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Dear friends,

I’m writing this just following the wonderful Shabbaton weekend in mid-December that took place as part of the JCA’s 50th anniversary celebration. This particular Shabbat weekend had many highlights for me. Personally, I can't tell you how moving it was, in the midst of leading Shabbat Ne’imah on Friday night, to see my little family come walking down the aisle of the Main Sanctuary at the precise moment we began singing “Licha Dodi.” Our daughter, Batya, was born on Erev Shabbat, about two months ago, and, since then, the sleepless nights notwithstanding, she has truly been our “Shabbat Queen.” I want to use the opportunity of this sentimental reminiscence to once again thank the JCA, on behalf of my family, for the support you have given us, and the warm and joyful welcome you have extended to our newest member.

As for the professional highlight, it was the Shabbat morning service, which I co-led with the Ne’imah musicians, along with profound enhancement provided by Sara Schley and Felicia Mednick, the co-leaders of our monthly “Renewal Service”, and meaningful contributions from other lay people in the form of davenning leadership (Marty Pepper Aisenberg) and Torah reading (Joseph Boucher). In a weekend meant to highlight the “rich and diverse ritual and spiritual texture” of our community, I found great satisfaction through participating in such a rich and diverse Jewish ritual experience, and felt gratitude for all of the relationships I have forged and tended over the past ten years of shepherding the spiritual life of the JCA.

But I think the most significant and impactful part of the Shabbaton was the conversation with Rabbi Deborah Waxman that took place after lunch on Shabbat afternoon. I had been looking forward to Rabbi Waxman’s visit as an opportunity to welcome an old friend from my rabbinical school days, and to show off the community I feel so fortunate to serve. (And, indeed, she was duly impressed!)

Beyond that, I was wondering what it would be like for the JCA to be in direct conversation with the head of the Reconstructionist movement, knowing the tenuous, and even ambivalent, nature of our affiliation. I came away feeling that the conversation went a long way toward strengthening that relationship, or at least providing us with both a bridge toward greater participation in the national movement, and incentive to cross it. Rabbi Waxman’s presentation was intelligent, passionate, and insightful, the philosophy of Judaism she expounded rang in consonance with our own aspirations, and the justifications for seeking to be involved with something “larger than ourselves” were, to me, quite compelling.

I hope, in the days to come, to keep this conversation going.

b’shalom, Rabbi Benjamin Weiner
Programs and Events Calendar

Mark your calendars for community activities, programs, study opportunities, and more. Please see the Ritual Life Calendar for information on Shabbat and other services.

January 2, Thursday

YIDDISH LEYNER'S GROUP
12:00 pm – 2:00 pm
We welcome anyone who enjoys reading Yiddish to join us.

JCA KLEZMER WORKSHOP
7:15 pm – 8:45 pm
An ongoing workshop for instrumentalists interested in learning how to play Klezmer music. Instructor Brian Bender (Wholesale Klezmer Band, Yiddishkeit Klezmer Ensemble, Little Shop of Horas) teaches Klezmer repertoire and style in a fun, relaxed setting. All instruments welcome. The workshop periodically performs as an ensemble for JCA events. Fee is $15/class.

January 5, Sunday

INTERGENERATIONAL LUNCH
11:00 am – 1:00 pm
People of all faiths are invited to join Jewish Community of Amherst teens for a monthly intergenerational lunch. A program for teens and senior citizens to come together and form meaningful relationships. We enjoy lunch and activities, schmooze, share stories, and have a good time!

CONTEMPORARY ISRAELI FILM SERIES:
GETT: THE TRIAL OF VIVIANE AMSALEM
2:00 pm – 4:30 pm
This critically acclaimed drama, considered one of the most significant Israeli films of modern times, is about a woman, Viviane Amsalem, seeking to finalize her divorce from her intransigent husband, and who is effectively put on trial by her country’s archaic marriage laws. Discussion led by JCA member and collaborative attorney, Lisa Kent, will follow the viewing. Co-sponsored by Adult Education and World Jewish Concerns committees.

January 8, Wednesday

LUNCH & LEARN WITH RABBI WEINER
12:15 pm – 1:15 pm

January 12, Sunday

ADULT B’NAI MITZVAH CLASS
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Programs and Events Calendar (continued)

