



## Rabbi's Message



In Mishnah Eduyot 5:6, we are introduced to Akavya ben Mehalelel, one of the greatest scholars in his generation:

**Akavya the son of Mehalelel testified about four things. They said to him: Akavya, retract the four things you have said and we will make you the head of the court of Israel. He said to them: Better I be called a fool all my days, so long as I do not do wickedness for even a single moment before the Omnipresent, so that they will not say "he retracted because [he wanted] power."**

This sounds uncannily familiar in our current election cycle, when politicians seem to fall into one of two categories. They either reverse themselves to align their positions with the latest polls, or point to their unwillingness to consider different perspectives as a sign of integrity. Akavya clearly viewed any evolution of his positions as a

betrayal of his teachers and of the Divine Will. That was his right, and perhaps he was correct in his opinions.

We are then presented with two different possibilities as to how the community reacted. First, we are told that he was excommunicated for his stubbornness and that his coffin was stoned after his death. It seems that even in the time of the great rabbis, there was little tolerance for religious or political pluralism.

However, we are also presented with a second possibility in a statement made by Rabbi Yehudah. He is shocked by the mere proposition that Akavya could have been excommunicated, declaring that "the [Temple] courtyard is never locked for any man of Israel who has wisdom and fear of sin like Akavya the son of Mehalelel [had]." Instead, Rabbi Yehudah claims that another man was excommunicated, for mocking an important religious ritual.

As a nation, and as a worldwide Jewish community, we have yet to learn the message of Akavya as taught by Rabbi Yehudah. I have received numerous letters over the past year decrying the lack of civility and respect in religious and national discourses. On topics ranging from the Iran nuclear deal, to the compromise on space at the Kotel, to the current election cycle, I am inundated with examples of intransigence and rejection. Too often, people are unwilling to respect the individual as they disagree with their opinions.

But I am heartened and reassured when I come to the PJC. I frequently overhear conversations about politics and religion, policy and practice. Most of the time, there is disagreement. But the disagreement is always respectful, and the conversation good-natured. We stand firm in our positions, but never let them interfere with our ability to come together to pray, to learn, to celebrate or to grieve.

At the end of his life, Akavya advises his son to reject the minority positions that he himself had clung to. When his son asks him why, Akavya responds, "I heard them from the mouths of many people, and they [i.e., the other Sages] heard [the opposite] from the mouths of many people. I stood by what I heard, and they stood by what they heard." Even after years of disagreeing with the majority on essential issues of Jewish law, Akavya was able to recognize the legitimacy of their

position. May we all learn from his example, holding fast to our principles and valuing the central place of community and respect in our tradition.

בשלום,

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Upcoming PJC  
Activities & Events

**May**

**5** -- Yom Hashoah Program with Dr. Moshe Avital/7:30pm

**7** -- Shabbat Mishpachah/9:30am

**12** -- Yom Ha'atzmaut BBQ/5:30pm

**20** -- Shabbat B'Shamayim/5:30pm

**21** -- Women's Group/1pm

**22** -- Tag Sale/9am

**3** -- Community Shabbat Dinner/ Following Services

**11** -- Tot Shabbat/11am

**11** -- Tikkun Leil Shavuot/8:30pm

**12** -- Shavuot Services/9:30am

**13** -- Shavuot Services/9:30am

**16** -- Congregational Meeting/8pm

**25** -- Women's Group/1pm

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## From the Desk of Our Education Director

*"And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the entire congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them, You shall be holy, for I, the Lord, your G-d, am holy."(Leviticus, 19:1-2)*



As we start the month of May, we come closer to two important dates in the Jewish Calendar, both connected to our recent 20th century history - *Yom Hasho'ah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day) and *Yom Ha'atzma'ut* (Israeli Independence Day). Smack in the middle of those two critical moments in our History, comes the weekly Torah portion for this week of May 8-14, *Parashat "Kedoshim"*, or "The Holy". The "*Kedoshim*" Torah Portion opens with G-d telling Moses that the nation of Israel shall be holy because it is a nation of G-d, and G-d is holy. Let's hold this thought for a while. We are holy because our G-d is holy. What does that demand from us?

