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Upcoming PJC Activities & Events

February

6 -- Tot Shabbat/11am

6 -- Hooked on Havdalah/4:30-8pm

13 -- Women's Group/1pm

26 -- Ramah Shabbat Program/6:30pm

27 -- Ramah Shabbat Program/9:30am

27 -- PJC Gala/6:30pm Dinner/9pm Reception

March

5 -- Tot Shabbat/11am

5 -- Women's Group/1pm

6 -- Gloria Horowitz Lecture/10am

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Rabbi's Message



As I write this, and look out the windows of my office, I see snow. A sheet of white that covers the lawn in front of the building, piles that make the branches of trees hang low and cover the roofs of all the houses. It makes driving treacherous. Welcome to January in New York, and the depths of winter.

And at the same time, when I look out of my office into the rest of the PJC, I see something completely different. Our children are working on birdfeeders made out of empty water bottles, tasting fruits and planting seeds. Welcome to *Tu Bishvat* at the Pelham Jewish Center, the new year of all trees, according to the *Mishnah* (tractate Rosh Hashanah 1:1).

Tu Bishvat began, not as a holiday where we celebrate the natural world around us, but as a way to keep track of the age of crops. According to the Torah, we are forbidden from benefitting from the fruit of a tree in the first three years after we plant it. In the fourth year, our ancestors were told to bring the fruit to the Temple

in Jerusalem. It is only in the fifth year that they were permitted to eat the fruit themselves. Knowing when a tree turns five is essential to this system.

For centuries, this was the only significance of the holiday, and that stopped being essential when the Temple was destroyed and when our ancestors stopped being farmers in large numbers. The idea of a *Tu Bishvat* seder wasn't developed until the sixteenth century, and it didn't take hold outside of kabbalistic circles until the twentieth century. It was then, with the rise of Zionism and a focus on the land of Israel, coupled with increased concern for the environment, that the holiday gained widespread interest.

This disconnect between the world outside and the world inside the PJC is just the current illustration of the differences between the Jewish calendar and the calendar that governs the rest of our lives. We observe the New Year on the first of *Tishrei*, but have spent most of the past month trying to remember to write 2016, not 5776. We will come together in costumes for *Purim*, months after the town went crazy for Halloween. And the biggest calendar conflict of them all, we tell our children that they are Jewish adults YEARS before they are legally responsible according to American law.

It, therefore, shouldn't come as a surprise that we are celebrating the Jewish holiday of green when the only colors outside are white and gray. But it does. How can we celebrate the beginning of spring just as it finally starts to feel like winter? Why doesn't our Jewish calendar reflect our reality?

The tension between our two calendars can serve to broaden our perspective. *Tu Bishvat* reminds us that there is a world outside of our own experiences, and beyond what happens in our community. *Tu Bishvat* connects us to the cycle of the year as it is experienced in Israel, where (in spite of their own recent snowfall) it is common to plant trees in honor of the holiday.

Tu Bishvat also allows us to see that we can shape the world around us. Even as every surface outside is covered with snow, we know that someday, it will be warm again. *Tu Bishvat* gives us an opportunity to see the world, not as it is, but as we want it to be. And it reminds us of our ability to shape what the future will look like.

בשלום,

Rabbi Alex Salzberg

From the Desk of Our Education Director

"May He who blessed our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, bless this entire congregation, together with all holy congregations; them, their sons and daughters, their families, and



all holy congregations: them, their sons and daughters, their families, and all that is theirs, along with those who unite to establish synagogues for prayer, and those who enter them to pray, and those who give funds for heat and light, and wine for Kiddush and Havdalah, bread to the wayfarer and charity to the poor, and all who devotedly involve themselves with the needs of this community and the Land of Israel. May the Holy One Praised be He reward them; may He remove sickness from them, heal them, and forgive their sins. May He bless them by prospering all their worthy endeavors, as well as those of the entire people Israel. And let us say: Amen." (Siddur Sim Shalom, pp.414-415.)

