



# Hakol

THE VOICE OF THE  
PELHAM JEWISH CENTER

November 2017  
5778 Cheshvan / Kislev



## Upcoming PJC Activities & Events

### November

**17** -- *Pizmon* Joins Us for Shabbat/Community Shabbat Dinner/7:30pm

**18** -- *Pizmon* Joins Us for Shabbat/*A Capella* Concert/1pm

**19** -- Thanksgiving-in-Box Drop Off/Huguenot Church/9am-5pm

**19** -- Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, Christ Church/4pm

**20** -- Thanksgiving-in-Box Drop Off/Huguenot Church/9am-5pm

**21** -- Thanksgiving-in-Box Drop Off/Huguenot Church/9am-5pm

**23** -- Offices Closed

**24** -- Offices Closed

### December

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## Rabbi's Message

I am very excited and grateful that the Pelham Jewish Center will continue to be a part of my life and the life of my family. In Darren's letter to the community, he shared that there was an overwhelming desire to renew my contract; this affirms the deep connections and relationships that we have built together in less than three years. These bonds develop slowly, and I am committed to nurturing and strengthening them in the years to come. I believe that we have grown together since I arrived, and we will continue to grow as individuals and as a community into the future.

The diversity of passions at the PJC is one of its greatest strengths. We must work together to ensure that all of us can find what we are looking for in our unique, committed, and powerful community and spiritual home.

As David wrote in the Psalms, "May we who dwell in God's house go from strength to strength."



go from strength to strength.

Rabbi Alex Salzberg



One of the first halakhic concepts that I was introduced to when I began studying to become a rabbi was that of "lishmah" - "for its own sake." In the context of my studies, it referred to legal documents, each needed to be written "for its own sake," not mass produced. This is why, in every wedding that I perform, there is a single letter that is left unfinished on the ketubah, so that one member of the couple can complete it, thus "writing" the document for the sake of that wedding.

This idea is extended beyond the intention that goes into producing documents. It is this same value that guides us when it comes to reciting the morning Shema, or listening to the shofar on Rosh Hashanah: when we do these things intentionally, for the sake of reciting the words or hearing the blasts, then we fulfill our obligation. But if we do them incidentally, or with some other purpose in mind, we do not fulfill the obligation.

So much of life is spent striving to achieve goals. We study in order to pass exams, we go to school in order to be qualified for a specific career, and we work in order to earn a promotion or earn a salary. These motivations are all valid, but they are not lishmah, we aren't studying or working for the sake of the study or the work.

At times, our relationship with the synagogue is the same way. Much of the work that our children do in the year leading up to becoming a bar or bat mitzvah is done in order to be successful on that day. Our fundraisers take place in order to keep the lights on at the PJC and to pay the bills. These are necessary endeavors, but again, they are not lishmah.

The primary components of our lives at the PJC must be different. When the Hebrew High School gathers together, or the Adult Education classes meet, we are not learning in order to achieve a grade, or complete a course. When we gather together to pray, or to celebrate a simcha, or to mourn a loss, we have no goal in mind beyond the immediate moment in front of us. We pray, and sing, and comfort for the sake of the prayer, the song, and the loss.

The divide between activities that are done lishmah and those that are not varies from person to person. In the example at the beginning of this column, I was studying Talmud for the sake of being successful at JTS. But the rabbis with whom I was studying had no other purpose, he studied with me for the sake of the study and in order to learn together with me.

We should all strive to find the aspects of our lives that we pursue lishmah. When we are successful, everything else - the worries and cares and responsibilities - fades away, and we focus only on the activity in front of us, no matter what it is. There can be no risk of failure when the goal is wrapped up in the activity itself. When the goal is to pray, then no service is too long. When the goal is to study, then no amount of time is too little.

We are at our best, and so is the PJC, when we each find the aspects of the community that we want to be a part of, for no other reason than that is where we want to be.

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## A Bit About Board Meetings!

Did you know that members of the Pelham Jewish Center are invited to attend the monthly Board meetings? Board meeting dates appear in <https://www.thepjc.org/calendar> .

