Rabbi Michael Ragozin was thrilled when Benjamin Summers indicated an interest in joining CSH as its rabbinic intern from October 2021 until June 2022. Beni, whose first visit was October 16, will lead the traditional Shabbat minyan (9 am to 10 am) and Nosh & Drash (10 am) on December 4, January 8, February 12, March 12, April and May 7.

“This is an opportunity for CSH to be inspired by a rabbinical student, while providing greater service to our traditional minyan,” Rabbi Michael said.

Currently a Shanah Bet Rabbinical student at Hebrew College, Beni worked for the last eight years in the Jewish professional space — colleges, high schools, temples, summer camps, non-profits, youth groups, and many more. He is about to begin an internship with SHEFA: Jewish Psychedelic Support. “My dream is to become a thought leader in the field of spiritual care for the emerging Jewish psychedelic movement,” he said.

He was born and raised in Salem, MA and has been connected to the Boston Jewish community. He sang Jewish A Capella in Kaskeset for four years at his alma mater, Binghamton University (available on Spotify). “I love singing and do so a lot, and usually loudly!” he said. He also loves attending live music events and is a huge professional soccer fan. T ottenham Hotspurs and The New England Revolution are his favorites.

On a more serious note, Beni thoughtfully answered some questions to help introduce himself to the CSH community.

What was your childhood like? What part did Judaism play in your family?

My childhood happened primarily on the North Shore, so coming to work with the community at Shirat Hayam feels like an exciting return to a place that was so central to my early development. I was born in Salem and started my school journey at the JCCNS preschool. My mother, Leah Summers, worked at Cohen Hillel Academy for decades and we were deeply connected to the Jewish community of the area.

We attended Temple Sinai when I was young, keeping almost my entire Jewish life outside of the home happening on the holy plateau of Community Road. I am named after a legendary Jewish educator who worked in this area years ago, Bennet Solomon, whose philosophy of pedagogy and passion for yiddishkeit filtered through my mentors and guardians and into me at a young age. Some of my beloved ancestors were devout chassids and members of the Yiddish intelligentsia of early 20th century Poland, and I grew up on stories of their wisdom, intellect and devotion to the Jewish people.

As a young student I loved putting on tefillin, I loved seders with my grandparents, I loved running into people I knew at Stop & Shop shopping for Shabbat on Friday afternoon. Needless to say, the North Shore holds a special place in my Jewish soul.

Can you tell us about your mindfulness training and how that fits into your life, your wanting to become a rabbi and how you plan to integrate the practice into your time at CSH?

The seeds of my relationship to the theory and training for the practice of mindfulness were planted in the Watts and Berkeley Shambhala communities of my youth. In college I studied the writings of a wide range of religious and philosophical voices to arrive at what I believe is a path of mindful, ethical, and devotional Judaism.

I was trained by my great-uncle, Rabbi Abba Nathan, who was a long-standing farmer of Shambhala meditation practice in the Boston area. He taught me the simple but profound value of sitting, observing, and feeling the vastness of the present moment.

I have been a practitioner for over 15 years and have had the privilege to teach mindfulness and meditation in many different settings. My training in meditation and mindfulness has been important to me as I work towards becoming a rabbi. As a rabbi, I hope to bring these tools to the community, so that we can all explore how to live mindful and ethical lives.

On a practical level, I have been integrating these teachings into my daily life, my teaching, and my personal growth. I have found that the practice of mindfulness can help us to connect more deeply with ourselves and the world around us. As a Jew, I understand the importance of finding ways to connect with our traditions and our community.

I am excited to bring these teachings to CSH and to explore how we can all use mindfulness to enhance our spiritual practice and our lives in general.
With the sun setting at 4:15 pm, the days of darkness have descended upon us. Our moods may change and some may experience winter depression or seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which can be treated. During this nadir of daylight, we bring light to darkness. We celebrate Hanukkah, the festival of lights.