January 15, Wednesday
LUNCH & LEARN WITH RABBI WEINER
12:15 pm – 1:15 pm

January 16, Thursday
JCA KLEZMER WORKSHOP
7:15 pm – 8:45 pm

January 22, Wednesday
LUNCH & LEARN WITH RABBI WEINER
12:15 pm – 1:15 pm

January 29, Wednesday
LUNCH & LEARN WITH RABBI WEINER
12:15 pm – 1:15 pm

January 30, Thursday
JCA KLEZMER WORKSHOP
7:15 pm – 8:45 pm

Upcoming Events

Adult Reading Group

The book for the third meeting of the JCA ARG will be *Marriage of Opposites* by Alice Hoffman. It got excellent reviews on Amazon and the following particular review: “A luminous, Marquez-esque tale” (O, The Oprah Magazine) is a forbidden love story set on a tropical island about the extraordinary woman who gave birth to painter Camille Pissarro—the Father of Impressionism. We will learn about his father, a man of Portuguese Jewish descent, his mother, from a French Jewish family, and his maternal grandmother, a pillar of a small refugee community of Jews who escaped the Inquisition.” All are welcome at our next meeting, even if you’ve never come before, and if there are questions, please call Ken Talan 413-896-3372.
Our Community

New Members

We welcome the following people who joined the JCA community in 2019:

Marjory Ackerman & Jeane Ryan  Amherst
Dawn Beckman     Leverett
Annique Boomsma & Jeffrey Gold  Pelham
Emily and Robert Boutilier   Amherst
Faye & Mike Brady     Hadley
Tony & Anne Burton    Amherst
Dvora Eisenstein and Lorelei Bond   Leverett
Mimi Farb     Amherst
Rhonda Frankel-Fein & Richard Fein  Amherst
Susan Hogan     Northampton
Jamie Rowen & Christopher Klimmek Amherst
Margie & Shelly Krems Sunderland
Michael Lesy     Amherst
Brianna and Marc Maier Amherst
Caryn Markson & Edward Emery Northampton
Renee Moss & Eric Bachrach Amherst
Alison Ozer     Amherst
Allen Ross     Hadley
Murray and Peggy Schwartz Amherst
Barry and Catherine Solomon Belchertown
Jennifer and David Wells Amherst
Chaia Wolf & Peter Wood Amherst

Condolences

We offer our sympathy and heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of those who have recently died.

Florence Cohen, mother of Jeff Cohen and his brothers Dennis and Michael, mother-in-law of Lori Holder-Webb, grandmother of Austin, Ilana, and Daniel Cohen, and great-grandmother of Naomi Peth-Cohen.


Barbara Humm, mother of Amy Kalman, mother-in-law of Jeff Kalman, and grammy to Sam and Leah. We offer our condolences, also, to Barbara's brother, Bob Tatum.

Seeking Your News

We would like to hear from you! Please send us your good news or anything significant you would like to share. We welcome your announcement up to 120 words and an accompanying jpeg photo up to 1MB in size. Please send by the 12th of the month before the publication of the next newsletter to: news@jcamherst.org.

Joining the Jewish Community of Amherst

If you would like to know more about becoming a member of the JCA, or you are ready to receive membership application materials, please contact Ann Wetherbee, Administrative Director, at 413-256-0160 or admindir@jcamherst.org. Shalom, and welcome!
Shabbat Vayiggash, Genesis 44:18-47:27

January 3, Friday
FAMILY FRIDAY
5:30 pm
A monthly community Shabbat celebration appropriate for all ages

January 4, Saturday
SHABBAT YOGA
8:45 am in the social hall

RENEWAL SERVICE
10:00 am in the small sanctuary
Service Leaders: Felicia Mednick and Sara Schley

SHABBAT MORNING SERVICES
10:00 am
Service Leader: Marty Pepper Aisenberg
D’var Torah: To be announced

Shabbat Vayhi, Genesis 47:28-50:26

January 10, Friday
KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICES
6:15 pm
Service Leaders: Rabbi Weiner & Danielle Kadinoff

January 11, Saturday
SHABBAT MORNING SERVICES
10:00 am
Service Leader: Rabbi Weiner
D’var Torah: Rabbi Weiner

Shabbat Shemot Exodus 1:1-6:1

January 17, Friday
SHABBAT NE’IMAH
6:15 pm
Service Leaders: Rabbi Weiner, Ḥazzan Diana Brewer, & the JCA Shabbat Ne’imah Band

Check the JCA website at: https://jcamherst.org/calendar/month/ for updated information on services.

Kiddush & Oneg Sponsors
If you would like to help with or sponsor a kiddush, please contact Ann Wetherbee, our Administrative Director, at admindir@jcamherst.org
Ritual Life Calendar and Notes (continued)

January 18, Saturday
SHABBAT YOGA
8:45 am in the social hall

SHABBAT MORNING SERVICES
10:00 am
Service Leader: Rabbi Weiner
D’var Torah: Rabbi Weiner

Shabbat Va’era, Exodus 6:2-9:35

January 24, Friday
KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICES
6:15 pm
Service Leader: Rabbi Weiner

January 25, Saturday
SHABBAT MORNING SERVICES
10:00 am
Service Leader: Marty Pepper Aisenberg
D’var Torah: To be announced

Shabbat Bo Exodus 10:1-13:16

January 31, Friday
KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICES
6:15 pm
Service Leader: Rabbi Weiner

