A Fire in the Forest:
The Life and Legacy of the Ba’al Shem Tov

Led by Rabbi Shawn Zevit with Special Guest
Rabbi Jeff Eisenstat

Join One Book Mishkan for Film, Discussion, Singing & Refreshments
Sunday, December 8 (4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.)

Kabbalism, Hasidism, Golems & the Ba’al Shem Tov? Well, just as one book leads to many books, one theme leads to many others! Having viewed the silent film classic, The Golem, to open our One Book Mishkan program series, our reading of Helene Wecker’s magical debut novel, The Golem and the Jinni, now leads us from Kabbalism to the Ba’al Shem Tov to Hasidism. Come learn how one topic leads to the next, and how we are all inheritors of the legacy of the Ba’al Shem Tov.

Rabbi Shawn leads our program as we view A Fire in the Forest: The Life and Legacy of the Ba’al Shem Tov and learn more about the Hasidic rebbes who were his followers. We are pleased to welcome Rabbi Jeff Eisenstat, who recently visited some of the sites seen in the film. Rabbi Jeff will share his experiences and join Rabbi Shawn in leading us in singing songs which come to us from this tradition.

Plan to be with us for a delightful afternoon of film, discussion, music and – as always – a good nosh from your friends on the Library Committee.
The Dynamics of Growth– Making Room in our Mishkan

What does it mean to join a synagogue? As I see it, we are both a community and a congregation. A community is a network of relationships. You join it by taking part. The more you take part, the more you will build those relationships, the more connected you will feel, and the more our community will grow. While the community is an informal network, the congregation is a formal organization. We have bylaws, officers, committees, employees, income and expenses. To be a member you have to fill out a form and pay your dues and contribute additional time and financial resources to help the congregation’s mission succeed. The congregation provides the platform, the structure, in today’s parlance, the hardware. The community is the software, the spirit and the real soul. I believe that if you are going to be a member of this community, you have a responsibility at some point to joining the congregation. And if you are a member of the congregation, please be a part of this community.

Cary Oshins, Past-President of Am Haskalah, Allentown, PA

Being a congregation means taking the building of sacred community to heart. It means conscious efforts to grow, strengthen, and deepen the love for our community, the Jewish people and the world at large. It is important that we understand the interconnections between effective outreach and in-reach.

This was so apparent in the wonderful new member’s Shabbat, coordinated by Karen Smith, Marcy Boroff, Gari Weilbacher and many volunteers that offered your time energy (and amazing challahs thanks to Pat Quigley and Peter Handler!). Under Rivka Jarosh and Judy Weeks’ guidance the Gimel class enriched our November 15th Kabbalat Shabbat with the children’s stories of their ancestors and the parent’s blessings for their children’s Jewish education, and the exciting prayer service that emerged from the combination of families and other adults praying together. Following a high-energy Torah study Shabbat morning, November 16 over one hundred new, returning and continuing members and guests filled our sanctuary with song, harmony and spontaneous offerings of the heart in the service Rabbi Yael and I led with support of our membership team and Cantor Ron Fischman who leyned Torah for us. More followed with an amazing potluck lunch you all provided, with delicious cookies thanks to Gabby and our Food for Thought teen bakers and our lively study and conversation on the intersection of Thanksgiving and Hanukkah this year that we have all just celebrated. Thank you all!

We have been blessed to have twenty new member households and almost as many returning member households since our New Year began. The calls and interest continue every week. At the same time there is a tendency in any member-centered organization to equate growth only with quantitative increases in membership. A proactive and consciously framed community-building approach recognizes that building sacred community must touch and invigorate every aspect of a congregation. Such work helps a congregation to better serve its current members, to reevaluate its mission and to deepen its community bonds. We are in the beginning stages of having these strategic conversations alongside with revitalizing programming, spiritual practice, life-long learning across all age groups, social justice activism, and all areas of our precious community’s life.

Crafting a community that attracts new members is an art, not a science. Genuine, dynamic changes can lead to positive growth and increased participation and commitment. In addition to internal (sometimes administrative) practices and external marketing efforts, there is the all-important aspect of relationship. Ultimately, it is not about the specific programming or the executive functioning of the office or the pizzazz of the public relations, as vital as they are. These are secondary and instrumental to the primary purpose of fostering caring relationships that address people in their whole-ness and support them in their growth as Jews and fellow travelers, and human beings. Ultimately for Mishkan Shalom to flourish long-term, we must not only invite people to participate in a particular program area, committee or subgroup, but to a whole and holy larger vision and connected community.

Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben, senior rabbi of the largest Reconstructionist congregation Kehillat Israel in Pacific Palisades, CA, (which he helped grow from 250 to over 1,000 households) has a motto on his wall that says, continued on page 4

Submit articles before the fifteenth of the month to levinsone@yahoo.com

December 2013-Kislev/Tevet 5774
Renewal of Shabbat and the First Community Meeting of the Year

Two poem/prayers from my heart and hopes in Mishkan welcoming the renewal of celebration of the Sabbath at Mishkan. Rediscovering of soulful sacred space together as a community of support, renewing our energies and our visions for the work we do in the world towards Tikkun Hanefesh v’Olam - repair of our souls and of the world. Keeping the Sabbath together as community-intriguing and tangible way to be supported and to be supporting in this sacred work of repair. Return to the home of your soul. Bring a friend or a family member. Together we are rebuilding our Mishkan Shalom, a sacred sanctuary for repair. So far this year we have nearly 35 new member households and rising. Our school has had to hire two new teachers to accommodate the growth burst this fall of new children! Learn more at the community meeting December 15, from 9:45 A.M. to 11:45 P.M. A time to be together to hear about our growth, plans and enjoy a nosh and gathering together in celebration, connection and love of one another:

It's Shabbat again. The e-mail messenger calls us together to gather with cares—such a flock of regaled feathers to feast upon the artists’ vision to gestate these lives growing daily and feast upon the artists’ vision to view with careful steps, like the kind you take around nesting ground birds. Not egg shell walking steps. Living eggs, bringing fourth lives from life from behind hard fragile shells. And I witness you. You witness me emerging from these fine speckled shells with wet wings ready for flight after the journey of emergence during the journey of firming our spongy bones. We witness each other emerging from these fine speckled shells with wet wings reading for flight after the journey of emergence to frolic as a fine feathered flocking healing and in flights of wonder together as we gather… It’s Shabbat again.

An Offering

Looking forward to a deep soul-time sewn together! Being present. A time for healing, nurturing, learning, celebrating, revealing… breathing into the Sabbath renewal. Breathe each other deeper into life. Returning to the home of our souls sacred space remembered as we bless the source of life and each other and the new ones so we are blessed and strengthened and manifests our collective soul vision of the Mishkan radiant shining of the Sacred where there is renewal making peace shalom returning entering source sourcing Source together the many many and One in the warmth sewn seen so it seems together in Sabbath celebration peace renewal blessed be seeing one and another with softened eyes blessed and blessing dissolves and we may glimpse Source in blessing from each other from our ancestors from this blessed sacred space as we gather in soul-time blessing blessing blessing

Love, Always David

Submit articles before the fifteenth of the month to levinson@yahoo.com

December 2013-Kislev/Tevet 5774
I noticed the vivid color of the leaves.
I was aware of the taste of my morning coffee
The sparkling taste of the toothpaste started me
I could feel the sensations of each drop of water running over me.

These are a few of the experiences shared by the teens and adults participating in the mindfulness program offered in the religious school this Fall. “Homework” for the first week was to for us pay close attention to something we do every day, usually with out noticing. Many of us were amazed how intricate these experiences actually were when we paid attention.

And practicing paying attention is what we do as we gather each Wednesday night.

“Wow, my mind is never still,” One student said after we sat quietly for a few minutes. Another commented that, “This was the most noisy silence I have ever been in—my mind did not stop talking the whole time.”

It is amazing to notice that the nature of the mind is to be continually on the move. The mind loves to wander over past events, worry about the future and run over familiar stories again and again. And this can be quite disconcerting because it can keep us from being right where we are. And so instead of noticing and responding to the experiences of the moment we are off somewhere else—missing the moment and reacting to a story that the mind has created.

So together we practice—we practice shema—listening

We practice paying attention to help train the mind to be calm and alert and to create a mind state that will give rise to insights. We practice paying attention so we can enjoy the moment and not get waylaid by the past or the future. We practice shema—listening, —so we are able to make wise compassionate choices and be present to the fullness of our lives.