In fact, Hanukkah actually occurs during the darkest of days. If the winter solstice, December 21 or 22, is the shortest day of the year, how can this be? Hanukkah is celebrated on the 25th of Kislev, the ninth lunar month on the Hebrew calendar. Since the lunar month is 29 ½ days, beginning Hanukkah on the 25th of the lunar month ensures not only that the moon is a waning crescent, providing the least illumination, but also that it rises after midnight. Hence, even the night, with the absence of the moon until after midnight, is dark.

In this darkest of times, we light a candle. Then, we add one candle each night, increasing the light. Towards the end of the holiday, when our menorah grows brightest, the new moon appears, restoring light to the night.

Hanukkah, then, is a holiday of hope. During the darkest time of the year, the candles affirm our power to bring light to darkness and the new moon reminds us that the light of the universe waxes and wanes, but the holiday ends with moonlight increasing.

So, too, with our lives and our universe – may we bring light to darkness and may the new moon portent a reawakening of joy and blessing in the month ahead.

Happy Hanukkah,
Rabbi Michael
I am so excited to talk to you this month about our Youth Choir. As many of you know, I led a choir of over 50 students at my last congregation. I can tell you all the reasons that I loved it as the director, but more importantly I want to tell you why the parents loved it so much.

First, Youth Choir helped motivate their little ones to go to Hebrew school in the morning because it was something they really looked forward to. Sometimes — as we all know — those weekend wakeups are not easy! Second, it was an activity that did not add extra expense or time commitment to their already busy schedules. Once I scheduled choir on the same day as religious school, the numbers of participants grew overnight. Third, the children performed at fun synagogue and community events, creating family memories that will last a lifetime. Many “Instagram-able” moments also showcased the synagogue in a vibrant, new way, and helped to recruit new members.

Next, these young singers built confidence and vocal skills in a comfortable, low-pressure atmosphere; many of them had solos, and I heard beautiful voices develop! Lastly, the students learned so many more songs and prayers in Hebrew than their classmates or siblings who hadn’t signed up. It was always my goal that the kids left me with a repertoire of melodies of a basic prayer service and traditional holiday songs. Even my youngest members were able to follow sheet music and sing in Hebrew by the middle of their first year in choir. A bonus item I heard about at every strategic planning meeting was that parents loved receiving my texts via the Remind app. Many of them were drowning in emails, and they appreciated brief text updates as the main method of communication.

You won’t be surprised to hear that any of the above reasons were also why I loved leading the choir! Connecting with other young families, mentoring singers over their years in religious school and watching the numbers grow were so rewarding. In addition, my own children and cousin joined the choir, and I saw firsthand how their talent, knowledge, and connections to Judaism and their fellow choir members grew as a result. Bringing this successful model to Shirat Hayam is one of my top priorities this year. The High Holy Day Youth Choir was a true joy to form during my first two months here, and I know the group will continue to grow and flourish in the months and years to come.

Many blessings,
Cantor Sarah

Message from the President

I, like many of my friends, have been shaken by recent and numerous tragedies that have befallen fellow congregants — from strokes to life-altering accidents to sudden illnesses and deaths. In looking to make sense of this all, I have wandered into the Kabbalistic concept of “pelia” or wonder, which led me to the writings of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Herschel, who famously wrote about what he called “radical amazement.” I know that the history of our congregation incorporated the concept of radical hospitality, and I suggest that we now embrace the daily wonders of life itself and stand in radical amazement, adopting what I am humbly calling radical gratitude. It is so easy to lose our balance in the face of what has been lost; it is so common to succumb to the sadness that threatens to overwhelm us. Yet, I think the lesson for us is to notice everyday how many things there are to be grateful for, from a beautiful sunrise to our (mostly) functional bodies to our friends and our congregation. By practicing radical gratitude, I think we can generate a grounding in wonder that will keep us rooted in amazement and gratitude, even in the face of the inevitable storms that will pass through our community and our lives.