A few years ago, I taught 6<sup>th</sup> graders at a Jewish Day School the book of *BaMidbar* (Numbers). The Essential Question I wanted my students to be able to answer by the end of a year of deep study was: "What does it mean to be a Nation of G-d?" The encounter between students and the text from the Torah while having this Essential Question in the background exposed glimpses of "revelation" as we embarked on a Journey with Bnei Israel in the desert (*BaMidbar*) while they search to become a Nation of G-d. Both the students and I went through a discovery process as we looked for the ways in which G-d developed His special relationship with Bnei Israel in the book of *BaMidbar*. Each one of us struggled with our own relationship with G-d, as a parallel personal journey to the one taking place in the biblical narrative.

Meir Shalev, an Israeli author, once wrote: "The successful journey never ends-kilometers do; but the time remains engraved in you and becomes part of you. At the end of the journey, you do not feel a winner, but rather thankful, as if the road went through you, and not you through the road." I feel as if I did not "end" my journey with my students through the "*Midbar*". The roads we took together are now a part of me, and I find myself returning to them, similar to the Israelites who walked in a roundabout for 40 years looking for the Promised Land.

Heschel, in his book *G-d in Search of Man* (1955) describes this arduous attempt of mankind to encounter G-d as a two-way relationship as he quotes Job's plight: "*I have sought Thy nearness; with all my heart I have called Thee, and going out to meet Thee I found Thee coming toward me.*" Job expresses the complex dialectic of the man - G-d relationship, the challenge of searching for the Divine with one's full intention, just to realize that G-d has been seeking him at the same time.

A few days ago, I had a conversation with a parent and her 5th grade daughter. The daughter claimed that she didn't want to come to school anymore because "we learn the same thing again and again". I tried to help her understand that although we do repeat the same holidays and Torah portions every year, we are the ones changing. We are in a Journey of discovery, and each time, confronted with the same "sign posts" Judaism has throughout the week and throughout the year, we continuously seek to reach for a deeper understanding of ourselves, the world and G-d. So time and again, by allowing time for brief encounters with the Divine Sparks in our busy daily routine, we allow ourselves to evolve and grow in our own understanding of the Divine and our role as members of "a holy nation."

Although the Torah text is permanent in time and space and available to all of us to revisit as many times as we wish, the moment of revelation in Sinai was momentary, ephemeral, and happened only to the prophet. In any given moment as we learn and discuss Torah, we are making an attempt to re-enact revelation, in order to continuously uncover what was revealed. Heschel writes: "At Sinai, G-d revealed His word, and Israel revealed the power to respond." By looking at the Torah text as an opportunity to respond, to ask questions, to reflect, debate and discuss how the words impact us, we can be empowered to sustain the dialectic meaning of revelation as described by Heschel. The weekly Shabbat Torah Service, the re-enactment of revelation, brings us closer to an understanding of G-d's will and perhaps of the vision expressed by Moses: "Would it be that all G-d's people were prophets, that Adonay would give His spirit upon them" (Num 11:29).

What does it mean to be a nation of G-d? Inspired by the struggle between the Israelites and G-d in the narrative, I wonder if we also may go through a dynamic process of doubting and affirming our own relationship with G-d as we journey through different experiences in our lives. Not only does this process never end, it seems that this process is as critical to men as other human traits. So I would suggest adding an additional Essential Question to our personal journeys through the Jewish Year and the Torah Reading: Let's start asking ourselves: "What does it mean **to me** to be a part of a nation of G-d?" "What does that demand from me?" "How can my actions, my words, my choices, reflect that holiness?"