February 1, Saturday
SHABBAT MORNING SERVICES
10:00 am
Service Leader: Rabbi Weiner
D’var Torah: Rabbi Weiner

Candle Lighting
January 3 ~ 4:11 pm
January 10 ~ 4:18 pm
January 17 ~ 4:26 pm
January 24 ~ 4:35 pm
January 31 ~ 4:44 pm
Times shown are 18 minutes before sunset for Amherst, MA

Rosh Ḥodesh Shvat
January 27, Monday

Shaharit Minyan
Tuesdays at 7:30 am in the small sanctuary

Jewish Meditation
Wednesdays at 7:30 am in the small sanctuary
Torah Reading Coordination

If you are interested in reading Torah and would like to schedule a time to read, please contact: Marty Pepper Aisenberg, maisenberg@videntpartners.com, 978-249-8470, for reading in February; Randi Stein, randistein@earthlink.net, 413-549-0526, for reading in March. For other times, please contact Aaron Bousel, abousel@comcast.net, 413-253-3544.

If you would like to learn to read Torah or would like help choosing or preparing a reading, please contact Batya Perman, 413-549-4853, or Jane Myers, 401-451-6020.

Thank You

The Ritual Life Committee would like to thank those who have given their time and expertise in service to the ritual life of the community:

- Torah/Haftarah readers: Joseph Boucher, Aaron Bousel, Richard Fein, Danielle Kadinoff, Linda McConnell, Rabbi Weiner
- Service leaders: Ḥazzan Diana Brewer, Danielle Kadinoff, Felicia Mednick and Sara Schley, Marty Pepper Aisenberg, Felicia Sloin
- D'var Torah: Rabbi Deborah Waxman
- Musicians: JCA Shabbat Ne'imah Band
How Hard Can it Be?  
by Nachama Skolnik Moskowitz

A long-standing assumption at the heart of synagogue Hebrew education is that if our children learned to read English, it should not be that hard for them to learn to read Hebrew fluently. Yet, even with four years or more of “Hebrew school,” young learners struggle with prayers and blessings. The culprit is often identified as lessened days/hours of learning time or competing family priorities. But, consistent and well-replicated reading research offers us another possibility – countless studies conclude that reading fluency is “… a by-product of having instant access to most or all of the words on the page.”

Instant access.

Stop and consider your own experience with English as you read the words in this article – you are not decoding letter-vowel-letter-vowel-letter, but rather are instantly and accurately reading each word with understanding. You could do so even if you saw words out of context. For the most part, your fluent reading of tens of thousands of English words was not developed through the use of flashcards, drills or re-reading (“hmm, not quite right ... practice reading that again three more times”); none of these skill-based activities create fluent readers.

What does? When beginning English readers decode (i.e., sound out) the word p-o-n-y they already know how it is pronounced and have a clear understanding of its meaning. Early English readers can self-correct, if necessary (“oh, that’s not ‘poony,’ it’s ‘pony!’”) and then understand the sentence in which it is embedded. More so, native language reading research reports that readers turn new-to-them words on a page into instantly accessible sight words via a self-taught and subconscious process that depends on three factors:

- knowledge of the sounds produced by every letter
- phonemic awareness, which means that the student can break apart the sounds in a word (i.e., recognize “pony” as having four sounds /p/ /o/ /n/ /y/) and
- familiarity with the word’s pronunciation and meaning.

By second grade, a typically developing student who meets the three factors above in her native language needs only 1-4 times of decoding a word to store it in memory as a sight word that can be instantly and accurately identified, even if out of context.

What does this mean for synagogue education? Unfortunately, it suggests that we set the majority of our Hebrew learners up for failure when “fluent and accurate reading of prayers” is a stated goal. New-to-Hebrew students usually have little idea of the pronunciation (never mind the meaning) of the complex Hebrew words in most Jewish prayers and thus cannot self-correct when decoding. The reading research noted above suggests that unknown words cannot become a fluently-read sight word because the learner does not have the foundation to achieve instant recognition. Not surprisingly, a person who only can decode Hebrew – especially at the halting pace of many new learners – cannot read prayers at synagogue-speed.
Yet, we know of young Jews who competently daven. How? These children have stored Hebrew prayers and blessings in memory through multiple exposures to authentic worship. They recite prayers and, if paying attention to the siddur, can match the sounds in their heads to the print on the page. They pray sound-to-print, much like very young children who learned to orally recite entire picture books and then later use known letters to unlock the print on the page. The bonus comes when Hebrew teachers scaffold sound-to-print learning, giving children the foundation to more easily tackle decoding with stronger skills and confidence to self-correct. More so, the originally unfamiliar Hebrew has the possibility of snapping into memory for future access.