This is the Prayer for our community, which is found in our Siddur Sim Shalom after the Torah Service. During PJC Shabbat services, we unfortunately don't recite this prayer in full. I generally say it quietly, to myself. How fitting it is that this prayer is placed right after our Torah Service! What I mean is, we should not take it lightly - the fact that we have just performed our millenary tradition of Torah reading. Our rabbis teach that Torah is the path that leads us to find the light in another's soul. It is appropriate that after devoting our attention to the weekly lessons from our sources, we also give thought to reflect on how much effort was involved in making it happen week after week in our community. It's important that we give some heed to the many devoted, generous, kind and selfless volunteers in our community that are involved in the many preparations and details so we can joyfully celebrate our Jewish traditions. These are the magic-makers, the ones who ensure that by presently connecting to our past, we and our children will also have a future.

I remember the first day I came to the PJC, nine years ago, not long after I had just arrived in America. It was during the holiday of Sukkot, and my friend Morah Havi Pessa asked me to sub for her at the Learning Center. Morah Havi had to travel to Israel for her granddaughter's bat mitzvah. I did not know in advance, but on that same day, the PJC Social Action Committee had scheduled a visit from the Bronx Jewish Community Center to our Sukkah. The Bronx Jewish Seniors came to our Sukkah to meet the class that I was subbing for. Great! I just came to sub and now I had to create an activity to help the students connect with the seniors, on the spot. Well, it seems that whatever I did with the students and the seniors was successful, because a woman whom I did not know came running toward me after the program and gave me two kisses and a hug -- a greeting I was used to in Brazil and in Israel, but not here in the US ...

Mussar instructs us to honor each and every person we meet by acknowledging that spark. This is what was so special about this person. Her embrace was so authentic, so warm, and welcoming, something I hadn't yet encountered in America. She had curly, greyish hair, and something about her made me feel special and loved right there, at that moment. Her name was (is) Hildy Martin. A year later, when I was hired to be the LC Education Director, I met her husband, Steve, who was the President of the PJC at that time. And since then I have seen how they honor others by acknowledging their spark.

The relationship that started with two kisses and a hug continued to grow and flourish. Nine years have passed since, and we have worked together in countless ways. Hildy was my Education Chair, the PJC President, and is our Early Childhood Educator. It was through her generosity and creativity that we were able to create our successful Nitzanim program, a gateway to young families and an unforgettable Jewish learning experience for our students. Our Learning Center has been enriched by her advice, guidance, eternal patience and innovative spirit. We have laughed and cried together, celebrated our successes and even walked together through the streets of Jerusalem. I have learned from Steve's *D'verei Torah*, enjoyed his *leyning* & *davening*, and appreciate having him lead the PJC Board a second time. It's been nine years since that first big, big hug. So much has happened since. My family and I feel so blessed to have Hildy & Steve Martin and their family in our lives. (I think I never told Havi how grateful I am that she asked me to sub for her at the LC on that day...) According to Pirkei Avot 4:15, "Who is honored? One who honors others." It was said that Rabbi Yochannan ben Zakkai was always the first to greet each and every one he met on his way.



On Shabbat mornings, after the Torah Service, it is people like Steve & Hildy Martin and many, many more incredible PJC'ers who come to my mind as I recite the prayer for our community to myself. By blessing others, we become channels of the Divine. According to [Rabbi Arthur Green](#), "In the act of blessing



13 -- Purim Carnival/
1-3pm

16 -- Spiritual Practices
Program with Rabbi
Pamela Wax/7:30-9pm

18 -- Community
Dinner/6:30pm

20 -- Gloria Horowitz
Lecture/10am

23 -- Megillah
Reading/7:30-9:30pm

April

2 -- Tot Shabbat/11am

9 -- Midnight Run/9pm

10 -- Sheldon Horowitz
Lecture/10am

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we make a statement of mutual relationship, that we are givers as well as receivers." To be blessed is to be protected by G-d and to bless others is to contribute to the protection and welfare of those whom we are blessing.



In my daily work with volunteers in this unique community, who share their time, their hearts, minds and hands selflessly, I pray that G-d will allow each of us to seek inspiration by acknowledging the spark in one another in our PJC Community. And I thank G-d for bringing Hildy & Steve Martin to my journey nine years ago at the PJC Sukkah. I wish them and the PJC community much joy, health and love for many years to come.

L'Chayim!