**PJC Executive Vice President Andrea Prigot** walks us through the Board Meeting experience:

### What happens at a Board Meeting?

At each regular meeting, the elected Directors of the Board, along with Rabbi Salzberg and our Education Director, Ana Turkienicz, review and plan the PJC's community activities and religious services, discuss what is coming up at the Learning Center, talk about communications, review the PJC's financial status, plan for maintaining the PJC building and parsonage, and discuss social action efforts, efforts to bring in new members, and plan fundraising activities. Each chair comes to the Board meetings ready to report on what

**2** -- Hooked on Havdalah/4:30pm

**5** -- Soup Kitchen/ 4:30pm

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

**14** -- Making Shabbos: Challah/6pm

**15** -- Community Shabbat Dinner/ 7:30pm

**16** -- Open Book 1/ 10:30am

**25** -- Offices Closed

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### Quick Links

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[2017-18 Board of Directors](#)

has happened and what is coming up in their domain. The meeting allows for shared communication, informed decision making, and scheduling of dates, with the goal of ensuring smooth operations throughout the year.

The Board includes those who have served for many years, often in several different positions, and those who are new to PJC Board service and want to shape the direction of the PJC. This combination lets the Board hear many perspectives and build on prior experience during our meetings.

Each month, Rabbi Salzberg opens the meeting with a short d'var related to our community. President Darren Lee presents a mini "state of the PJC" talk on what is on his mind. Secretary Mark Levine distributes minutes of the prior month's meeting and Treasurer Ted Brown shares the latest financial statements. Barbara Saunders-Adams discusses fundraising efforts and David Radvany presents plans for promoting long-term financial sustainability. Michael Weissman covers what is new in House. Other chairs present what is happening and together we discuss any challenges and coordination requirements.

### **What is the Board focusing on right now?**

Increasingly the broader discussions revolve around community engagement, especially in going beyond financial support, which, while absolutely essential, is just part of active involvement in the community. The hope is to encourage members of all ages to volunteer their time to run one-time events, participate in social action programs, and to get involved in long-term work like that of Communications, headed by Leah Leonard. The Board and the Religious Practices Committee, headed by Shelley Klein, are also looking for ways to increase attendance and participation in religious services and attendance at shiva minyanim.

The Board is also discussing all the ways in which the PJC should welcome new families, which includes both new members and outside attendees at life cycle events. Much of the programming directed at newcomers and young families comes under Mimi Steinberg's purview, and she has organized a committee who comes up with programming and coordinates volunteers to set up for each event.

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## **Education Director's Message**



Recently, the Jewish newspaper "Forward" published a series of articles on the issue of Bar and Bat Mitzvah. In one of these articles, the Forward editor, [Jane Eisner](#), retells how she felt that her Bat-Mitzvah was one of the happiest days of her life before her wedding day. It reminded me of one very happy day, 9 years ago, on November 15, 2008, when I celebrated my adult Bat-Mitzvah at the PJC. My Torah portion was Parashat Vayera, which was read by Rachel Lief on her Bat Mitzvah this year.

In light of recent events, I wanted to revisit my d'var Torah from that day, with which I found myself grappling again, as we approach this same Torah portion now.

[Parashat Vayera](#), (Genesis 18:1-22:24) is rich in dramatic events. I find one of them particularly disturbing to me, and little was written about it by the commentators: in this Parsha, we learn that Abraham saved his own life by sending his wife Sarah to king Avimelech, while telling him that she was his sister, not his wife. In the light of the recent revelations in the Harvey Weinstein case, a big question mark suddenly popped up - is there a message in our biblical tradition that enables men to objectify women? Why was Abraham doing this to his wife, Sarah? How does this align with Abraham's inspiring character: his hospitality and kindness to strangers, his fight for justice in Sodom, his unconditional belief in God? Is this another of G-d's tests of Abraham's belief?

And what about Sarah? Did she have a role in God's plan? First she was promised a son in old age, and then she is sent away for yet a second time to "save" Avraham's life - and what about her own life, her body? I became puzzled, upset, and angry at Abraham.

Judith Plaskow, in the "[Women's Commentary of the Torah](#)," asks what happened to the moral voice of Abraham when he - in her words - betrays his wife Sarah. If we are partners with G-d in Creation, therefore, we are sacred, and our relationships are sacred, it seems that what is happening in this portion between Abraham and Sarah disrupts the idea of the sacredness of marriage. In [Midrash Rabbah](#), we learn that Sarah was Abraham's niece. [Rashi](#), an 11th century commentator, teaches that Abraham could state that Sarah, who was actually his niece, was indeed his "sister," in the sense as nieces and nephews are

close relatives. In the same way, Abraham referred to his nephew, Lot, as his "brother." Even if we accept that for Rashi, a niece can be called "sis", this does not change the fact that Sarah indeed WAS Abraham's wife, and that during the entire time that we followed Abraham's journey, never was it revealed that she was anything but his wife.