Based on what researchers tell us about the factors that enable fluent reading, it is time for synagogue educators to reconsider their learning goals and teaching techniques – we cannot expect our learners to achieve Hebrew reading fluency as they have with English. While the native language reading research does not speak directly to our settings, it suggests that

- We should not be afraid of offering avenues for our children to store Hebrew prayers and blessings in memory via consistent use in frequent, authentic contexts (prayer services, home rituals, song sessions).
- We should shift our focus from years of drilling Hebrew decoding to laying a strong foundation in the sounds of Hebrew language in low-stress but powerful learning approaches like Hebrew Through Movement, Jewish Life Vocabulary, and age-appropriate t’fillah.
- We should have the patience to wait to introduce Hebrew decoding at an older age, for once children build their exposure to words used in prayers and blessings, the learning is quicker, more efficient and sticks.
- We should help teachers gain the skills to scaffold sound-to-print decoding.

Bottom line, we must more strongly and intentionally honor the sound-to-print progression of learning to read in one’s native language, while paying attention to our unique circumstances.

It is true that our pre-bar/bat mitzvah Hebrew learners will never have at their disposal the benefits they had prior to learning to read English – a rich environment in which they heard, responded to and spoke the language before introduced to print. For a whole host of reasons, it would be unusual for our learners to reach the level of fluent Hebrew reading that they have achieved with English – i.e., instant and accurate recognition of a word out of context. To suggest that our students can become fluent Hebrew readers sets them, their teachers, parents and the system up for frustration, even failure.

But in the time we have, can we help learners become competent and confident with synagogue Hebrew? Absolutely! By attending to research, rather than our kishkes, we can shift Hebrew learning in our part-time/synagogue settings to more closely honor what the experts tell us. When we do that, it doesn’t have to be hard!
January 1, Wednesday
JCA SCHOOL WINTER BREAK: NO CLASSES

January 2, Thursday
CHALLAH & JAM WITH FELICIA SLOIN AND SAM COATES-FINKE OF BACKYARD BAKERY
10:00 am – 11:30 am
Explore Jewish holidays, language, culture and values through music, movement and drumming. Meet other families, braid some challah, make some music and have some fun! Come weekly or drop-in. There is a $25 annual registration fee for this program. Please register online at www.jfswm.org/jewish-family-jam.

January 3, Friday
FAMILY FRIDAY
5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
Generations will come together for a Shabbat celebration of music, singing, puppets, storytelling, blessings, and more. Enjoy a musical family jam with Felicia Soin for young children and an intergenerational Torah discussion with the rabbi for older children and adults. Programs are followed by a delicious community meal. Parent/Guardian attendance is required.

January 5, Sunday
JCA SCHOOL
10:00 am - 12:30 pm
Learner’s Minyan this morning.

BETTER TOGETHER
(B’NAI MITZVAH CLASS/INTERGENERATIONAL LUNCH)
10:00 am - 1:00 pm

January 8, Wednesday
JCA SCHOOL: ELECTIVES
4:00 pm – 5:30 pm

For updates and complete school calendar listings go to:
https://jcamherst.org/calendar/category/youthcalendar/
Youth and Family Education (continued)

January 11, Saturday
MUSICAL MISHPUCHA WITH FELICIA SLOIN
10:30 am – 12:00 pm
Families start out in our traditional morning service, stay for the taking out of the Torah...AND THEN follow Felicia Sloin into another room to enjoy a musical kid-focused Shabbat morning celebration. We will return to the sanctuary to join the rest of the community for kiddush and a light luncheon. This is a monthly service recurring on the 2nd Saturday each month. This family service is appropriate for kids of ALL ages. Adults must remain with their children throughout.

January 12, Sunday
JCA SCHOOL
10:00 am – 12:30 pm

January 15, Wednesday
JCA SCHOOL: ELECTIVES
4:00 pm – 5:30 pm

January 16, Thursday
CHALLAH & JAM WITH FELICIA SLOIN AND SAM COATES-FINK OF BACKYARD BAKERY
10:00 am – 11:30 am

JCA BAKERY WITH SAM COATES-FINK
5:00 pm – 8:00 pm

January 17, Friday
JVCORPS
5:00 pm – 9:00 pm
SHABBAT NE’IMAH
6:15 pm

January 19, Sunday
JCA SCHOOL
10:00 am – 12:30 pm

January 22, Wednesday
JCA SCHOOL: ELECTIVES
4:00 pm – 5:30 pm
Youth and Family Education (continued)

January 24, Friday
CHAI EVENT (GRADES 9 – 12)
6:00 pm – 11:00 pm – Offsite
For more info, including address, visit the Chai Facebook Page or email chaiteens413@gmail.com.

January 26, Sunday
JCA SCHOOL
10:00 am – 12:30 pm

January 29, Wednesday
JCA SCHOOL: ELECTIVES
4:00 pm – 5:30 pm
We are pleased to give members of the new board the opportunity to introduce themselves to you, and tell you why they have chosen to serve JCA in this way. On behalf of the community, we thank them and send good wishes as they begin their new year together.