Ana Turkienicz

Education Director

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President's Message



As we work our way through the book of Exodus, we are continually reminded of how precarious it has been to be a Jew over time. It starts with the Egyptians and the Amalekites, and sadly continues to the present. Like most of us, I enjoy the bittersweet old joke, "What defines a Jewish Holiday? They tried to kill us, we survived, let's eat!"

What surprises me is that it turns out that at least in the US and UK, Jews have a longer life expectancy than the general population. In the United States, life expectancy at age 55 (average number of additional years lived beyond 55) [for Jews is 27.7](http://www.scienceandreligiontoday.com/2011/03/03/why-do-jews-tend-to-live-longer-than-members-of-other-religious-groups), two to seven years longer than any other large religious group in the United States. (<http://www.scienceandreligiontoday.com/2011/03/03/why-do-jews-tend-to-live-longer-than-members-of-other-religious-groups>) In the UK, the average male age in England and Wales is 36; among Jewish men, it is 41. For women, the average age in the general population is 38; in the Jewish community, it is 44. There are nearly three times as many Jewish people who are 100 or older than there are in the general population in the UK. (<http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/and-now-good-news-jews-do-live-longer>.)

But the bigger surprise about Jewish life expectancy is revealed by an Israeli longitudinal study. In 1997, researchers at Hebrew University began to follow 5,000 Israelis age 60 and older to prospectively evaluate factors associated with morbidity and mortality. After following patients for seven years, they reported their results in 2007 in the European Journal of Ageing. Like a large body of research previously published, they determined socioeconomic status had a major impact on survival, with the poor two-thirds more likely than the affluent to die. Socioeconomic status is one of the major explanations of why Jews in the US and UK live longer than the general population. Similarly, initial state of health and depression were powerful determinants of survival.

What surprised the investigators was that Jews who attended synagogue regularly were 75% more likely to be alive than their more secular cousins. This coincides with a substantial body of US literature that regular church or synagogue attendance, typically defined as once a month or more, is associated with longevity. ([J Insur Med.](#) 2012;43(3):154-61. Relationship between selected social factors and all-cause mortality.; [Psychother Psychosom.](#) 2009;78(2):81-90. Religiosity/spirituality and mortality. A systematic quantitative review.)

Why would going to synagogue regularly improve survival? Communal connecting unquestionably provides part of the explanation. Simply put, humans are social animals and fare best when they have broad and deep connections. The Israeli authors argue that in "old age, the main problem that many people have is the loss of one's social function. A person who goes to synagogue has a function: He is called to the Torah, and he has a network of social ties in the community." Of course, synagogue is not the only way to have a social function. But it is a simple and powerful one. In this era of communal disengagement, when fewer Americans than ever belong to communal or fraternal organizations, *shul* provides a simple, powerful venue for human connection.

The literature argues that social connections are only part of the reason that synagogue attendance impacts survival. Another probable influence is mindfulness. There is a growing body of research that relates mindfulness and meditation to improved health. In one study these practices led to a reduction in

inflammatory gene expression, suggesting a mechanism for this relationship. ([Brain Behav Immun. 2012 Oct; 26\(7\): 1095-1101.](#) Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Training Reduces Loneliness and Pro-Inflammatory Gene Expression in Older Adults: A Small Randomized Controlled Trial)

One of the many potential benefits of attending *shul* is to cultivate a practice of mindfulness. One of the central tenets of our liturgy is to cultivate an awareness of the world around us and our place within that world. We are asked to be conscious of everything and to focus our attention - deflecting distraction and intentionally contemplating what matters to us. One of the paradoxes of prayer for me is that not understanding Hebrew provides a space for losing myself in thought and song, and striving towards mindfulness. It doesn't always work - in fact it often doesn't - and yet it provides me with a weekly opportunity to slow down and be aware. That is truly a gift.

Finally, our tradition calls out to us to be grateful. Gratitude, it turns out, is another tool to improve our well-being. An article published in the well-respected medical journal the Huffington Post ([How Gratitude Can Benefit Your Physical Health All Year](#)

[www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/gratitude-benefits-physical-](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/gratitude-benefits-physical-
health_us_56538058e4b0879a5b0c1464)

[health_us_56538058e4b0879a5b0c1464](#)) cites an array of studies - with hypertext links to the actual articles - arguing for the benefits of adopting an attitude of gratitude. So much of Jewish wisdom focuses on the importance of this. The inscription on the ark at the PJC, a phrase from Psalm 118 we sing each holiday during *Hallel*, is "*Zeh hayom asah Adonai, nagilah v'nismecha vo*" - "This is the day the Lord has given us. Rejoice and be glad."

