What Will Be Our Covid-19 Legacy?

Rabbi Michael Ragozin, whose two fellowships through LEAP and Boston Educational Leaders Cohort are addressing Jewish issues and the pandemic, has spent quite a bit of time discussing the Covid-19 crisis with his colleagues.

One question that particularly stands out is: what will be your synagogue’s legacy after Covid-19? What will congregants remember?

While on the surface most might point to the adoption of Zoom, the free and easy video-conferencing application that has allowed the safe continuation of religious services and other programs, Rabbi Michael points out that Zoom is only a technology—a tool that helps us transcend the barriers of quarantine and social isolation to remain in contact.

“Shirat Hayam is a spiritual community and the pandemic threatened our ability to connect with each other,” he said. Based on the numbers of congregants who participated in various Zoom events and services, he is delighted that Shirat Hayam’s communal response to Covid-19 evidenced “an extraordinary outpouring of effort to maintain and elevate our sense of community.”

Shir Chesed Adapts and Expands

For example, the 55 volunteers of the Shir Chesed (“Lovingkindness”) affinity group adapted to the challenges of curtailed in-person visits. Since last October, volunteers reached out to 24 synagogue members who were coping with bereavement by sending cards, making phone calls, and delivering chicken soup. Caryn Cohen, who lost her sister, said, “Being part of a community like Shirat Hayam helps during these difficult times. Thank you also for the phone call and delicious chicken soup.”

The group also helped 17 members who had been hospitalized and welcomed five babies. Joshua and Brooke Patkin Kay expressed their appreciation. “What a special gift to receive the beautiful hat that was knitted by the Shir Chesed committee for our newborn baby, Jonah. It was so thoughtful of the Shirat community to welcome our little one in such a meaningful way,” Brooke said.

Shir Chesed members aided the synagogue by making phone calls to 156 single senior members to check on them during this period of isolation, and followed up on the phone calls by referring people to Rabbi Michael if they needed help. The Board of Directors and professional team called the remainder of the congregation twice during the pandemic.

Also, the popular “Chicken Soup for the Soul during Covid” lunch virtual meetings were another highlight of this winter and gave the community much needed “schmooze time.” March 23, 2021, exactly one year after CSH closed its doors due to Covid-19, was its last session. This virtual lunch turned out to be an amazing get-together for a bunch of dedicated CSH members who consistently found respite and support during these challenging times. Zoom lunches were held bi-monthly from December through March, and attendees averaged between 17 and 25 each session.

The conversation during each Zoom lunch, ably led by Shir Chesed’s own Patricia and Jerry Kreitzer, shared everything from positive practices for keeping busy during Covid-19 isolation, information to keep informed (Dr. Mark Messenger)

Continued on page 4

Continued on page 3

Calendar

MAY 1 - 31, 2021

Shabbat services broadcast online. Visit www.shirathayam.org - for all links and updates. *Community or co-sponsored events.

Tuesday 7 PM and Thursday 7:30 AM minyan’s are in house at CSH and online.

SATURDAY, MAY 1
9:00 am Shabbat Services (see p. 2)
10:30 am Bat Mitzvah of Alex Levine
(Join us at shirathayam.org/shabbat-covid-19-response/)

MONDAY, MAY 3
7:30 pm Tzedek LaKol “Moving From Conversation to Action at CSH” for CSH members. Register at shirathayam.org/tzedek-lakol-justice-for-all/

THURSDAY, MAY 6
7:30 pm Community Call-to-Action Against Anti-Semitism virtual presentation with author Deborah Lipstadt moderated by Rabbi Ragozin. Register at lappinfoundation.org. Follow-up to Book Read. All are welcome.