ERIC WEISS (President)

I am the father of three sons who have each become bar mitzvah, one in August 2015 at the JCA. Currently, I am the Manager of Regional and Municipal Programs for the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. Previously, I worked as leader and consultant to non-profits, and I was the first Sustainability Director for the Hampshire Council of Governments. I am also the former Chairman of the Belchertown School Committee. I enjoy running, being outside, swimming and skiing. It is an honor to serve as president in our 50th year. Mazel tov to us all!

BORIS WOLFSON (First Vice President)

My wife, Amanda Walling, our son Ben, and I joined the JCA shortly after moving to Amherst in 2008, and in June 2019 Ben was called to the Torah here. I joined the Board in 2018, and have been on the Executive Committee since 2019. I also serve on the Adult Education Committee (since 2011), and the Nominating Committee (since 2015). In my other life, I study cultural history and performance, teach Russian culture and language at Amherst College, and serve on the board of directors at Greenwood Music Camp.

ZIVA HARMATZ (Second Vice President)

I have lived in Amherst since 1983 and began attending the JCA ten years ago at the end of a long journey seeking a spiritual home. I ultimately converted to Judaism in 2012, and completed an Adult Bat Mitzvah in 2014 where my connections to the community of the JCA deepened and my sense of belonging blossomed. While my most significant participation in the JCA has been spiritual in nature, I have also previously served on the JCA’s Finance Committee, the Fair Share Dues Committee that revised the original policy, and as Chair of the Nominating Committee. In my professional life, I have always worked on behalf of others; first in the private sector and later as a public official serving people with intellectual disabilities and autism. I believe my professional experience and my deep commitment to the JCA as my spiritual home will be assets to the JCA community and the board of directors.
Spotlight on Committees (continued)

RACHEL VIGDERMAN (Third Vice President)

I am thrilled to be serving as a vice president on the JCA board. For the past year, I was the board Clerk, and I became immersed in the executive committee work, and went beyond my duties as clerk. I joined the security work group; worked on a new contract for Keren Rhodes; took the lead in starting a JCA endowment; and co-organized a JCA school alumni reunion event. All of these duties are in addition to my serving as chair of the JCA Youth and Family Education Committee. I have 30 years of Jewish leadership and programming experience in New York City and locally. I was a Hadassah National Young Leader. I have been on the Lander-Grinspoon Academy (LGA) and Jewish Federation boards. I created Jewish programming for tots through adults including: Al Galgalim, a Jewish mommy and me group; pre-school events at LGA: a Torah Yoga program which was featured in the Daily Hampshire Gazette; a Video Club which won a Hadassah Best Programming Award; as well as others. I was selected to participate in the Federation’s leadership training program-- ILEAD, and I was the program director for the Jewish Endowment Foundation’s financial literacy program, Heart of Money.

JEFF ROTH-HOWE (Treasurer)

My wife Debbie and I have been members of the JCA since 1982. I have been living in the Valley since 1974, twenty-five years in Amherst and now in Leverett since 2006. We found the JCA’s openness to having families with one Jewish partner and one non-Jewish partner as part of the congregation to be very supportive as we started a family of our own. I am retired from my career in human services where I worked extensively with both state and private agencies, including serving as Executive Director of Children’s Aid and Family Service of Hampshire County for fifteen years. I volunteer now at the Amherst Survival Center, serve on the Leverett Personnel Committee, on the Hampshire Council of Social Agencies, and sing bass in the Leverett Community Chorus. The best part of my week is being with my two young granddaughters who also live in Leverett. I hope my experience working with and serving on other boards in the area, and my management background will be useful in assisting the work of the JCA board moving forward.

MARA HAHN (Clerk)

I grew up in Columbia MD. My parents were always very active in the Jewish community and have served as role models for me. I went to a Labor Zionist summer camp and spent a gap year in Israel before it was a common thing to do. I have always been engaged with the Jewish community. My family joined the JCA thirteen years ago, when our son was eighteen months old. We were looking for a Jewish community that was warm and comfortable. I joined the Youth & Family Education Committee several years ago and have served as chairperson for the past five years. I served on the board of the JCA as a member-at-large from 2015-2018. I look forward to serving as the clerk.