Social connection, mindfulness, gratitude - they all are central to our life at the PJC. In the *Talmud* (Berachot 8a) R. Yehoshua ben Levi said to his children: "Go early and stay late in synagogue in order that you should live a long life." Maybe those Rabbis really did know something after all.

B'Shalom,

Steve

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PJC Gala to Honor Steve & Hildy Martin



February 27th is just around the corner, and that means if you have not yet signed up to attend the 2016 PJC Fundraising Gala, honoring Hildy & Steve Martin, NOW is the time to do so! Please send in your Gala ticket and Journal response cards ASAP or [respond now](#). The deadline for submission of Journal ads is February 11th.

We are also looking for additional silent auction [items & services](#), so please consider what you have to donate. Remember this is a wonderful opportunity to socialize with your fellow congregants, to celebrate the Martins and to raise money to support all of the important programming at our synagogue!

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PJC Nominating Committee 2016-'17

**CALL FOR
BOARD**

The PJC Nominating Committee is forming now for 2016-'17. If you are interested in serving on the Committee, or on the PJC Board for the coming year, please contact [Michelle Dvorkin](#). Open Board positions will be announced later this month.

Israel News Bits



Kosher Cannabis in Israel Is Set to Explode

There are currently eight farms in Israel that grow marijuana for medical use. That number may increase exponentially under a plan recently proposed by ultra-Orthodox Health Minister, Yakov Litzman. Under the plan, there will be no restrictions on the number of dealers in the field of medical marijuana so long as the growers apply for a license and meet quality and safety requirements.

Israeli Youths Barred from International Competition

This year the Youth Sailing World Championships will be held in Langkawi, Malaysia.

Israeli competitors have been barred from the competition because Malaysia refused to grant visas to the Israeli youths and their coach. Malaysia reportedly forbade the athletes from carrying an Israeli flag or wearing any symbol showing their country of origin. The organizing body for World Sailing is investigating.

BDS Success, then Failure

The largest supermarket in Slovenia removed Israeli products from its shelves after pressure from the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement, known as BDS. The stated goal of the BDS Movement is for Arab control over all of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. The supermarket reversed its decision after the anti-Israel boycott received attention in the media.

Israeli Restaurant in East Village Is Best in U.S.

Timna, an Israeli restaurant in the East Village was chosen as the best new restaurant in the United States by readers of USA Today and 10Best. Chef Nir Mesika creates interesting Middle East dishes, including chestnut soup, Mediterranean sashimi, and Bedouin octopus.

Tributes & Donations



Tributes to the PJC In Honor of ...

- Vivian & Theodor Brown, IHO Oliver Krulak in celebration of his Bar Mitzvah
- Judy & David Plaschkes, IHO Sybil & Les Rosenberg on their 50th wedding anniversary

Tributes to the PJC In Memory of ...

- Vivian & Theodor Brown, IMO Ethel Salzberg
- Martin Dvorkin, IMO Marilyn Dvorkin
- Hildy & Steve Martin, IMO Marilyn Dvorkin
- Michael Simon, IMO Celia Greenfield, founding member of the Pelham Jewish Center

Donations to the PJC from ...

- Barry Emer
- Jean Grumet & Seth Kupferberg
- Naomi & Marshall Jaffe, the purchase of a hot-water kettle for tea service during Kiddush
- Jaclyn & Evan Walker

Special Donations to the PJC from ...

- The Estate of Arlana Cohen
- Les & Sybil Rosenberg



Rabbi Alex Salzberg

הרב עזרא יהונתן בן שלמה ושרה

December 1, 2015

Les and Sybil Rosenberg
3 Brassie Road
Eastchester, NY 10709

Dear Les and Sybil,

I hope that this note finds you well. I am writing to thank you for your donation to the Pelham Jewish Center, allowing us to create the Memorial Garden and erect the plaque commemorating the victims of the Shoah. Your gift also helped us to pay needed attention to other, related landscaping concerns.