FRIDAY, MAY 7
6:00 pm Kabbalat Shabbat (see p. 2)

SATURDAY, MAY 8
9:00 am Shabbat Services (see p. 2)
10:30 am Bat Mitzvah of Miriam Weisman (Join us at shirathayam.org/shabbat-covid-19-response/)

SILVER LININGS

Did you have an unexpected positive experience due to Covid-19 restrictions? Care to share it with your CSH family? Send your thoughts to sackett.shelely@gmail.com and put “Silver Linings” in the memo.
Life of the Congregation

RABBI’S CORNER

Israel Independence: Why Israel Is My Spiritual Home

This is the exchange in Leon Uris’ book, Exodus, between Kitty Fremont, an American nurse, and Karen, a survivor of the Shoah who’s liberated from a Displaced Person camp on Cyprus and taken to Palestine aboard the passenger ship, Exodus.

“Karen, I want to take you home to America with me.”

“Home? But … but this [Eretz Yisrael] is my home.”

I first read Exodus (Uris’ book, not the second book of the Torah) in middle school. It awakened in me a love of Israel. It spoke to me in ways I didn’t understand at the time, capturing a yearning for alignment among my senses of identity, people, and place.

I re-read Exodus this Passover. For me, this book is a masterful piece of art. As historical fiction, it does not tell a “true” story; and yet, it does speak of a deeper, fundamental truth. It articulates why Israel matters and what Israel means. It presents the powerful calling of striving and fighting for Jewish sovereignty in light of 2000 years of diasporic suffering and trauma.

America is certainly my home. But we can have many homes. My parents’ house where I was raised is another home. And Israel is my spiritual home.

It’s in Israel on a Birthright trip in January 2000 that I learned to sing, that I encountered Shabbat, that I encountered Torah, and that I experienced a previously unknown feeling of group belonging. These same qualities — and more — deepened and became part of my life six months later, when I began studying at Pardes, a yeshiva where I stayed for two years.

Folks often talk about the importance of teaching children life sports, i.e. sports they can play into their senior years (e.g. golf, tennis) as opposed to team sports (soccer, basketball, etc). And, for most, college is certainly a unique time to explore and foster personal development and friendships. These are the threads of our individual fabric.

But for me, it is Israel that has given me both my life pursuits (not life sports) and friendships that make my life meaningful. Seven years have passed since I last breathed the air of Israel and walked her streets. As the pandemic is winding down, I feel called to return, to recharge and re-invigorate my soul in the land of Israel.

If you feel similarly and would like to explore a congregational trip, please email or call me.

Tzedek LaKol “We Shall Not Be Silent: Conversations on Race ” Follow-Up

The Tzedek LaKol: Justice for All CSH Affinity Group invites all CSH members to join them on May 3rd at 7:30 pm for a moderated community meeting to process and discuss the information from the April Speaker Series. The speakers included Gov. Deval Patrick, Rav Tiferet Berenbaum and Rev. Dr. Andre Bennett. Even if you didn’t attend the programs, you are welcome to attend what should be an interesting and productive meeting.

“Our committee looks forward to hearing the voices of our members as we move forward to confront racial injustice in our community and beyond,” co-chair Barbara Sidman said.

To register, go to shirathayam.org/tzedek-laKol-justice-for-all/

For all Zoom links go to www.shirathayam.org and click blue Guide to Virtual Services at top of home page (or shirathayam.org/guide-to-virtual-services/)
Conspiracy of Kindness

Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom Hashoah) was observed on April 7, 2021. The Talmud says, “whoever saves one life, saves the entire world.” What if saving one life comes at the risk of losing your life? What if you saved 6,000 lives at the risk of death to you and your family? And all 6,000 people were strangers to you. From a different culture, language and religion. Unbelievable?

*Chiune Sugihara was a Japanese diplomat who served as vice-consul for the Japanese Empire in Kaunas, Lithuania. During the Second World War, Sugihara helped thousands of Jews flee Europe by issuing illegal transit visas to them so that they could travel through Japanese territory. The fleeing Jews were refugees from German-occupied Western Poland and Sovietoccupied Eastern Poland.

Following the German attack on Poland and the beginning of the persecution of the Jews there, many fled eastwards. Some 15,000 Jews from Poland arrived in the still independent Lithuania. Caught between the Nazis and the Soviets, they were desperately seeking ways to emigrate. When the Soviets occupied Lithuania in 1940, the Jews’ plight intensified. All foreign diplomats were forced to leave the country. Scores of Jews descended on the Japanese consulate pleading for exit visas.