What would it mean for our community if we would all engage in a Journey seeking holiness? Please feel free to share your thoughts with me and with others, since we are all together in this Jewish business of striving to be a holy nation-aren't we?

Chag Atzmaut Sameach,

Ana Turkienicz

Education Director

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## President's Message

Judaism has always been intensely aware of the power of speech acts. The world was created when G-d said, "Let there be light." We are currently in the first part of the counting of the Omer, from *Pesach* to *Lag b'Omer*, a period of time we do not allow celebrations. Why no celebrations? Because we mourn and commemorate the death of thousands of students of Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Salzberg taught over *Pesach* that the Talmudic explanation for their deaths was "they did not conduct themselves with respect for each other." (Yevamot 62b) The traditional explanation for the destruction of the Temple is *sinat hinam*, baseless, gratuitous hatred among the Jews of Jerusalem. *Lashon hara*, evil tongue, remains a focus of rabbinic emphasis and teachings because there is a deep understanding of the damage speech can do. We are not a religion that embraces the children's saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me." Instead, we understand that three people are hurt by evil speech: the one who speaks it, the one who hears it and the one who is spoken about.

These are stressful times partly because too few of us are committed to the right kind of speech, myself included. It takes tremendous concentration, foresight and generosity to avoid the wrong kind of speech. This is perhaps even more true in our interpersonal interactions as it is in our political lives. We need now, more than ever, to practice kindness and moderation in our speech to each other -- inside and outside the walls of our synagogue.

The intersection of this year's political campaign and *Yom HaShoah* gives me pause. There is an undeniable coarsening of modern debate, a shift in the boundaries of what is permissible to say out loud. I worry that it has become increasingly normative to demonize anyone who disagrees with us, and I am frightened by the consequences of this trend. We should all be concerned about the power of speech.

I deeply believe that we at the PJC, we Americans, share core values about so many things, and yet it can take so little to undermine our ability to acknowledge that we share those common values. As we look forward to many more months of ongoing political debates, whether they are about Israel, presidential politics or other topics du jour, we need to remind ourselves of the fundamental importance of treating each other



with respect, that we avoid baseless hatred, that we avoid the evil tongue. I have come to believe that our promise of "Never again" starts with our speech to each other.

B'shalom,

Steve

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## PJC Gala -- Thank You!

### Pelham Jewish Center

2016 Gala



April 10, 2016

Donna Weissman and the 2016 PJC Gala Committee wish to extend their thanks to everyone who made this year's Gala such a tremendous success! First and foremost, thanks to Hildy & Steve Martin for allowing us to honor them. Although they hesitated to do so, they graciously said yes in order to benefit the PJC, and we are pleased to announce that this enabled us to raise over \$25,000 in support of the synagogue.

Thanks to all those who participated in this effort, including everyone who purchased tickets, made a donation or placed ads in the journal. We are extremely grateful to those who opened up their homes to host a dinner: Rachel & Andy Collens, Karen Dukess & Steve Liesman, Deborah Korenstein & Michael Glickman, Andrea Prigot & Haig Hovaness, Elaine & Marc Prager, and Lydia Read & Dan Mailick.

Several thousand dollars were raised thanks to our generous silent auction donors: Julie Cepler, Diane Cohen, Jill & Barry Goldenberg, Steve Liesman, Jeanne & David Radvany, Sybil Rosenberg, Beth & Joel Serebransky, Ana Turkienicz and Liz Tzetz.

Many people participated in the planning and execution of the event. Thanks to: Leah Leonard for spearheading communications; Julia Coss for helping to manage all of the minute details; Adam Bukowski for everything he did to make the space look great; Melanie Samuels for handling the finances; Sybil Rosenberg for donating the floral centerpieces; Deborah Karson for designing the invitation and taking photos of our honorees; Darren Lee for all of his printing, re-printing and endless patience, as well as his help in setting up - along with Izak Lee; Neco Turkienicz for the beautiful montage; Adam Abeshouse for his audio expertise; Roger Krulak for planning the dessert reception - and Lisa Neubardt, Cheryl Goldstein & Marcelo Nacht, and Naomi Jaffe for helping him with the reception set up; Jill Goldenberg, Naomi Jaffe, Larry & Diane Cohen, Lisa Neubardt and Michael Weissman for their work on the Gala Committee, and finally, to everyone who pitched in at the end to help clean up.