MARTY PEPPER AISENBERG (Member at Large)

Born and raised in Worcester, I grew up in a big Reform congregation with an excellent K-12 educational program; my three years in the junior choir (grades 7 - 9) cemented my lifelong love of Jewish sacred music. I’ve been a member of Reform and Conservative congregations for extended periods and spent time in Modern Orthodox and Chabad settings. But my wife Susan and I didn’t find our true Jewish home until we joined the JCA several years ago. I’m on the Ritual Life and Not Bread Alone committees; two of Susan’s paintings hang permanently in the Social Hall. Professionally, I was a trial lawyer for fifteen years; worked for nonprofits for another fifteen; and for past fifteen I’ve been a partner in a firm that refers expert witnesses to attorneys. I have two daughters, ages forty and twenty-one; the younger had her bat mitzvah here when she was eighteen. I am endlessly grateful to the JCA, a truly extraordinary community that has nurtured the blossoming and deepening of my spiritual life. As I enter my second year on the board, I look forward to being of greater service to the community.
BARBARA SCHAFFER BACON (Member at Large)

Hailing from Springfield, I have been in the Valley since coming to UMASS in 1973. I was raised in a reform congregation (Sinai Temple) and was very active in the temple youth group and regional association [NEFTY]. This didn’t stop me from marrying Roger Bacon, a nice Catholic boy from Amherst forty one years ago. We raised two children in Belchertown where I served on the School Committee for fourteen years. We are now blessed with a granddaughter who had a naming and blessing at the JCA this past year. I work with Americans for the Arts, a national organization that promotes artists and the arts as integral and essential to healthy, vibrant and equitable communities across the nation. I’m also a member of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, our state arts agency. It is exciting to renew my board service as we celebrate our 50th anniversary. The vitality of the JCA in every aspect of spiritual, educational, social action and community life is what fires my enthusiasm.

BARBARA BERLIN (Member at Large)

I was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York and left New York in 1956 the day after Normand and I were married, moving to Berkeley, California, Montreal, Canada and finally in 1965 with our two sons to the small town of Amherst. We quickly realized that for our sons, to know their identity, it was important to have a Jewish Community here and so we became active in establishing the JCA. I became director, teacher, principal of Jewish Studies and Hebrew. After a sabbatical year spent in Israel where I studied in an ulpan, I developed a Hebrew language class which I taught in the Amherst Public Schools. I have been very active in the JCA over the years serving several times on the Board of Directors. I am proud of what has been accomplished and where we have arrived. I hope to bring to the board a history and perspective that I believe will be helpful as the board addresses new challenges and continues to build on what has come before.

FRIEDA HOWARDS (Member at Large)

My husband, Irv Howards, and I came to Amherst with our three children in 1965. We found no JCA, no bagels, no malls, no buses, no stop lights, no Hwy.91 - just a pretty little town. I grew up in an Orthodox home, went to Heder (reluctantly) four times a week. While attending a Catholic University I worked for a Reform Rabbi editing Hebrew textbooks. My parents and grandparents spoke Yiddish some of which I absorbed by osmosis. We came from Illinois where Irv started a Hillel and we helped to build a synagogue where our older son was the first Bar Mitzvah. We have been members of the JCA since the beginning and the Amherst Jewish Community before the name change. Irv served as president and many years on the board. I was a teacher, a Hampshire County Commissioner, managed some Elderhostels, an ACTV Board member and learned videotaping. We were married 66 years when I lost my best friend to Parkinsons in 2013. I feel lucky to have had the JCA in my life and I want to help it grow and prosper.

LISA KENT (Member at Large)

I’m a lawyer with a thriving family law practice in Greenfield. I moved to Amherst in 2001 from central New Jersey, enrolled in an Adult Ed class with then Rabbi Sheila Weinberg, and have been close to the JCA ever since. I have two grown children, both musician/artists, one in Brooklyn, one local. I’m married to David Glassberg, live in Amherst, and look forward to being part of the Adult B’nai Mitzvah this spring!
JONATHAN LEWIS (Member at Large)

My wife Melanie and I are Brooklyn born and bred, and our graduate school and professional lives have taken us to Maryland, Iowa, Kansas and Delaware before we located to the Pioneer Valley to be closer to our kids. We have a son and daughter-in-law in North Amherst and a daughter in Arlington, and we are glad to be able to see them more often. We are both retired psychologists who worked together in our private practice, and in addition I served as a senior psychologist at the Center for Counseling at the University of Delaware for thirty three years. I served as president of the Delaware Psychological Association twice, and I was active with the American Psychological Association as well as the American Board of Professional Psychology. We are both very grateful that we found the JCA and we have felt it to be a congruent and welcome place for us. I serve on the Adult Education Committee and I am looking forward to contributing even more to the JCA.

LESLIE LORBER (Member at Large)

My husband and I moved to Amherst two years ago and I have been a member at the JCA since that time. After serving on the Membership Committee for a year, I am now the co-chair of that committee. I have recently joined the Chesed Committee as well. Being an active participant at the JCA is important to me. I completed the Western Mass Master Gardener training this year and volunteer at several garden sites in the valley. My twenty-four year-old son is now attending Columbia University for an MFA in Fiction Writing and my twenty-two year-old daughter is completing her MS in Occupational Therapy at Ithaca College this year. I completed a training offered by the Institute for Jewish Spirituality this past summer with teachers Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg and Rabbi Nancy Flam, and I now lead a meditation sit each Wednesday morning at the JCA. I am honored to be able to serve on the JCA Board of Directors.