The remarkable Chiune Sugihara reportedly spent 20 hours a day in July 1940 writing as many visas as he could and was still writing them on the train platform when he was evacuated. When asked later why he did it, Sugihara said, “It is the kind of sentiment anyone would have when he actually sees refugees face to face, begging with tears in their eyes. He just cannot help but sympathize with them. … I knew that somebody would surely complain about me in the future. But, I myself thought this would be the right thing to do.”

Among the recipients of Sugihara’s lifetime visas were the entire student and teacher body of the Mir Yeshiva. With Sugihara’s help, they rode out the war in a ghetto for stateless people in Japanese-occupied Shanghai, while every other yeshiva or religious school in Eastern Europe was decimated.

After WWII, the Mir Yeshiva relocated in Jerusalem and in Brooklyn, NY and today has flourishing campuses with over 10,000 students. I attended Brooklyn’s Mir Yeshiva for High School and Rabbinical College. I recall sitting in my 9th grade Talmud class being led by the sweet and humorous Rabbi Leshinsky. When he said he was born in Shanghai, the class erupted in laughter. Then he told the tale. We were shocked and embarrassed. So many of my teachers and friends who helped shape me were descendants of Sugihara’s visas. I would not be the same man without their influence. Thank you from the depths of my heart, Mr. Sugihara!

Today, descendants of those with Sugihara visa numbers over 100,000. The “Japanese Schindler,” Chiune-Sempo Sugihara is recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations. Although I never met him, when all is said and done, I am Sugihara’s son. (*see Mir Yeshiva! Holocaust Encyclopedia The Story of the Jewish Community in Mir for the complete entry)

B’shalom,
Cantor Alty

Message from the President

As the weather warms, I am hopeful about our future as we start our gradual re-opening. We have started Tuesday evening and Thursday morning minyan at CSH and in late April, families celebrated B’nei Mitzvah in the sanctuary with some opting for Kiddush meals outside. A High Holy Days planning committee is set to start meeting soon. Hopefully, CSH will be able to host in-person Shabbat services the second weekend of July. We will, of course, monitor the situation, follow all guidelines, and keep you informed.

Looking forward to seeing you all in person soon!

—Dr. Mark Messenger

Calendar
(Continued from page 1)

FRIDAY, MAY 14
6:00 pm Kabbalat Shabbat (see p. 2)

SATURDAY, MAY 15
9:00 am Shabbat Services (see p. 2)
10:30 am Bat Mitzvah of Alexis Rebello (Link at https://shirathayam.org/shabbat-covid-19-response/)

SUNDAY, MAY 16
7:00 pm Erev Shavuot service with CSH (Link at https://shirathayam.org/holidays/)

MONDAY, MAY 17
7:30 am Shavuot service (Link at https://shirathayam.org/holidays/) followed by Yizkor service at 8:30 am
7:30 pm Becky’s Book Club: American Dirt by Jeanine Cummins (Link at https://shirathayam.org/book-club/)

TUESDAY, MAY 18
7:30 am Minyan (CSH)
7:30 pm Shirat Hayam Annual Meeting. (Link at https://shirathayam.org/limmud-covid-19-response/)

FRIDAY, MAY 21
6:00 pm Holy Happy Hour Minyan (use reg. Friday night link, see p. 2)

SATURDAY, MAY 22
9:00 am Shabbat Services (see p. 2)

FRIDAY, MAY 28
6:00 pm Kabbalat Shabbat (see p. 2)

SATURDAY, MAY 29
9:00 am Shabbat Services (see p. 2)
10:30 am B’nei Mitzvah of Evan Eisen and Marissa Eisen (Link at https://shirathayam.org/shabbat-covid-19-response/)

MONDAY, MAY 31
9 am and 7 pm Minyan (Memorial Day)

T’rumot HaLev Membership

Our new fiscal year starts May 1, 2021. T’rumot HaLev 21/22 Membership Commitment Forms have been mailed and emailed to current members. You can fill them out online or via hard copy. The deadline is May 31. We thank you for your continued commitment to us.