It was a beautiful evening, made more so by the participation of so many community members who helped to celebrate the PJC and Hildy & Steve!

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## Membership Meeting Announced

# ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The Annual Meeting of our membership will be held on Thursday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, at 8:00 p.m. at the PJC.

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend in person if you can. Official proxies will be sent by mail and also will be posted on our website a few weeks before the meeting.

The Nominating Committee has recommended the following slate of candidates for consideration at the Annual Meeting, scheduled for Thursday, June 16<sup>th</sup>:

Officers: (one-year terms):

**President: Darren Lee**

**Executive Vice President: Michelle Dvorkin**

**Secretary: Mark Levine**

**Treasurer: Ted Brown**

General Board Members: (three-year terms):

**David Radvany**

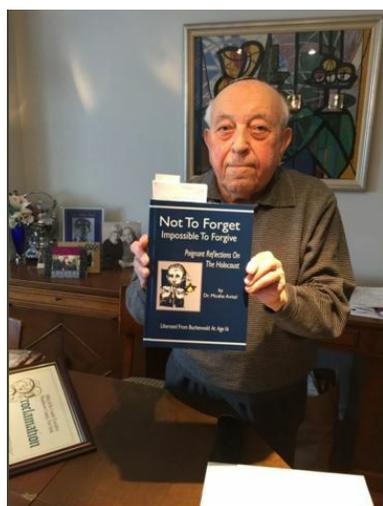
**Andrew Stettner**

**Michael Weissman**

Other candidates may run for any office by presenting the signatures of ten (10) members to the Secretary at least twenty (20) days prior to the Annual Meeting. For the official notice, [click here](#).

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## Yom Hashoah Program at the PJC



### Featuring Dr. Moshe Avital Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm

Please join us on Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup>, at the PJC when we will observe Yom Hashoah [Holocaust Remembrance Day], featuring speaker Dr. Moshe Avital. Dr. Avital was born in Czechoslovakia, and during the Holocaust was imprisoned in six concentration camps. He was deported to Auschwitz at age 14 with his entire family, was separated from them and - after much suffering - was liberated from Buchenwald by the American Third Army on April 11, 1945. In total, Dr. Avital lost 200 relatives.

After Liberation, he was hospitalized for two months in a makeshift hospital in Buchenwald. He was sent to Ecouis, a village in Normandy, France for recuperation. There he joined the illegal immigration to the then Palestine.

His ship, which was named the Children of Buchenwald, was intercepted by the British navy on the Mediterranean. He was forcefully removed from the ship by the British Forces and imprisoned in Atlit Detention Camp in Palestine.

One night, Moshe Avital was liberated by members of the Hagannah - "A Jewish Underground in Palestine". He later joined the Hagannah and fought in the War of Liberation 1947-1950. He also fought in the 1956 War with the Israel Defense Forces in the Sinai War.

In November 1950, he came to the U.S. and pursued his higher Academic education at Yeshiva

In November 1950, he came to the U.S. and pursued his higher Academic education at Yeshiva University, graduating with high honors, and earning a BA and MS in Education, and a PhD in Hebrew Literature.

For 50 years, he has served in various Educational positions in the United States. Dr. Avital speaks half a dozen languages and is a translator. He was the official Hebrew to English Translator for the ABC Network for the proceedings of the then Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's historic visit to Israel, and the proceedings of the Knesset - the Israeli Parliament - in November 1997.