Each Wednesday night, focusing our attention on the sound of a bell, on the movement of a candle flame, or on a liturgical phrase we notice the mind wandering away and practice calling it back to the moment. We realize together that the mind will wander and with practice we can notice sooner and return with greater ease.

Future Wednesday night practices will include mindful eating—taking a lot of time noticing the intricate tastes and textures of a good piece of chocolate. We will also experiment with walking meditation and the practice of stopping a few times a day to pause and take notice of something beautiful.

The teens are amazing in their curiosity and in their commitment to these practices. Their insights and experiences are illuminating for all of us. It is a joy for myself and the other adults in the class to be walking along side of them on this journey.

May it bring forth great blessing.

Shalom, Rabbi Yael
Dear All,

December will be a lovely month for Mishkan students because we begin it with Hanukkah. We will have a Hanukkah candle lighting at 7:15 p.m. on Wednesday, December 4. We come together to celebrate the 8th night of Hanukkah. The theme of the evening is heroes in your life. Feel free to join us as we light multiple Hanukkiot and mention many people we consider heroes in our day.

Preparing for a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a huge commitment for the family and for the young person. This month we will have our second family workshop where the whole family experiences an hour about trying to figure out how prayers fit into our lives. These workshops led by our rabbis are thought provoking for all involved. For the first time this year, a class that has already begun the process of getting ready for this special ceremony will be meeting on Shabbat, December 7, in order to review their year so far and help each other for the remaining ceremonies. This class is now very bonded and its parents are especially interested in keeping that connection going.

Our Tot Shabbat continues to prosper. We meet once a month from 9:00 a.m. - 9:45 am. Not only is it fun for the little kids, six years old and younger, but it is fun for me and the parents. Tot Shabbat is a nice place for parents interested in introducing their children to some Jewish services. We sing, dance and do a project. This month we will meet on December 14, and it is always the second Saturday of the month.

Before I finish this article, I want to feature some of the special lessons we do in the school. Ariel Zaslav is a teacher for the Zayin Class. In teaching about Reconstructionism, the students helped generate a list of attributes, values and qualities of Reconstructionism. Ariel then designated foods to stand for each of the things on the list. Students then created a Trail Mix that reflected the important attributes, values and qualities of Reconstructionism to them. In another class, led by David Acker, teaching Dalet and Hay, the students created plays in Hebrew with words that that learned in the last few weeks. We will have those plays up on the school page very soon for you to see for yourself.

In finishing this newsletter piece, I am reminded how we live in two civilizations and wish everyone a happy new year and a healthy one in 2014.

B’shalom,

Rivka
Our Memoir Cookbook: Writings & Recipes:

Last Call For Submissions!
Bringing It All Together: Helping Hands Welcome!

Thanks to so many who submitted memoirs, essays, stories, recipes, images and more to our not-really-a-cookbook collection of writings with recipes. And special thanks to a few fine Mishkan mavens who helped along the way (more later!)

If you really did mean to make a submission but just didn’t get it in, we would still love to have it! Let us know ASAP and we’ll work together to see it gets included!

We’re now working on editing, layout, publication, pre-sales and preparation for our participation in February’s fabulous fundraiser, A Taste of Mishkan. If you have some time this month and can lend a hand, be in touch! Send contributions, offers of help or questions to cookbook@mishkan.org.

One Book Mishkan and One Book, One Jewish Community
Now’s a Great Time to Get Reading!

We’re working on two wonderful programs for this spring, which will be all-the-more-interesting for those who have read the books! So, now’s a great time to get hold of our One Book, The Golem and the Jinni, by Helene Wecker; settle-in and enjoy this easy-reading, magical novel. Widely available in local libraries, it’s also available for download on your Nook or Kindle readers.

We’ll have our Book Discussion on February, in anticipation of our two spring programs. First, the return of our much-beloved panel discussion, bringing us experts on the great many Jewish writers of fantasy and science fiction. Finally, our capstone program will offer a brand-new format, an evening of performances and readings. In a very special twist, we’ll be exploring themes common to both our One Book Mishkan and the citywide One Book, One Jewish Community selection, The Wanting.