[Rabbi Obadia Sforno](#), a 16th century commentator, suggests that to be a "wanderer" means to be exiled from one's birthplace, continuously moving from place to place. When we judge the actions of the wanderer, the exiled, we have to know that his circumstances were very different. This commentary helped me frame my inquiry and nailed my question right on. So let me try to make sense out of this.

Let's look at this narrative from the perspective of the wanderer, the refugee, the illegal immigrant; back in Ur, Abraham marries his niece Sarah. They leave their homeland, and wander towards a land that G-d has yet to reveal to him. Living in exile requires a special survival kit. Before their departure, the young couple agrees that in order to stay alive during their journey, they will tell strangers that Sarah is Abraham's sister - not exactly a lie, but a half truth. This will ensure those strangers won't kill Abraham to marry Sarah. Since this actually happens twice - once with Pharaoh in Egypt and again with Avimelech in Gerar - we come to understand that this is a matter of absolute trust: basic and unconditional trust between the wandering young husband and his wife. We also understand that at this point in the narrative, Abraham and Sarah know that G-d promised that they will become parents of a great nation, and that they will have a son in the next year. They need to stay alive at all costs, and they need to trust each other.

What? How did I go from the act of lying to Avimelech to an act of trust? See, first came Abraham's unconditional and absolute trust in G-d - a G-d who tells him to wander into a strange land - and then, the trust between Abraham and his partner Sarah - an alliance that becomes the root and source of the Jewish people, for better and for worse. Perhaps trusting G-d enabled Abraham and Sarah to develop a mutual trust in one another that endured against all odds. Thus, when later on G-d tells Abraham: "Do whatever Sarah tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be called yours," we see a partnership among G-d, Abraham and Sarah but we may still argue that one of the sides in this partnership is not given a fair shot.

In the words of another commentator, the [Ramban](#), (Nachmanides) a strong connection to G-d is "d'veikut," closeness, a cleaving unto God. The first time this expression is used in the Torah is upon the rejoining of Man and Woman after G-d created Woman from Adam's side - "ve-davak be-ishto ve-hayu le-vasar echad." One of the great principles the Ramban employs to understand the book of Genesis is "ma'asse avot siman le-vanim" - the stories of the forefathers are signs, hints, premonitions of what will happen to the children. This inherent experience of Judaism and Torah is seen in all generations.

Throughout history, the Jewish people have been continuously confronted with dangerous life and death situations. To save their own lives and their Jewish legacy, many others after Abraham and Sarah displayed courageous acts of trust in G-d and devotion to one another.

Three thousand years after Abraham and Sarah's story, in their escape from their homeland Poland to South America, my father's family faced a similar dilemma. In 1928, my paternal grandmother, also named Sarah, was not able to obtain enough certificates to bring her parents, her young brother and her 4 year-old son, my father, Leonardo, to South America. Three generations were not permitted to leave Poland together. So **Sarah**, my grandmother pretended to be my father's (her son's) **sister**. During the voyage from Europe to South America, my father hurt his finger in a door in the ship, and ran into my grandmother's arms crying in yiddish: "Mame, mame!" My grandmother, frightened that someone might hear him, slapped my father and replied, "You cannot call me your mother! I am your sister." That I stand before you today is in truth, due to their courage and the tough decisions they made and kept; the lies they told to "kings", and the tests they were put through by G-d, including the challenge to the sacred bond and trust between a mother and her infant child.

The story of the two Sarahs, the biblical one and my grandmother, stand before my eyes as I listen to current accounts of modern migrants, wanderers, and refugees, who are faced with unfathomable challenges as they choose between life and death. The true meaning of these stories, if taken as metaphors for our own life, can still illuminate our choices. The name "Sarah" means minister, leader. May Sarah's story teach us lessons of endurance, leadership and perseverance against all odds. However, I cannot find in our matriarchal and patriarchal stories an answer for the inexplicable sexual harassment behavior we are witnessing in the news these recent weeks. Maybe that's because these stories were not told by women... I wonder what would have been the women's voice when telling about the same events, and how our world would have been shaped if these were the earliest stories we would have learned in our formative years. It's on us now to find those voices and make them heard as modern Jewish educators and parents.