To date, Dr. Avital has published 15 books, most about Jewry, Zionism, Jewish education, the Holocaust and the Bible. He is a well-known author and speaker on the Holocaust. He presents extraordinary testimony, both as a survivor and as an educator, bringing to light many unknown facts of the Holocaust era. He provides psychological, philosophical and theological analysis, as well as reflections regarding the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Dr. Avital divides his time between New Rochelle and Israel.

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## **Yasher Koach to Our PJC Education Director!**



Ana Turkienicz, our Learning Center Education Director, will be spending three weeks in June - July volunteering as a Hebrew teacher, teaching the educators in the Cuban Jewish Community.

Wishing Ana a well-deserved *Yasher Koach* as being named one of the 2016-2017 winners of Rodeph Sholom School's Paul Druzinsky Teacher Enrichment Fund Award recipients!

The Paul Druzinsky Teacher Enrichment Fund helps RSS attract, retain, and reward outstanding faculty by awarding two annual grants of up to \$7,500 each to selected faculty members for one-of-a-kind, transformative experiences related to their fields.

"I have been teaching Hebrew, Prayer and Torah for the last 10 years since I came to America, and I have been privileged to do so in a country where we have the freedom to access knowledge and technology to enrich our instruction and engage our learners. I have always been interested in learning about Jewish Communities who manage to keep their Judaism alive and survive as a community against all odds," Ana Turkienicz says about her upcoming trip to Cuba.

"I learned about the Jewish Community in Cuba many years ago and about their struggle to survive as Jews and as a community. I am fascinated by their strength, and I believe as a Jewish Educator in America, I have much to learn from Jews who have struggled to keep alive the flame of Judaism in spite of all the restrictions and shortness of means, media and resources. I believe such an encounter can help me grow as a Jewish educator and as a human being, forcing me to explore beyond the limits of what we know today about Hebrew language instruction," Ana says.

Proud of Ana and this meaningful acknowledgement of her talent & vision!

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## **Membership Directory Update**



The PJC is initiating a Membership Directory update. Please look for further information and details in our *Weekly Announcements*. We plan to send you a copy of the information we currently have in our database for your family, and have you return it to our Office Manager, Julia Coss, updated and complete.

Thanks in advance ... more details to follow soon!

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## **The PJC Community Cemetery Program**



The PJC Cemetery Committee would like to suggest that the time to learn about our project, and to consider making a purchase, is **now - no matter your age or situation**. Our cemetery area is at Mt. Eden in Hawthorne, NY, and the director - Steve Cipolla - is happy to discuss what is available, costs and how this works, as well as show you around. He can be reached at (914) 769-0603. The Cemetery Committee, chaired by [Jacqueline Schachter](#), would like to encourage members to speak with her about this program, as well.

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## Israel News Bits

### Happy Birthday! Zubin Mehta

Iconic Israeli conductor Zubin Mehta turned 80 in April. Mehta, who became the music director of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra 47 years ago, is not slowing down. After engagements in India, Italy and Austria, he will be heading on a tour of South America in late summer. In addition to his day job in Israel, Mehta oversees music programs for Druse, Muslim and Christian Arab youth.

### To Fight ISIS, Israel Provides Intelligence to Its Neighbors

While Israel has peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, its relationship with both countries remains tense. Nevertheless, on important security issues, the countries sometimes cooperate. Major General Yair Golan, the IDF deputy chief of staff, recently told news outlets that Israel was providing intelligence support to both Egypt and Jordan in the fight against ISIS. While ISIS poses a threat to Israel, Iran-backed Hezbollah

remains Israel's largest risk with over 100,000 rockets and missiles.



### Under-Education of Ultra-Orthodox: Who Is to Blame?

It is a regular challenge to provide ultra-Orthodox children with the education they need to be full participants in Israeli society. Their schools, which are funded by the State of Israel, do not provide core subjects such as English or mathematics. Fifty two former ultra-Orthodox students have sued Israel for failing to provide them with a basic education. In an aggressive move, Israel has sued the students' parents saying that if the students are not successful, the parents are at fault because they could have sent their children to a different school. The lawsuit will shine a light on the poor educational system that Israel now supports for the ultra-Orthodox.