KEN SCHOEN (Member at Large)

I was an active member of CBI for many years and established a Men’s Club and also ran the senior monthly luncheon and lecture. My major current contribution to Judaism is via my involvement with the Jewish Historical Society of Western Mass (www.jhswm.org) and being a Judaica book dealer (www.schoenbooks.com), supplying Jewish books to libraries. Since joining the JCA, my late wife Hanna Jane and I have been active participants in a wide range of activities. I enjoy working with people to sustain a strong Jewish community by building closer relationships among the membership through Kiddush and get-togethers. I value doing this not just among age-related groups (i.e., seniors or young families) but as a diverse community of shared interests who use ritual, art and music etc. to build on our foundations, grounded in our religious traditions.
Spotlight on Committees (continued)

**Chesed Committee**

**A Compassionate Community**

The Chesed Committee assists JCA members in times of joy, sorrow, and need, coordinating volunteers to help with meals, rides, errands, visits, shiva minyans, etc. We also welcome babies to the community.

Please let us know if you, someone in your family, or someone in the community is ill, hospitalized, or in need of assistance. We can’t help if we don’t know.

Contact the Chesed Committee by email at jcachesed@gmail.com or by calling the office at (413) 256-0160.

**Thank You, Volunteers!**

The Chesed Committee thanks all who have recently provided compassionate support to others in the community.

And thanks, again, to everyone who has made a meal, provided a ride, lent a sympathetic ear, visited a person in need of companionship, or performed other acts of chesed (loving kindness).

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**Not Bread Alone**

**Monthly Volunteers Needed**

**Sundays January 12 and February 9**

JCA members help to prepare a meal at Not Bread Alone the second Sunday of every month. We need four volunteers for the cooking crew (9:30 am-12:00 pm) and three for the cleanup crew (12:00 pm-2:00 pm). Do a mitzvah and have fun.


Please contact Hollie Kalkstein holliekalkstein@gmail.com with any other questions.

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**JCA Hall Gallery**

**Exploring Light, Dark and Color: Recent Pastel Landscapes**

Artist: Richard Cohen

Exhibit Dates: Through January 30, 2020

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Thursday, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm. Fri. 10:00 am – 3:00 pm or by appointment

Cohen’s landscape paintings are inspired by his love of the outdoors. Being in nature nourishes and energizes him, and in his paintings he tries to capture the beauty, awe and serenity of those experiences. He wants to enable the viewer, even when inside, to be surrounded by natural beauty, and experience the play of light on hills, trees and water, and the drama of the sky.
Donations to the JCA

**Annual Appeal**

In memory of Joseph & Shulamit Schmerling  
(Ruby & Rina Schmerling)

In honor of the birth of Naomi Peth-Cohen  
to Ilana Cohen & Mike Peth  
(Jeffrey Cohen & Lori Holder-Webb)

In honor of Solomon Goldstein-Rose and  
Sophia Normark on the joyous occasion  
of their marriage  
(Andra Rose)

In honor of the JCA founders  
(Barbara Schaffer Bacon)

In memory of my parents, Fran & Dan  
who demonstrated the responsibility  
and rewards of active synagogue  
membership!! (Roger Bacon &  
Barbara Schaffer Bacon)

James & Amy Sweeting

Bob Solosko & Jean Krogh

In memory of Charles Dombroff  
(Daniel & Jill Berlin)

Rhoda & Ronald Juels

Lewis & Caden Mainzer

Libby Arny

Myra & David Ross

Harry Levit

Steven & Janis Wolkenbreit

Jeanne & Janet Potash

Scott Nielsen & Elinor Levine

Rachel & Icek Aizen

Bryan & Leslie Lorber

Caryn Markson & Edward Emery

Linda Sinapi

In honor of Rabbi Weiner and his newly  
expanded family  
(Eric Sawyer & Cheryl Zoll)

Joel Harris & Tobi Sznaiderman

In honor of Rabbi Weiner  
(Jeanne Friedman & Carol-Ann Smalley)

In memory of Evelyn Richman and Joe  
Friedman, my parents  
(Jeanne Friedman & Carol-Ann Smalley)

In honor of Rabbi Weiner  
(Richard Fein & Rhonda Frankel-Fein)

In memory of Kaia Savolainen  
(Richard Fein & Rhonda Frankel-Fein)

Jay & Catherine Alpert

Jesse Ferris & Kathryn Lachman

Harriet Nestel & Marcia Gagliardi

Carol Kaminsky

Dyan Wiley

In honor of Susan Myers, the person who  
encouraged us to join the JCA and in  
memory of Harold & Estelle Samuels;  
Tony & Alma Fonsh (Judy & Kip Fonsh)