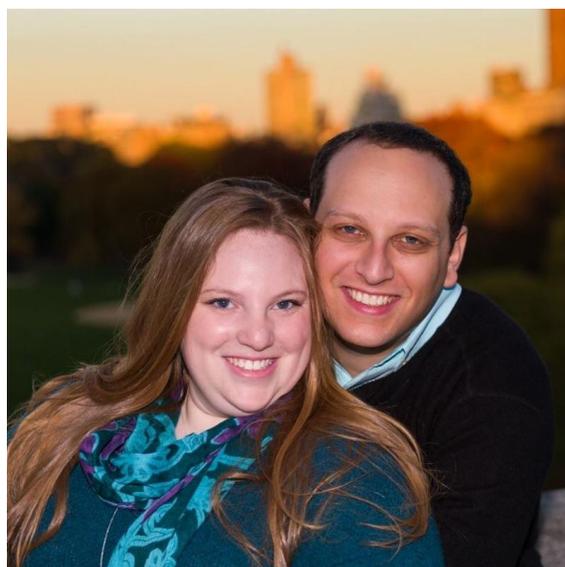
I hope the words of Torah will inspire us to develop trust in mankind, and a belief in justice. May they enable us to be wise and compassionate as we witness one of the greatest migration waves in the history of humankind, seeking opportunities to embrace and welcome the stranger before we judge their choices. We all know, "our father was also a wandering aramean". May we never face the challenges of strangers in a strange land, as our ancestors did.

May G-d bless each every one of you and your families with health, love and shalom.

*Ana Turkienicz*

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## Dana and Brad's Aufruf!



Please join Jacqui Stein and family & friends as they celebrate the upcoming wedding of her daughter, Dana Wellesley-Stein to Bradley Levine with an *aufruf* in the couple's honor! Join them this Saturday, November 11th, for the *aufruf* during Shabbat morning services, followed by a Kiddush celebrating Dana & Brad and their marriage.

All are warmly welcome to attend and wish them all *Mazal Tov!*

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## Pizmon Shabbat

**A CAPPELLA CONCERT AT 1:00 ON SATURDAY!**

**PIZMON** PELHAM JEWISH CENTER | NOV. 17-18

CHECK US OUT AT [PIZMON.ORG](http://PIZMON.ORG)

PIZMON WILL BRING THEIR VOICES AND SONGS TO SHABBAT SERVICES AT THE PJC, BOTH FRIDAY NIGHT AT 6:30 AND SATURDAY MORNING AT 9:30

FOLLOWING KABBALAT SHABBAT ON FRIDAY, WE WILL BE SHARING A COMMUNITY SHABBAT DINNER. PLEASE RSVP TO JULIA IN THE OFFICE. (\$18 PER ADULT, CHILDREN ARE FREE).

Join us -- RSVP to [Julia](#) today for our first song-filled Community Shabbat dinner of the year next Friday

## Thanksgiving in a Box

Please join our community effort this Thanksgiving to help feed a family for the holiday. As part of Thanksgiving-in-a-Box, the PJC has signed up to donate 75 boxes this year and we need your help!

Pelham as a whole donates 800 boxes - let's do our share. It's as easy as writing a check, or as fun as shopping with the kids to get them involved. See the flyer for details or reach out to [Michelle Dvorkin](#). Together we can help feed so many in need.

Click [here](#) to link directly to the Thanksgiving-in-a-Box flyer which lists all the items in the collection and program details.

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## Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

### INTERFAITH THANKSGIVING SERVICE

*Sponsored by the Pelham Interfaith Council, representing: Christ Church (Episcopal), Huguenot Memorial Church (Presbyterian), Pelham Jewish Center, Community Church of the Pelhams (United Church of Christ), and Our Lady of Perpetual Help/Saint Catharine's Church (Roman Catholic Church)*

*All are invited to this family-friendly, community gathering. Please join us as we celebrate Thanksgiving together.*





**4 pm, Sunday, November 19**

**Christ Church, 1415 Pelhamdale Avenue [at Shore Road]**

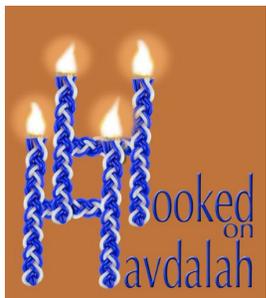
**[www.facebook.com/PelhamInterfaithCouncil](http://www.facebook.com/PelhamInterfaithCouncil)**

*Refreshments to follow*

**BRING A CAN OR BOX OF FOOD FOR THE ANNUAL INTERFAITH FOOD OFFERING  
[MONETARY DONATIONS ALSO ACCEPTED] TO BENEFIT A LOCAL FOOD PANTRY**

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## Hooked on Havdalah: A Night of Community, Jazz and Wine



Enjoy a catered intimate dinner in the home of a fellow congregant of the PJC. All parties come together at the PJC after dinner for Havdalah, then the kids are upstairs doing crafts and having fun while the adults enjoy an evening of live jazz (Israeli musicians), dessert and wine with new and old friends! Please join us for this memorable and wonderful evening. A good time will be had by all!