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## PJC Library News



There is a wealth of books on Jewish themes in our PJC Library. Drop in and take a look. Books are arranged by categories and marked by white labels. We have shelves on varied topics: ancient Israel, modern Israel, Holocaust studies and literature, Jewish history, Jewish literacy, Israeli writers, Jewish fiction, Jews & Christianity, biography, children's books, books for youth, *chumashim*, *talmudim*, *siddurim*, and Jews from other lands, to name a few.

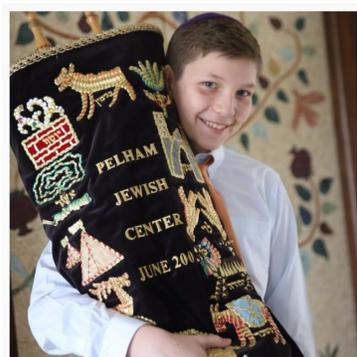
Borrowing a book is easy. There is a pocket with a green card in the back of most books. Write your name and the date you take the book out on the card. Hand the card into the Office. Julia will periodically check to see how long books have been out. If a book is out more than a month, she will send you a gentle reminder. To return a book, place it in either of the two blue bins found in the Library and in the Office.

On the bottom right side on the wall adjacent to the kitchen, below the Israel shelves, is an empty cabinet set aside to keep source books you may need for services. Please make use of it as needed.

Come to the PJC and READ!

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## The PJC Torah Guide



The Learning Center's Hebrew High School has created a video demonstrating many of the Honors that are given out during a typical Shabbat morning service, so that anyone can see what is expected, and feel comfortable accepting an Honor at the PJC. Click [here](#) to watch the video; the password is shalom451.

This video is also intended to be shared with family or friends who may be visiting the PJC, and are uncertain about accepting an Honor. Our thanks go out to the members of the Hebrew High School for stepping up to support our community, and our deep gratitude goes to Neco Turkienicz, who filmed and edited what you see.

If you would like to practice any of the Honors before participating, please contact [Rabbi Salzgberg](#) -- he would be happy to work with you directly.

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## Tributes & Donations



### Tributes to the PJC In Memory of ...

- Evelyn & Gary Trachten, In Blessed Memory of Evelyn's father, Joe Olensky, remembering and honoring this exceptionally warm and loving man
- Evelyn & Gary Trachten, In Blessed Memory of Janice Rossman
- Sally & Harold Weisman, In Memory of Ines DiGioia

### Donations to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund from ...

- Meryl & Martin Druckerman, in honor of Siri Wright, on the completion of her conversion ~ Mazel Tov!
- Meryl & Martin Druckerman, in recognition of Leah & John Leonard, for their most meaningful donation of the new Memorial Wall Board
- Amy Ehrlich & Jonathan Backer, in honor of Hildy & Steve Martin
- Maria & Adam Absehouse, for the Maot Hittim Fund
- Barry S. Emer, for the Maot Hittim Fund
- Shelli Goldberg-Peck & Joel Peck, for the Maot Hittim Fund
- Florence Grossman, for the Maot Hittim Fund
- Marjut & Jonathan Herzog, for the Maot Hittim Fund
- Linda & Mark Levine, for the Maot Hittim Fund
- Andrea Prigot & Haig Hovaness, for the Maot Hittim Fund
- Sybil & Les Rosenberg, for the Maot Hittim Fund
- Jacqueline Schachter & David Haft, for the Maot Hittim Fund
- Elizabeth & Joel Serebransky, for the Maot Hittim Fund
- Rhonda Singer, for the Maot Hittim Fund
- Deborah & Morris Stampfer, for the Maot Hittim Fund
- Evelyn & Gary Trachten, for the Maot Hittim Fund

**Make Tributes & Donations [ONLINE!](#)**

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