and had begun to scratch the surface by taking part in Jewish cultural practices, celebrating some holidays, and cooking with my wife, Margot. She grew up mostly secular, but kept in touch with observance mainly through holidays.



After a few years of circling around the edges in my own head and visiting different shuls sporadically, I eventually ended up at TBZ where I felt immediately welcomed and surrounded by others choosing to take part in a spirituality that spoke to me.

At TBZ, and through my choice to be Jewish, I not only have deepened my connection to the divine, but also my connection to myself. I find myself eager for Shabbat services in a way I was not eager to go to church growing up. I find myself seeking out ways to participate in Jewish life in and outside of TBZ whether it's *hagbah* (lifting the torah) or *havdalah* (marking the end of Shabbat) or just being in community with others. I have found, through choosing Judaism and choosing TBZ, a fulfilling community committed to the Divine, and to lifting up the sparks of the divine that live within us all.

### **COMMUNITY MEETING**

Please join us for the Annual Community Meeting of the TBZ membership on Monday, June 16, 7-9pm.

Renew community connections, hear updates from our leadership on the status of TBZ, and vote for our Board of Trustees.

# Purim Thank You!

A big "thank you" to all of the volunteers who made the dough for the hamentashen, Beit Rabban families and others who joined us on Wednesday, March 5. With special thanks to Emma Zbarsky and Natalie Henrich.

A big "thank you" to the many volunteers who baked the hamentashen and packed the *mishloach manot* (gifts) for all of our TBZ members and our friends at 1550 Beacon Street (Hebrew Senior Life). We baked 1627 hamentashen! We can't name all of you, but special thanks to the kitchen crew and leaders of the day: Natalie Henrich, Jon Frankel, Asaf Bitton, Micah Klein, Jessie Henrich, and Alma Kreiman-Leader

A big "thank you" to the families who delivered *mishloach manot*, sang, and connected with our neighbors at 1550 Beacon.

A big "thank you" to the 34 amazing drivers who delivered 374 mishloach manot to our local TBZ members. With special thanks to Eddie Taub and Sandy Taub for organizing the routes.

A big "thank you" to the Beit Rabban teachers and students for an awesome Purim carnival. And to all the actors for the fun Purim spiel. And Rav Tiferet for coordinating both.

A big "thank you" to the *megillah* readers: Molly Silver, Ronnie Levin, Rabbi Ben Lanckton, Julie Seeger, Judith Rosenbaum, Rabbi Ebn Leader, Rav Leah, and Rav Claudia.

A big "thank you" to our awesome staff for all the work behind the scenes, especially Sarah Ott, Rochelle Kelman, Benjamin Maron, and Sandi Garcia.

A big "thank you" to everyone who made Purim a wonderful, meaningful, and fun celebration at TBZ!

A big "thank you" to all the TBZers who donated to Yad Chessed, raising a combined \$6,627!













## Mazel Tov!

- Nina Moliver's granddaughter, Rivkah Hornbacher, doctoral candidate in neuroscience at Brown University, on the publication of an article presenting the results of a clinical trial for a repurposed drug used to treat alcohol use disorder.
- Reb Moshe and Anne Waldoks, on the birth of their grandson on November 4th.
- Risa Waldoks and Ira Blum, on the birth of their son on November 4th.
- Marjie and Rabbi Mark Sokoll, on the birth of their grandson on November 6th, to parents David Sokoll and Dani Weiss of Cleveland Heights, OH.
- David Ofsevit and Nancy Mazonson, on the birth of their grandson, Leon Glassman Ofsevit, on November 3rd to parents Elena Glassman and Ari Ofsevit.
- Julia Spiegelman, who successfully defended her dissertation on non-binary high school students' language learning experiences.
- Daniel Myers and his entire family, for becoming bar mitzvah.
- Eduardo Stern, on the birth of his grandchildren (twins: Sasha and Irina), to parents Aliosha and Jennifer.
- Fran Adams, whose daughter Joanna was married to Mathew Shea on October 28.
- Robert (Bob) Stickgold, on receiving the 2024
   Harvard Medical School Prize in Sleep Medicine.

   And, on winning a Moth StorySLAM competition in Minnesota, qualifying him for a Moth GrandSLAM competition.
- Craig Sumberg, on his new job with the Firehouse Center for the Arts in Newburyport.
- Rabbi Suzanne and Andy Offit, on the marriage of their son David Offit to Sarah Baron in Washington, DC.
- Sheila Katz and Eduardo Stern, whose son and stepson, Noah Katz-Appel, married Nidhi Sunil.
- Carole Greenfield, who had an essay appear in Salvation South.
- Carly Dreme Calbreath (who teaches *llanot* 4th & 5th grades at Beit Rabban) and Sam Tygiel on their engagement.
- Les and Ilan Schonberg, who celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary!
- Les and Ilan Schonberg whose daughter, Mara Schonberg, became a full professor of medicine at Harvard
- Shulamit and Jehuda Reinharz, who celebrated 57 years of marriage on November 26!
- Carole Greenfield, who had an essay featured in Honeyguide Literary Magazine.