Saturday evening, December 2nd, beginning at 4:30pm, meeting at the PJC at 6:30pm.

RSVP to [Mimi Steinberg](#) to attend or volunteer to host a dinner.

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## Open Book Program

# The Pelham Jewish Center

## OPEN BOOK

### Torah Service

12/16

1/6

2/3

### The Amidah

3/10

3/24

4/14

Have you ever felt lost during Shabbat morning services?

Do you wish that you understood them better?

Come learn the intention of the prayers,

the meaning of the words, and the choreography of the service

Saturday mornings at 10:30 in the Library

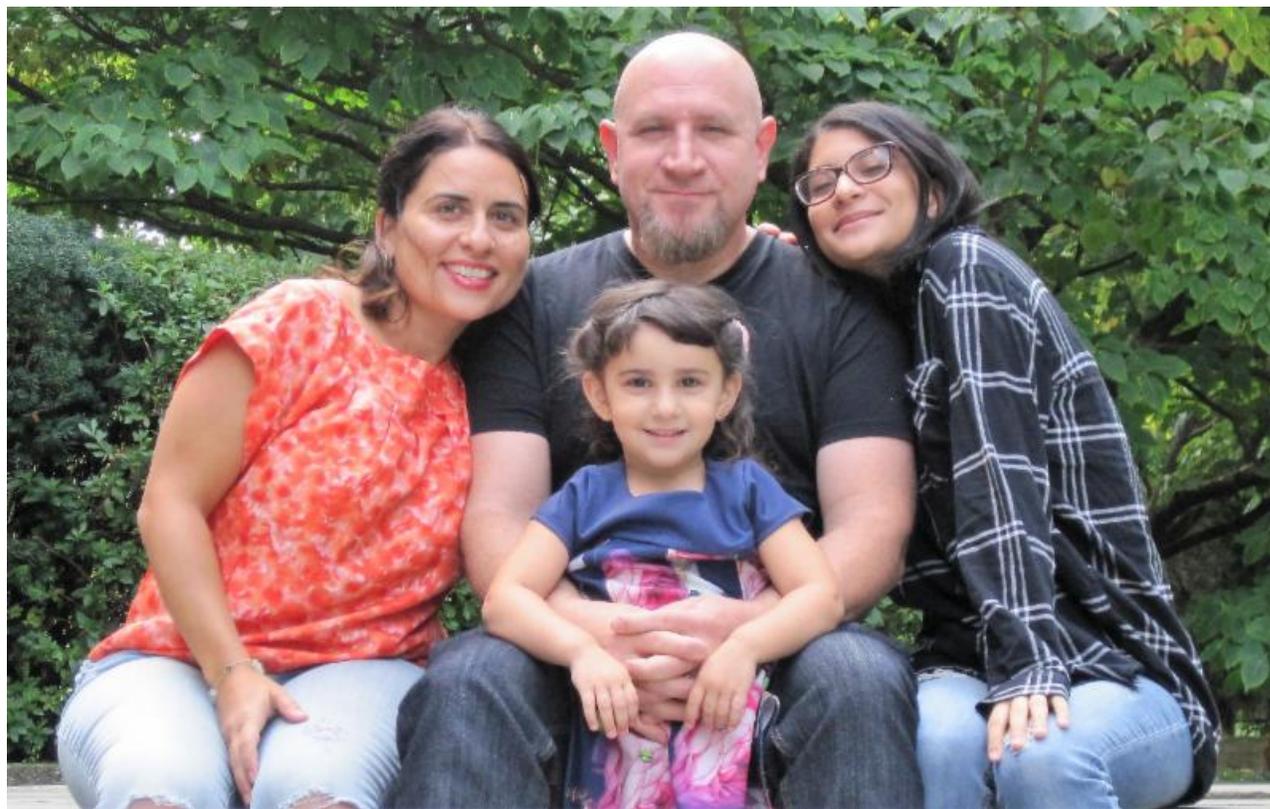
(During Junior Congregation)

451 Esplanade

www.thepjc.org

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## New Member Spotlight - Meet the Gretz Family



Noam, a metal fabricator from Israel, and Danielle, a talent booker from Manhattan, moved to Pelham from the Upper East Side last year with their daughters Ariel and Hannah.