Congregation Shirat Hayam | 781.599.8005 | www.shirathayam.org | NEW WAVE 3
Covid-19 Legacy
Continued from page 1

spoke on vaccines), ways to reduce stress with favorite comfort food ideas and recipes, and methods to connect on the internet to lectures, classes and stories about grandkids. There was even ukulele music! The final lunch was highlighted by Rabbi Michael, who helped all reflect on the past year and think of options for moving forward when CSH reopens.

Regular attendee Marion Garfinkle said, “The Chicken Soup Lunch has allowed me to connect with a bunch of compassionate human beings, all looking to make a difference in the lives of those in need at CSH. Although on Zoom, we are so happy to see one another at our meetings. I am still a practicing RN, and this is the closest type of committee that I have joined which reaches out and ‘cares’ for their fellow human being!”

Brenda Cohen also loved the meetings. “The Chicken Soup Lunches are a great way to communicate with friends during this pandemic.”

Shir Chased always welcomes new members (contact barri@shirathayam.org for info) and all look forward to being able to meet in person soon.

Service Attendance Up During Covid-19

According to CSH Zoom data, many more people, both members and non-members, have been showing up at services. Attendance is up across the board: over 100% for both Friday night and the Shabbat morning traditional minyan, and 50% at morning minyan.

“Praying together, seeing each other’s faces, has been critical during this time of quarantine and social isolation,” Rabbi Michael said.

“Harriet and I were sporadic attendees at CSH’s in-person Friday evening service, but, since Covid, we have become regulars at the online service,” Jeff Brand said.

“Though it’s difficult now to practice ‘radical hospitality,’ I can still feel the camaraderie and the spirituality, even over Zoom. It’s meaningful to me to participate and be connected.”

Arnie Glick, who grew up on Wallace Road, a “pretty side street off of Lynn Shore Drive,” started attending Zoom services at CSH last fall. Though he has enjoyed living in Brookline’s Coolidge Corner for the past 35 years, he continues to feel drawn to the North Shore. “As a child, I was fortunate to attend the Hebrew Day School, then known as Hillel Academy, which was located in a big white house on Atlantic Avenue in Swampscott. So, last November, I happily realized that since services were on Zoom, I could now join the Friday night Kabbalat Shabbat service at Shirat Hayam,” he said. And he has continued attending regularly throughout the winter months.

With regard to joining weekly with his fellow worshippers, he observed, “I think that what has made the biggest impression on me is how much everyone seems to enjoy just being there, greeting each other, talking with the Rabbi and lingering after the service has concluded for a few more minutes of interpersonal connection—all of which has been so important during the period of the pandemic. And I quickly noticed that Rabbi Michael has a wonderful ability to help foster those connections.”

(Comes out Arnie’s cartoon on page 1).

Ann Segal, who leads minyan every Tuesday evening, said most congregants she has spoken to are very happy to attend on Zoom. “We have been getting between 11 and 22 or so at most of the services, as people find it very convenient to be at home, go to their computer and attend services in the comfort of their own home without having to go outside in the rain, snow or even the nice weather,” she said.

Recently on April 6, we rezoomed in-person minyan, which was also available on line. Four attended, and Ann hopes more will return once they are vaccinated. “Don’t forget, Shirat Hayam IS our ‘home away from home!’” she joked. On April 8, eight attended morning minyan in the sanctuary and were treated to both Marc Winer’s in-person Torah reading and Doris Villa’s famous and traditional Thursday morning fare, homemade muffins.

The High Holy Days provided other CSH firsts — virtual services and a lay High Holy Day volunteer committee to make it all happen, including Phyllis and Jack Karas.