Warmly,
Ruth Estrich

Calendar

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10
6:00 pm Kabbalat Shabbat at CSH

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11
9:00 am Shabbat Synaplex (see p. 2); Renewal with guest Noam Sender; Traditional Shacharit led by Rabbi Michael
9:00 am CJE (grades K-6)
10:00 am Torah Yoga and Nosh & Drash with Noam Sender

MONDAY, DECEMBER 13
7:30 pm Becky’s Book Club, Discuss On the Road by Jack Kerouac (Go to https://shirathayam.org/book-club/ for link and location of meeting).

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14
4:00 pm Center for Jewish Education (grades 2-7)
7:30 pm Atlantic Avenue Limmud-Adult Learning, Registration required for Zoom link and updates. See page 4 (Four sessions; attendance at all not required)

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17
5:30 pm Holy Happy Hour with light refreshments followed by musical Shabbat at 6:00 pm with guest musician, pianist David Sparr

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18
9:00 am Shabbat Synaplex (see p. 2); Traditional Shacharit led by Jan Brodie
9:00 am Center for Jewish Education (grades K-6)
10:00 am Torah Service led by CJE grades 6 & 7; Torah Yoga and Nosh & Drash with Mimi Nelson Oliver Embodying our W-Holy Life: How Movement, Mindfulness and Music enhance Mental Health
11:25 am Shirat Hayam member Pam Fine delivers Drash

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 21
4:00 pm CJE (grades 2-7)

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24
9:00 am Minyan (online)
4:00 pm Kabbalat Shabbat at CSH

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25
9:00 am Traditional Shachat and Renewal
10:00 am Torah Service, Musaf, Mourner’s Kaddish, Healing, Talk

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31
9:00 am Minyan (online)
4:00 pm Kabbalat Shabbat at CSH

SATURDAY, JANUARY 1, 2022
9:00 am Traditional Shachat and Renewal
10:00 am Torah Service, Musaf, Mourner’s Kaddish, Healing, Talk

See our website calendar (https://shirathayam.shulcloud.com/calendar) for upcoming Traditional Shachat leaders, Renewal guest musicians and Nosh & Drash leaders.
practice of Jewish Mindfulness was first planted in 2015, when I was working at Temple Emunah in Lexington MA. Our rabbi mentioned at a staff meeting that he was working with a few congregants to start a new initiative within the community that would focus on offering contemplative experiences and programs centered around Torah and tefillah that would be called Emunat HaLev. I knew very little of the contemplative arts before that time, but something deep within me welled up with intense excitement and I cheered aloud at the thought of getting to investigate what Jewish spiritual practice and mindfulness might offer one another.

Turns out, it’s quite a lot! I spent the next several years building a routine meditation practice into my daily life which eventually led me to attend several multi day silent meditation retreats. I even took advanced courses at Lesley University in their Mindfulness Studies masters program to familiarize myself with the intricacies of neuroscience and predominant theories of Western mindfulness as sourced from Theravada Buddhist roots.

In 2018 I began hosting weekly meditation gatherings in my home in Somerville called “Sit & Sing” where folks would gather together to sit in silence for thirty minutes followed by thirty minutes of singing niggunim, zemirot and other forms of devotional tunes. It turned into a beautiful community of contemplative practice that met regularly until the beginning of the pandemic times. I am hopeful of starting it back up again soon; I really miss it as part of my week!

In terms of how my practice interacted with my path to the rabbinate, I can say that the deliberation process was significantly aided by the spaciousness and quietude of the retreat setting. I also believe that as a society we would benefit from installing more methods for slowing down and practicing “radical amazement,” as Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel coined it, into our daily lives. My hope is that as a spiritual leader I can competently and compassionately guide others in discovering how practices like mindfulness can be both personally healing as well as Jewishly enriching.