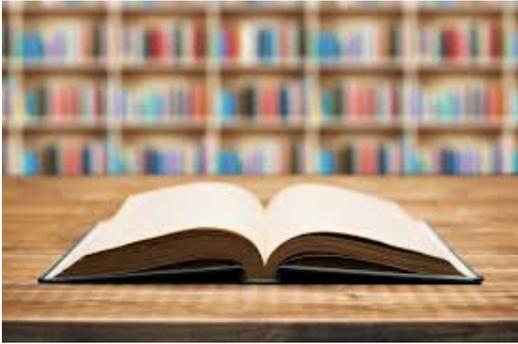
The past year has been one of exciting change for them as they've acclimated to the welcoming community of Pelham and of the Pelham Jewish Center. Soon after Ariel began attending the Nitzanim class in January, they saw how the PJC was more than simply a religious institution - it was a loving community and an extended family. It was a place where they knew they'd be planting roots.

"I love the familial atmosphere," says Danielle. To which Noam couldn't agree more - "the warmth and overall feeling of community runs large at the PJC, which was the biggest draw for us".

"In a short amount of time we've made such lovely friends at the PJC including our wonderful Rabbi Salzberg and his family", says Danielle. The Gretz family looks forward to many wonderful shared experiences with the PJC community.

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# Library News



We have exciting new books at the library:

*Dinner at the Center of the Earth* by Nathan Englander

*All the Rivers* by Dorothy Rabinyon

*Three Floors Up* by Eshkol Neville

*The Weight of Ink* by Rachel Kadish

*The Day of Atonement* by David Liss

Feel free to stop by and browse! Before borrowing a book, please fill out the green card in the back so I know who has the book and when it is checked out. You can have the book out for approximately two months.

Barbara Saunders-Adams  
Librarian

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# Share a Simcha!

## simcha!

"Share a Simcha" allows congregants to share their news with our PJC community. Please submit news about family members -- engagements, births, job updates, kid achievements, community acknowledgements and any other

milestones to [Lisa Yelsey](#). This will continue to be a regular *Hakol* feature, so keep your news and updates coming!

- Wishing much *Mazel* to Marcelo Nacht & Cheryl Goldstein on the wedding of their daughter Jesi to Cabell Brown on October 21st in Horseshoe Lake, AR -- the outdoor wedding under the stars was conducted by Cabell's grandfather, John Stokes, with the breaking of the glass officiated by Cheryl's father, Phil Goldstein.
- *Mazel Tov* to Stephen Handelman & Sue Simpson on the occasion of their son Joshua's *Bar Mitzvah* on October 28th.

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# Tributes & Donations





#### **Tributes to the PJC in Honor of ...**

- Rabbi Salzberg, and the PJC community, for the support shown to her in the days and weeks following Joshua's passing, by Anne Borofsky

#### **Tributes to the PJC in Memory of...**

- Jack Abeshouse, by Silas & Mei-Sang Brown
- Jack Abeshouse, by Steven & Hildy Martin
- Jack Abeshouse, by David & Jeanne Radvany
- Founding Member, Celia B. Greenfield, by Col. Michael Simon

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

- Sam Adams & Barbara Saunders-Adams, in memory of Jack Abeshouse
- Robert & Andrea DeRose Kahn, in honor of the engagement of Brittany Geller to Brian Moreland
- Zachary & Chelsea Salzberg, in honor of Rabbi Salzberg and the role he played in making their wedding day so special
- Judy Shampianier & Michael Bowen, in honor of Rabbi Salzberg and the PJC community for making Jackson's Bar Mitzvah such a wonderful simcha

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

At any time, if you wish to pay by check, please make it payable to **"The Pelham Jewish Center"** and mail it to our bookkeeping firm at: The Pelham Jewish Center, P.O. Box 418, Montvale, NJ 07645.

All donations to the **Rabbi's Discretionary Fund**, at any time throughout the year, should be made payable to **"The Pelham Jewish Center -- Rabbi's Discretionary Fund"** and mailed directly **to Julia Coss at the PJC office.**

Thank you!

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