“Jack and I found it extremely daunting to think we were working on a committee that could well determine how our fellow congregants would participate in the CSH High Holy Day services,” Phyllis said. As a pulmonologist, Jack reviewed and interpreted all the appropriate medical data relevant to Covid-19. When it became clear by late summer that the infectivity would be perilous for the safety of the CSH congregation, he felt the most appropriate approach would be a virtual High Holy Day.

“This was not an easy decision, but Mark Messenger’s knowledgeable medical input was most appreciated and respected in this difficult process. Jack and I both recognized that this was not the ideal situation our congregation would want, but working with the entire, highly-committed Task Force, led by Rabbi Michael, made the process and decisions easier,” Phyllis said.

In the end, they felt the committee made the right choice, “and the positive reactions from most members of the congregation pleased us greatly,” she added.

Other Activities

Other highlights were outdoor hikes in freezing weather, so younger CSH members (and their parents) could see and play with each other, and a spectacular outdoor Hanukkah mitzvah fair.

The 2021 annual Purim Mishloach Manot Greetings Campaign pledged to give My Brother’s Table 30% of the proceeds. Congregants donated a total of $12,450 this year, a 46.7% increase from last year, and CSH was pleased to send My Brother’s Table a check for $3,735.

Tzedek LaKol: Justice for All, a new CSH Affinity Group, launched in October 2020 and hit a home run in April with its debut series, “We Shall Not Be Silent: Conversations on Race.” With over two dozen members and co-chaired by Barbara and Alan Sidman, the group is committed to exploring and addressing ongoing issues of racial and social justice through programming, education and engagement and welcomes new members (contact barri@shirathayam.org for info).

At the end of the day, Rabbi Michael couldn’t be more proud of how the CSH community coped with the difficult year of Covid-19 restrictions. “This is a story of members stepping up to maintain community in a time of quarantine and isolation,” he said.
**CEE News**

**Spring has Sprung!**

Spring has sprung in the CEE! Our preschool classrooms are growing.... literally! Our plants have sprouted and so have the potatoes that we have been observing.

This month we introduced the children to mortar and pestles. We are taking our outdoor kitchen to a whole new level! We search for materials to grind by hand, we explore the sights, sounds, and smells of our concoctions. Grinding materials by hand builds those fine motor muscles that we need while learning to hold a pencil and write!

**Becky’s Book Club**

Join Becky’s Book Club facilitator and leader, Amy Cohn, for CSH monthly discussions. Named in memory of Becky Shepard z”l, who started the CSH congregational book club and passed away in 2014, the meetings take place on Zoom and are open to the community. The group will discuss *American Dirt* by Jeanine Cummins on May 17 (a gripping and empathetic story of an immigrant mother and son and their struggle to flee cartel violence and settle in America) and *The Family Upstairs* by Lisa Jewell on June 21 (a can’t-look-away suspense tale of three entangled families living in a house with the darkest of secrets). All meetings start at 7:30 pm. after minyan. Live Zoom link is available at shirathayam.org. Go to the Get Involved tab, click Affinity Groups and then click Becky’s Book Club.

**Matzah painting!**
The symbols of Passover were all over the CEE! Our Toddler classrooms created beautiful works of art using matzah as a canvas. We used our five senses to explore the matzah. We discussed the texture, size, shape and even the crunch! We enjoyed breaking the matzah up into pieces and working those fine motor muscles.

Janis Knight, Director of CJE, shares this update:

The story of the Exodus is the story of going out from Mitzrayim (Egypt), often translated as “the Narrow Place.” Not being able to have classes in person has certainly felt constricting but we have handled it with grace and humor. Passover kits for students this year included the materials to make a beautiful matza cover and to construct a wooden seder plate. We gathered online for a song session and a school-wide Jeopardy game, then met again to create our works of Judaica together. Some of our students wrote the year on the reverse of their plates as a reminder and a memento of the unexpected learning milieus of Zoom and CJE-At-Home. We created Candy Seder bags for our Madrichim to give them a little treat during this unusual time, as well. The staff and I are looking forward to being able to end the year in person with our students, even if it is only healthy for us to meet outdoors on Shabbatot. Shavuot will be our big finish focus on Shabbat, May 15th. Stay tuned!