Les, you told me when we first met that you take the Biblical command to tithe seriously. Your actions have demonstrated the truth of your words. You are both a powerful example of Jews who are committed to the welfare and continuity of the community. Your continued support and generosity on behalf of the PJC is greatly appreciated, not only by me personally, but by our congregation.

בשילוח,


Rabbi Alex Salzberg

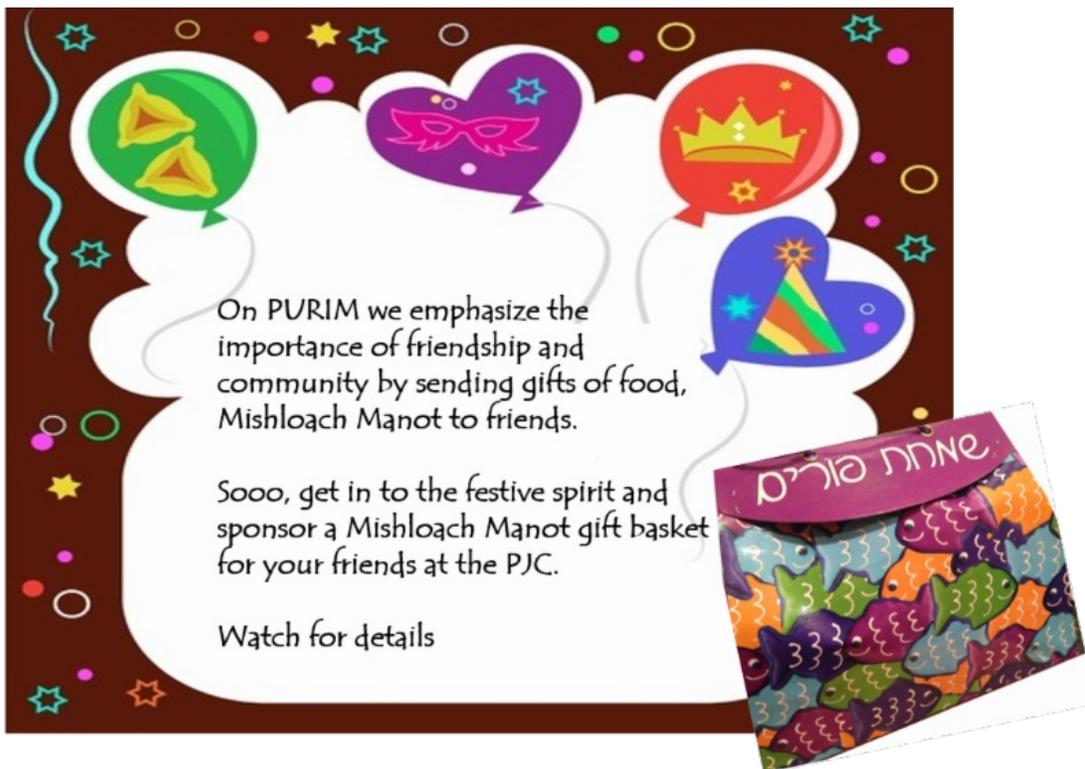

Steve Martin

He who does charity and justice is regarded as though he had filled whole world with loving kindness. -- Sukkah, 49b

The Pellsam Jewish Center * 451 Esplanade * Pellsam Manor, NY 10803 * 914-738-6008 * www.thepjc.org

Make Tributes & Donations [ONLINE!](#)

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On PURIM we emphasize the importance of friendship and community by sending gifts of food, Mishloach Manot to friends.

Sooo, get in to the festive spirit and sponsor a Mishloach Manot gift basket for your friends at the PJC.

Watch for details

The graphic features a dark brown background with colorful stars and circles. It includes four balloons: a green one with yellow triangles, a purple one with a pink masquerade mask, a red one with a yellow crown, and a blue one with a colorful party hat. In the bottom right corner, there is a gift basket filled with colorful fish-shaped cookies, with a purple ribbon that says 'מנחת פורים' (Mishloach Manot).

SAVE THE DATE
PJC PURIM CARNIVAL
SUNDAY, MARCH 13TH, 1:00PM

SUNDAY, MARCH 13th, 1-3PM

join us for games, a taste of the circus, balloons
and, of course, treats!

Open to all, please bring your friends!
Questions: shayna.klopott@gmail.com



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