**Why did you decide to become a rabbi?**

At some point during the odyssey that has been my adulthood thus far I realized I wanted to make a grand attempt to be as useful to the Jewish people and human species as I could possibly conceive based on a developing perception of my strengths, weaknesses, and where my interests intersect with emergent and pressing needs in the world.

Becoming a pluralistically trained rabbi through the program at Hebrew College was nestled at the cross section of all the factors, and since the beginning of my journey I have not been able to imagine doing anything else with my time or energy that would be a better fit toward those ends. I think it is also relevant to add that my exposure to the works of Rabbi Art Green played a factor in making Hebrew College the only rabbinical school program I considered. I look to him as an elder to look up to and want to carry forth much of his contribution to Torah and Kabbalah through my own work and life.

**What do you plan to talk about in your monthly drashes? Will you address the intersections between psychedelic medicine experience and Jewishly informed spiritual care?**

Concerning the monthly drashes: I am thrilled to have a chance to share my practice of contemplative and embodied Torah study with the CSH community. I believe that learning Torah, whether alone, in chevuruta or in a group setting is more than just an intellectual exercise. It can be a laboratory for spiritual experience and personal meaning making that taps into realms of mind and heart beneath surface level. There is a teaching in the Talmud which beautifully refers to Torah learning for its own sake (Torah Li’shma) as a Sam Chayyin (A Drug Of Life), which can be likened to the other kinds of drugs out in the world which are sourced from nature, are medicinal, and help us to locate the Divine in our lives for the betterment of all.

This is just one of a growing number of ideas that I have been collecting from our tradition that will hopefully aid psychedelic journeys ground their experiences of expanded awareness back into the roots of their Jewish journey, which for me is crucial as we move into a new age of legal and regulated psychedelics being utilized for healing and for spiritual transformation in society at large. While psychedelics won’t be the focus of my teachings per say, I’m always happy to be in dialogue with those seeking to understand what is coming and what Judaism has to do with it.

**What drew you to CSH?**

I would say three things come up for me with this question. Firstly, I have a desire to gain more experience leading services and facilitating adult learning as part of my development. This internship offers both of those and I couldn’t resist applying for the position because of it. Also, I am excited about returning to the North Shore as a different version of myself, reconnecting with old faces and meeting new people, and further expanding my network of prayerful and engaged Jewish communities in the Greater Boston area. Lastly, I am fascinated with the current project of CSH. I remember a time long ago when there were two shuls that merged into one, and then hearing about how this new place was innovating and bravely diverging in cool ways to offer people what they were needing from a 21st century synagogue. I want to learn from the team leading this community, meet its blessed members and grow as a person and future rabbi. Also, I love the ocean :)
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 *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac on December 13 (a 1957 novel by American writer Jack Kerouac, based on his travels with his friends across the United States. It is considered a defining work of the postwar Beat and Counterculture generations). 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.

Jan. 10: *The Exiles* by Christina Baker Kline
Feb. 7: *The Four Winds* by Kristin Hannah
Mar. 14: *The Marriage of Opposites* by Alice Hoffman
Apr. 11: *Midnight in Broad Daylight* by Pamela Rotner Sakamoto
May 9: *Hamnet* by Maggie O’Farrell
June 13: *Gateway to the Moon* by Mary Morris

From the Desk of Andrea Bernard, Director, Center for Early Education:

The CEE is excited to Celebrate Hanukkah with a weeklong workshop led by Cheryl Schwartz and Sarah Ragozin. The festivities will include crafts, hands-on exploration of Hanukkiot, dreidels, candles, gelt — and, of course, enjoying potato latkes. We look forward to sharing pictures with you next month.

Above: Infant art!!! Our youngest CEE group is in the sensorimotor stage of development, exploring the world through their senses.

Below: The CEE was in the midst of a Fall Fun Frenzy! We had a special visit from Mr. Scarecrow, who sang Autumn themed songs with us.

Above: The teens of Better Together (Liora Ragozin, Nat Mahler, Jake Dubow, Chloe Conley, Amanda Sorkin, Ned Jeffries) and teachers Jason Stark and Janis Knight observed Shabbat with Kaplan residents via Zoom.