**Life of the Congregation**

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Kaia Goldstein created her Seder plate from the kit provided by the CJE.
Our deepest condolences to those who have passed away.

**NON-MEMBERS:**

**Thomas Spisak Sr.**
3/5/2021
Father of Tom Spisak

**Arnold Goldberg**
3/16/2021
Brother of Ina Hoffman

**Harrison Lauhon**
3/20/2021
Nephew of Sara Winer

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**Greenberg**

**Husband and Father, Michael**

**In memory of**

Sister, Elizabeth Handis
Mother, Tillie Handis
Father, Jacob Handis
from Bernard Handis

Uncle, Samuel Patt
Brother, Jerry Brenner
from Beverly Shapiro

Husband and Father, Michael Greenberg
from Carla and Mindi Greenberg

Mother, Ethel Strogooff
from Carol Levin

Father, Ira Rosenberg
from David Rosenberg

Father, Lawrence B. Collier
from Deborah Collier-Comins

Mother, Mollie Cutter
from Diane Hart

Mother, Ethel Fishman
Father, Joseph Fishman
from Evelyn Handis

Father, Edward Isaac Siegel
from Herbert Siegel

Mother, Mae Karas
from Jacob Karas

Grandfather, Samuel Zoll
from Lawrence Feffer

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**CANTOR’S DISCRETIONARY FUND**

In appreciation of Cantor Alty from Marcia Kalman

**In memory of**

Father, Abraham Berkowitz from Lois Sargent

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**CENTER FOR EARLY EDUCATION FUND**

In honor of the birth of Jonah Matthew Kay, grandson of Marjorie and Randy Patkin from Shelley and Robert Freedman

In memory of David Weissman, life partner of Judi Gottlieb from Lori and Larry Groipen

In memory of Thomas Spisak, Sr., father of Tom Spisak from Michael and Wendy Dubinsky; Diane Levin and Stephen Hicks

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**CENTER FOR JEWISH EDUCATION**

In memory of Thomas Spisak, Sr., father of Tom Spisak from Herbert Goldberg; Ellen Gordon; Lori and Larry Groipen

In memory of beloved Father, Grandfather and Great Grandfather of the Freitas Family Get well wishes to Barbara Sidman In celebration of seeing everyone soon! from Beverly Kahn

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**BURT & BECKY SHEPARD SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

In memory of

Father, Harold Weiner from Lawrence Weiner

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**GENERAL FUND**

Get well wishes for Barbara Sidman
Get well wishes for Bobby Kaplan from Phyllis Sagan

In appreciation of Barri Stein, and all that she does for CSH from Bethany and Moshe Roditi

With thanks for Shirat Hayam’s wishes for a speedy recovery for Robert Hart from Diane and Robert Hart

In honor of the birth of Marjorie and Randy Patkin’s new grandson, Jonah Matthew Kay from Mark Schwartz

With thanks for allowing me to say Kaddish with your congregation from Richard Slavin

In memory of Arnold Goldberg, brother of Ina Hoffman from Phyllis Sagan; Cheryl and Arthur Schwartz; Ellen and Barry Turkans

In memory of Harold Mack, brother-in-law of Bette Shoreman from Ellen and Richard Alexander

In memory of Philip Strasnick, father of Brian Strasnick

In memory of Sandra Klosky, mother of Robin Dale and Leslie Harisp

In honor of the birth of our grandson, Jaxxon (Yisroel) Riley Ferguson from Beth and Marc Andler

In memory of Jackie Goldstein, husband of Mildred Goldstein from Louise Chudnofsky

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**KIDDUSH FUND**

In honor of the birth of Shelly Sackett’s grandson, Leo
In honor of the birth of Beth and Marc Andler’s grandson, Jaxxon from Diane and Edward Knopf