Marjory Ackerman & Jeanne Ryan

Boris Wolfson & Amanda Walling

Yaffa & Haim Gunner

Jenny Kallick & Bob Bezucha

Barbara & Ted Slovin

Rachel & Robert Vigderman

Elissa & Bernard Rubinstein

Ronnie Williams & Suzanne Arnopolin

Richard Cohen & Eliza Gouverneur

In memory of Carl Fastow  
(Mara & Harry Hahn)

Evelyn Goldenberg

James & Barbara Pistrang

In appreciation for all that JCA provides for  
us all (Susan Zarchin)

Ken Schoen

Michael & Barbara Burkart

Howard & Ruth Smith

Randi Stein

Burt Franzman & Joan Epstein

Aaron Berman & Amy Mittelman

Morton & Helen Sternheim

Felicia Mednick

Joan & Monroe Rabin

Welcome Batya! Rabbi Weiner, Cantor Elise  
and Efraim’s new blessing and addition to  
their family. A blessing to our JCA family.  
(Nathan & Pearl-Anne Margalit)

In honor of Nina and Don Tetenbaum in  
honor of the marriage of their son, Josh  
to Jennie Rose Halperin  
(Nolan & Amy Anaya)

Norman & Eva Brown

Elaine Walsh

Rona Conrad

Ruth Love Barer

Judith Souweine
Donations to the JCA (continued)

**General Fund**
Amy Rothenberg
Jessica & Eric Wilkinson
Roger Magnus
In memory of Janice & Arthur Goldman
(Josh & Marina Goldman)
In honor of Ann Weatherbee et al for help with sponsored Kiddush
(Hannah Blau)
In honor of Janis Levy – my teacher
(Joni Beck Brewer)
In honor of Jeanne Potash (Janet Potash)
In memory of Victor Reuben Swenson
(Sarah Belchetz-Swenson)
Ted & Elizabeth Trobaugh
Joanna & Clay Ballantine
In memory of Florence Cohen
(Reed & Arnie Alper)
Vivian & Paul Oulm
In memory of Dora Zwilling
(Andrew Effrat)

**Project Rehovot**
Stephen & Joan Levine
In honor of Rabbi Ben Weiner
(Linda Sinapi)
In honor of Rabbi Weiner (Guy Wood)
In honor of Haim & Yaffa Gunner
(Lewis & Caden Mainzer)
Stephen Marglin
In memory of Richard Goldstein
(Leah Goldstein Mosimann & Pearl Mosimann)
Barbara & Ted Slovin
In memory of Ruth & Martin Sorkin
(Eliisa & Bernie Rubinstein)

**Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund**
In honor of Jody Wax’s well-deserved retirement as a school nurse
(Yaffa & Haim Gunner)
Evelyn Goldenberg
In honor of and with appreciation of Ruth Love on her birthday
(Susan Zarchin)
Eva & Eugene Goldwater
Howard & Ruth Smith
Burton Franzman & Joan Epstein

**Tzedakah**
In memory of my mother, Helen Rabin
(Monroe & Joan Rabin)
In memory of Florence Cohen, mother of Jeff Cohen (Judith Souweine)
Jewish Community of Amherst

742 Main Street, Amherst, MA 01002
413-256-0160 | fax 413-256-1588
info@jcamherst.org | https://jcamherst.org

Rabbi Benjamin Weiner (rabbiweiner@jcamherst.org)
Rabbi Emeritus Yechiael Lander

Director of Youth and Family Education:
Keren Rhodes (kerenrhodes@jcamherst.org)

Board of Directors

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First Vice President: Boris Wolfson (bywolfson@comcast.net)
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Third Vice President: Rachel Vigderman (rachelvig@comcast.net)
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Members at Large: Marty Pepper Aisenberg, Barbara Schaffer Bacon, Barbara Berlin, Frieda Howards, Lisa Kent, Jonathan Lewis, Leslie Lorber, Ken Schoen

Just click on any email address to send a message. For further information and a full description of committees with contacts, please refer to your JCA Guidebook.

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Administrative Assistant: Erica Torrellas (erica@jcamherst.org)
Facility & Maintenance: Santo Alers

Office Hours

Monday: Office Closed
Tuesday – Thursday: 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
Friday: 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Have you checked out the JCA Judaica Store lately?
The Judaica Store features books by JCA members and others, siddurim, chumashim, tallitot, mezzuzot and many lovely gift items.
You can shop whenever the office is open.

Affiliated with Reconstructing Judaism

Kolot — JCA Voices
January 2020
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An archive of previous editions may be found at:
https://jcamherst.org/our-community/newsletter-kolot-jca-voices/

Deadline for the February issue is January 12th.