From the Desk of Janis Knight, Director of the Center for Jewish Education:

December is exciting at CJE! For the first time, we will be offering students in grades 4-7 elective classes during the month of December. This is designed to offer students additional and perhaps unexpected ways for them to explore the richness of Jewish culture and practice. I’m excited for our students to have a taste of their choice of: Jewish Holiday Cooking, Hebrew Calligraphy, Jewish Superheroes, or Moroccan/Yemenite Metalwork. Classes were chosen to appeal to a broad range of potential interests and learning styles amongst our students. Watch this space for a peek at what they produce.

Right: The teens of Better Together (Liora Ragozin, Nat Mahler, Jake Dubow, Chloe Conley, Amanda Sorkin, Ned Jeffries) and teachers Jason Stark and Janis Knight observed Shabbat with Kaplan residents via Zoom.
BRODY MINYAN FUND
Get well wishes for Bobby Kaplan from Helaine and Jim Hazlett
In memory of Libby Kessler, mother of Beth Hoffman
In memory of Frances Mendelsohn, mother of Alvah Parker from Shelley Sackett and Lenny Rotman
In memory of
Father, Chester Tischell from Arlene Leventhal
Mother, Bertha Yanofsky
Grandmother, Dora Westerman from Barbara Levine
Father, Edward Flanzbaum from Barbara Meyer
Husband, Albert Mitchell from Bernice Mitchell
Mother, Ruth Goldstein from Carolyn Perlow
Great grandmother, Bessie Kramer from Deborah McWade
Father-in-law, Henry Kabatchnick from Eli Talkov
Mother, Edna Gordon from Gerald Gordon
Aunt, Ida Poleschuck from Jackie Rosenthal
Father, Israel Bluestein from Janice Kelley
Father, Sidney Feffer
Grandmother, Sara Lena Zoll from Larry Feffer
Husband, Kenneth Miller from Lois Miller
Grandmother, Henrietta Lillian from Marsha Feffer
Grandfather, Israel Greenbaum from Maurice Greenbaum
Father, Maurice Klasky from Phyllis Karas
Sister, Sandy Weiner from Rachelle Rosenbaum
Father, Harry Weinstein from Reva Surette
Aunt and Uncle, Sylvia and Allen Rubin
Grandfather, Max Rubin from Rhonda and David Preman
Father, Louis Ravich from Richard Ravich
Father, Leonard Cooper from Robert Cooper
Mother, Susan Jepsky from Robert Jepsy
Friend, Pearl Pearlstein from Robin Cooper
Father, Morris Munick from Samuel Munick
Husband, Arnold Spector from Sandra Spector
Mother, Lilian Comins from Stuart Comins

BURT & BECKY SHEPARD SCHOLARSHIP FUND
In memory of
Father, Albert Rich from Stanley Rich

CANTOR’S DISCRETIONARY FUND
In appreciation of Cantor Sarah and all that she is doing for CSH and the community from Bethany and Moshe Roditi
In appreciation of Cantor Sarah’s help from Charlotte Fine
In celebration of Joan Rich’s special birthday from Marsha Gerber

CENTERS FOR JEWISH EDUCATION
In memory of Sherry Wurtzel, mother of Renee Sidman from Carol and Sam Denbo; Lori and Larry Groiphen; Beverly Kahn; Hallie Sperling and Mark Schwartz
In memory of Sandy Feinstein Yacklow from Marla and Philip Gay
In memory of Evelyn Solomon Cohn, mother of Amy Cohn from Beverly Kahn
In honor of Barbara Vinick’s granddaughter, Abby Garrity, becoming a Bat Mitzvah from Helaine and Jim Hazlett

FEINSTEIN SCHOLARSHIP FUND
In memory of
Grandfather, Herman Goldsmith from Joyce Bornstein