In memory of

Mother, Anna Titchell Gilman
Stepfather, David Gilman from Arlene Leventhal

Mother, Ada Greenbaum from Dorothy Tadman

Mother, Fay Bonfeld
Father, Irving Gerson from Gail and Jerry Gerson

Mother, Ruth Dinerman from Gerald Dinerman

Father, Jacob Marmor from Hedy Schnelwar

Mother, Natalie Hotz
Husband, I. Donald Rosenthal from Joyce Rosenthal

Grandmother, Jean Gartz
from Karen Hirsch

Father, Bernard Kaplan from Marlene Goldberg

Father, David Goldberg from Martin Goldberg

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**CONDOLENCES**

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**Donations**

March 1 – 31, 2021
How to Make a Donation

To make a donation, please visit shirathayam.org/

Donate or mail your donation with a check made out to CSH or Congregation Shirat Hayam. Please specify the fund to which your donation should be allocated.
Every issue, The New Wave spotlights congregants as a way to help us get to know each other by putting a face with a name. This month, Drs. Linda Kleeman and Jeff Oringer share their thoughts on Shirat Hayam and its special, personal meaning for their family.

Where did you grow up?
What role did religion and synagogue life play in your younger years?

Jeff: I grew up in East Northport, New York on Long Island in a Conservative congregation and went to Hebrew school every week. Because I'm adopted, I had to go through a conversion ceremony and go to the Mikvah before having my Bar Mitzvah. I always felt connected to the Jewish community and went to a Hebrew high school for four years after my Bar Mitzvah. I went to Jewish day camps and USY on Wheels, a 6-week bus tour around the country. We kept kosher and said prayers daily. After college, I really only went to the synagogue on the high holidays and when traveling as a locums doctor just after residency, I found congregations in the towns where I lived. It was comforting to go to a synagogue in Virginia and learn that the prayers were the same ones I had learned in childhood.

Linda: I grew up in Charleston, West Virginia. My family had a clothing store that had been the family business on my father’s side for a few generations. I grew up in a Reform congregation that was a rich community in the 1950s-1990s, but has since seen a drastic decline in members. The Jewish culture that I grew up with was more about community engagement and ethical teaching than religious teaching. As a teenager and young adult, I was looking for a source of spiritual inspiration and was briefly drawn to Buddhism, but ultimately have felt my connection to Judaism grow since coming to Shirat Hayam.

Tell us a little about yourselves and your family

We have two kids, Caroline and Miles, who have grown up at Shirat. I have been grateful that they have had a rich exposure to Jewish traditions.

Jeff: I am a gastroenterologist at North Shore Medical Center in Salem. We were fortunately introduced to the congregation by one of my colleagues, Al Namias. I have been grateful that they have had a rich exposure to Jewish traditions.

Linda: I am a high-risk obstetrician at Beth Israel Lahey. I was at Tufts for years, but recently moved to Beth Israel Lahey due to the hospital mergers and the opportunity to work closer to home at the Beverly and Winchester satellite offices. In terms of hobbies, I like to cook, garden and craft. I’m a definite homebody.

What first brought you to CSH?

Linda: We first started visiting congregations on the North Shore when we were planning our wedding. At the time, Rabbi HaLevi was here and we really enjoyed the myriad ways to engage with Judaism and the congregation on Shabbat. Jeff usually went to the Nosh & Drash and I usually went to yoga. And honestly, the bagel luncheons afterwards were always a great opportunity to meet people!

What keeps you at CSH?
What is special to you?

Definitely the community. We have developed meaningful friendships that we hope to keep for the rest of our lives. We continue to feel drawn to the different programs and our children have developed treasured friendships as well, and have embraced their Jewish learning. The CJE teachers have been so positive and wonderful. Our favorite service is definitely Renewal and we look forward to being able to do that in person again in the future. We also love how vibrant the role of the cantor is in the congregation. The Purim Zoom was fantastic and we loved seeing our friends’ children in the program, even though we haven’t seen them in person all year.

Are you involved in any activities or committees at CSH?

Jeff is currently a board member. Linda is looking forward to being part of the Shirat Membership Ambassadors.