- Ila and Les Schonberg, who attended their youngest grandson Chananya's upsherin on November 28.
- Ronnie Levin, who was quoted in a Washington Post article about concerns about tap water. In addition, he was quoted in a CNN report and a report in Chattanooga, TN.
- Marc Daniels, in his new role as Commercial Service Sales Representative at Casella Waste Systems, Inc.
- Eliza Mnookin and her entire family who celebrated her bat mitzvah.
- Penny Roberts, whose daughter, Karen Silverman, has been named a fellow in the 2025-2026 Executive Leadership Program of the Mandel Institute for Nonprofit Leadership.
- Doug Lutz, whose photograph "68.34N 27.5E" was shown during the Member's Exhibition "Winter Solstice", at the Griffin Museum of Photography, Winchester, MA from December 13 to January 5.
- Leah Broyde Abrahams, photographer, and her sister, Ruth Broyde Sharone, writer of the interfaith musical "Meet me There," have collaborated on a motivational photography book, 11 Things to Celebrate Before Breakfast (a small, upbeat reminder of what is good and possible in the world).
- Rabbi Ma'ayan and Rick Sands, whose son Gabriel Sands will be married to James Reid on April 5, 2025 in NYC.
- Rabbi Ma'ayan and Rick Sands, whose daughter
   Shoshana Narva will be married to Brian Saia in Boston on August 10, 2025.
- Sarah Rovin (TBZ's former rabbinic intern) on her engagement to Jake Herman.
- David Kaplan, who, on December 20, completed a twomonth, 713 mile, 88 temple, walking Buddhist pilgrimage (Shikoku Henro) on the Japanese island of Shikoku.
- Rabbi Tyler Dratch, former rabbinic intern at TBZ, who was announced to become the Rabbi of Beth Am Synagogue in Baltimore.
- Danielle Smith and Amy Goldman on their engagement.
- Donna Tarutz, who started a new position as Director of the Council on Aging and Human Services in the Town of Natick.
- Jarrett Byrnes, whose initiative to restore ocean life to the seawalls of Boston Harbor was featured in the news.
   (TBZers visiting the Seaport or Condor Street Urban Wild in East Boston can even check them out at low tide!)
- Marjorie and Rabbi Mark Sokoll, on the marriage of their daughter, Talya Sokoll to Tim Follo on Sunday, January 19 at More Than Words in Boston.

## Mazel Tov!

- Glenn Rothfield, who celebrated the 100th birthday of his mother, Eleanor Rothfield, on January 20. Still "as feisty, independent, and sharp as ever," the whole family gathered in Florida for the simcha.
- Ronnie Levin, who had a piece published in Newsweek about PFAS in drinking water and the effects on our health.
- Paul and John Sinclair, whose daughter Maya Sinclair, got engaged to Adam Rostowsky.
- Shulamit Reinharz, who won the Finalist position in the category of "Holocaust Memoirs," one of the awards given by the National Jewish Book Council. Her book is Hiding in Holland: A Resistance Memoir.
- Michael Zwirblia, who completed his conversion process has joined the Jewish People!
- Richard Carrick, whose latest album, The Atlas, is now available.
- Carole Greenfield, who had a poem published on Autumn Sky Poetry Daily. The poem pertains directly to the fears and concerns of being Jewish in troubling times.
- Julie Reuben whose quilt, Arches, won first prize in hand quilting at Quilt Con, an international organization featuring the work of modern quilters.

- Leah Abrams, whose essay "Cancer, Grief, and Academic Life," was published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Rabbi Sam Seicol on his retirement after 43 years in professional chaplaincy.
- Celia Moses, who started a new job as an Administrative Coordinator for the Ophthalmology Department of Boston Medical Center.
- Irwin Pless, who turned 100 on March 11!
- Hassia Diner, whose biography, Julius Rosenwald: Repairing the World, was highlighted by Jewish Lives in their "Jewish Life of the Week" column.
- Felicia Kazer, whose photo was featured in The Boston Globe for the International Women's Day protest.
- Sarah Mautner-Mazlen, who recently had an article published in McGill University's Jewish campus magazine, Nu, about Esther and Vashti.
- TBZ members of the Newton Brookline Asylum Resettlement Coalition (NBARC), who were recognized in the *Brookline News* for their work supporting immigrant families.

#### **CONDOLENCES**

- Rabbi Ethan Bair and Asatar Bair following the death of their mother and TBZ member, Saphira Linden
- Sheine Wizel following the death of her mother, Anita Wizel
- Erina and Julia Donnelly Spiegelman following the death of Erina's mother, Patricia Donnelly
- Rabbi Daniel, Jen, Micah, and Nora Klein following the death of Daniel's father, Burt Klein
- Paula and John Sinclair following the death of Paula's stepfather, Phil Deleon
- The family and friends of TBZ member, Naomi Cotter
- Kathy, Thomas, and Eva Kates following the death of Kathy's father, Art Lord
- Amy Sweigenberg, following the death of her sister,
   Susan Sweigenberg
- Rafi Ellenson and his family following the death of his older brother, Rabbi Micah Samuel Ellenson

- Stéphane, Mara, Samuel, and Emma Acel-Green following the death of Stéphane's mother, Andrée Acel
- Joyce Zakim and Peter Greenspan, Deena Zakim and Jesse Chabot, Shari and Phillip Zakim-Yacouby following the death of Joyce's father, and Deena and Shari's grandfather, Leon Wolf
- The family and friends of TBZ member, Gerald "Jerry"
   Nadler
- The family and friends of TBZ member, Miriam "Micki"
   Marcus
- Danya Handelsman and Jed Shugerman following the death of Danya's father, Neil Handelsman
- Rebecca and Reuben Swartz following the death of Rebecca's mother, and Reuben's grandmother, Sarah Swartz

May their souls be bound up in the Bonds of Eternal life. המקום ינחם אתם עם שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים.

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