GENERAL FUND
In appreciation from Bunny Lieberson
In honor of Donna and Spencer Kagan’s granddaughter becoming a Bat Mitzvah from Arlene and David Addis
In honor of my grandson, Jake Pearlman, becoming a Bar Mitzvah from Fran Pearlman
In honor of Haley Cashman’s engagement to Ben Levine from Lois and Bobby Kaplan

KIDDUSH FUND
In memory of Sandy Feinstein Yacklow from Phyllis Sagan

In memory of
Grandmother, Frances Winthrop Berlow from Claudia Rodenstein
Grandmother, Ida Globsband from Daniel Globsband
Grandfather, Samuel Epstein from David Kauder
Father, Israel Goldiamond from Dr. Stephen and Dr. Lisa Plymate
Father, Benjamin Hander from Helyne Hamelburg
Mother, Florence Kaplan from Howard Kaplan
Father, Samuel Dolinsky from Marilyn Segall
Mother, Selma Schnee-Spiegel from Martin Schnee
Father, Donald Foreman from Rand Foreman-Bergman
Mother, Connie Comins from Edey Baker
Brother, Harvey Kirstein from Phyllis Kaplan
Mother, Sylvia Gelb from Richard Gelb
Father, Harold Gelb from Richard Gelb
Parents, Ethel and Harold Rosenberg from Shelley Schnee

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.

High Holy Day Appeal
Pledges as of Nov. 9, 2021: $59,052
Donations

Father, Gerald Schlosser from Jill Goodman
Grandfather, Louis Pekin from Joan Rich
Father, Joseph Staretz from Judith Rosenberg
Mother-in-law, Mollie Rosenberg from Judith Rosenberg
Mother-in-law, Victoria Tarlow from Judith Tarlow
Father, Alfred Goldstein from Judy White
Mother, Leola Interess from Leslie Ogan
Mother, Helen Kaplan London from Michael Kaplan
In memory of Robert P. Alexander, DMD from Elizabeth Stevenson
Mother, Tovah Hurwitz from Myles Hurwitz
Mother, Esther Shapiro from Rosalyn Shapiro
Uncle, Murray Bonfeld from Roz Goldberg
Mother, Mildred Shanker from Ruth Shanker
MERKEN TALLIT FUND
In memory of
Mother-in-law, Annie Merken from Elaine Merken

POLONSKY BUILDING FUND
In memory of
Father, Nathan Polonsky from Norma and Sherman Freedman

RABBI’S DISCRETIONARY FUND
In appreciation of Rabbi Michael from Beth Hoffman and the Kessler Family; The Revman, Linsky and Katz Family
In memory of Libby Kessler, mother of Beth Hoffman from Judy and Mark Arnold
In memory of Sherry Wurtzel, mother of Renee Sidman from Jessica and Daniel Gelb; Marsha Gerber
In memory of Sandy Feinstein Yackolow from Sandra and Arnold Shuman

RITUAL FUND
Wishes for strength and healing for Ben Yellin
In honor of the birth of Susan and Larry Goldberg’s granddaughter, Violet from Diane and Ed Knopf

In memory of
Father and Grandfather, Harry Reinherz from Cynthia Poster and Family

SHIR CHESED FUND
In memory of David Willis from Bette and Dan Shoreman
In memory of Sandy Feinstein Yackolow from Herb Goldberg

In memory of Evelyn Solomon Cohn, mother of Amy Cohn from Sheila and Stanley Rich

In memory of
Father, Morris Finn from Brenda Cohen
Father, Fred Zeller from Jane Zeller

In memory of
Father and grandfather, Richard Jay Sorkin from Nancy Sorkin and Jessica Orenberg
Nathan and Anna Parman from Phyllis Boris
Father, Maxwell G. Swartz from Rita Swartz

In memory of
Father, Harry Schwartz from Sheila Rich

TREE PLANTED IN ISRAEL
In memory of Sandy Feinstein Yackolow from Donna and Philip Lapatin

TZDEK LAKOL - RACIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE
In memory of
Mother, Mildred Zeramby from Arlyne Rosenberg

Holy Happy Hour

Bethany Roditi, Sheila and Stan Rich and many others enjoyed getting together in person for Holy Happy Hour on October 15. Save the Date — next Holy Happy Hour Minyan is December 17!!!

SHMOOZIN

"The secret to making the perfect potato latke is really quite simple -- if at first you don’t succeed, fry, fry again!"

SHMOOZIN

“No electronics, no computer chips, not even any batteries -- it’s nice to know that children can still be happy playing with something as low tech as a dreidel.”
CONGREGATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

Meet Marc Winer

Every issue, the New Wave spotlights a congregant as a way to help us get to know each other by putting a face with a name. This month, Marc Winer shares his thoughts about Shirat Hayam and its special, personal meaning.

Where did you grow up?
I was born in New Haven and lived there until the age of seven. Thereafter, we moved every four or five years due to my father’s work-related transfers, first in 1954 to a rural area just outside of Poughkeepsie, next in 1960 to West Hartford, and in 1964 to Beverly.

Tell us a little about yourself and your family.
I would describe my early life as fairly typical of a middle-income person of the baby-boomer generation. Our family life provided plentiful protection, care, safety, and love — and, like so many of our generation, we never knew of want for things that are truly important, and we never knew of fear for our wellbeing. However, my parents — mom especially — schooled us about the fact that life was radically different for those of us from earlier generations, for European Jews, and for persons of color. I sensed this firsthand at age nine on a family trip to Florida. At a stopover, my younger sister was approached by a store clerk and informed that she had wrongly used a water fountain designated for Colored Only.

What role did religion and synagogue life play in your childhood and young adulthood?
My religious life took root in New Haven, where our family belonged to an orthodox shul. It was there, while sitting next to my father on a Rosh Hashanah, that I first saw a grown man cry. That man was the Chazan, tearfully reciting the Hineni prayer in his slow, solemn approach to the bimah to start the Musaf service. I asked my father why the Chazan was crying, and though I can’t recall his exact answer, what I do recall is that my dad’s response made me understand that the Chazan had much that was painful and difficult on his mind — remember that this was only a few years after WWII — and it was at that moment that I first realized the potential depth and importance of religious service. That memory has remained active within me. Our at-home religious life was sustained by mom. She held fast to keeping a kosher home, and missing Shabbos candle lighting, Kiddush, and traditional Friday night dinner was non-negotiable. While my wife, Sara, had a different experience in her youth, she has maintained the Shabbat tradition non-stop over our 51 years of marriage, so that to this day Shabbat always brings about spiritual uplift, renewal of family connection and (for me) some of the best food on the planet.

What did you learn to chant Torah?
The matter of my wanting to be a Baal Korah — one who reads Torah — began in earnest sometime in the 1970s when Sara and I were living in Everett. Once, our rabbi asked if I would lehn — chant — Parsha Re-eh while he was to be on vacation. It took me six weeks of daily practice to fulfill the request. Thereafter, Torah reading evolved from an occasional to a regular practice, and about five years ago I was finally able to claim that I had chanted the entire Sefer. I am grateful and honored that CSH has regularly invited me to chant Torah — though I must say that each occasion proves to be a humbling and somewhat daunting experience, largely because I view Torah as the source code of the Jewish experience and its text as needing to be approached with utmost respect and appreciation.

What first brought you to CSH?
Sara and I agree totally that CSH has thoroughly succeeded in identifying and achieving its own special sense of community. If I’m still adjusting to some details of our religious services, I see — and have experienced — this House of Worship to be impressively warm and welcoming. Both Sara and I are really grateful for the dedication and plain hard work by Rabbi Ragozin, Cantor Sarah, officers, and all the CSH staff that has made this place so special.

Marc Winer with his wife, Sara.