Be sure to mark your calendars for Sunday, January 26, when Michael Lavigne, author of The Wanting, will speak and sign books at Adath Jeshurun during OBOJC’s seventh annual Author Event. Free and open to the public, the event usually draws a capacity crowd, so pre-registration is recommended. Registration and a range of online resources, including an interview with the author and a guide to some foreign vocabulary, can be found at: http://onebook.jewishlearningventure.org/.

Our Library: 4000 Volumes and Counting!
Check Out Books and CDs to Enjoy This Winter!

Our wonderful collection awaits you! Come browse and learn more about any Jewish topic you’ve wanted to explore. We welcome questions, comments and suggestions at: library@mishkan.org. See you in the library!
Hanukkah: Rededicating Ourselves and Our Generous Hearts
Before we reach the end of this Festival of Lights, it’s a fine time to note the holiday’s teaching of rededication. A few years ago, we added the idea of “Avodah: Service to Mishkan” into the life our community. Mid-year seems a good time to rededicate ourselves to that idea.

I was taught that “avodah” meant “devotion,” and was to be understood as having three distinct, yet related, meanings: “prayer,” “work” and “service.” Translated as both “prayer” and “work,” it also means that work, for the sake of service, is equivalent to prayer; an activity elevated to the sacred by its intention. And so “avodah” is used today in Jewish life to remind us that when we volunteer our time and talents for a worthy cause, we are – to borrow Rabbi Heschel’s phrase – “praying with our legs.”

How much time should each of us contribute to help our community thrive? The answer is the same (and different) for each of us:

The building of the mishkan is our people’s model for a community in which all are invited to contribute and to participate in the most sacred of endeavors. In order to play a valuable role, all that was required was a generous heart. And, every role – no matter how big or how small – was critical to completing the task.

Beth Steinhorn

Thus we began to say, “Bring your gifts to our Mishkan.” What gifts – no matter how big or small – do you have to offer? Consider what skills, experience, talents and time you can share to strengthen our community, to help us remain vibrant. Reach out to our Board members, group leaders and staff; offer your help with a generous heart and know you will give a gift of time and effort that will be exactly right.

Special thanks from Rivka Jarosh to school parents
Andrea Konow, Tom Ginsberg & David Waldstreicher
for jumping in to wo/man our SNACK STAND when needed!
(And a special shout-out to young Moses who helps on Wednesday nights!)

* * *

Todah Rabah to Board Member
Karen Smith
For Coordinating Our New Members Shabbat Potluck Lunch
& helping us get to know our newest members

Nice Opportunity for Committee Chairs & Group Leaders!
Share the pleasure of expressing gratitude
→ Who do you see deserves special appreciation?
Help spread the word about your group’s needs
→ What opportunities do you see for getting involved?
Send details so we can let everyone know! sharon.rhode@verizon.net
Madeline Vlam
December 14, (Minḥa Service)

She likes fezzes (right, those tasseled, flat-crowned Mediterranean caps) and bow-ties, Shakespeare and a video game called Skyrim. She remembers running down the Mishkan hallway as a second-grader and planting bulbs during the Mishkanathon. And if she were going to describe her synagogue to a friend, she’d say it’s a little bit like Warped Tour, the roving music festival sponsored by Vans, the skateboard shoe company.

“It’s a place where everyone can be themselves, even if they’re of different races, countries and genders.”

Madeline Vlam always knew she’d eventually become a Bat Mitzvah at Mishkan, but she started taking the milestone seriously when she watched her brother, Ben, prepare several years ago. She remembers the chocolate his tutor brought to both of them; she remembers watching him lead prayers.

“I was very excited. I looked forward to being like my brother.”

Her parasha, Shemot (Ex. 1:1-6:1), is an ironic choice for Madeline; it opens with a recitation of names—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah— and “I’m horrible at remembering names. Then it’s about Moses’ birth and what he does, how he frees the Israelites from Egypt. I like how it’s a cliffhanger. It ends right when they’re leaving Egypt. You want to know what happens, but you can’t.” At least, not until the following week’s parasha.

One of the biggest challenges, Madeline said, has been finding time for bat mitzvah practice amidst her schoolwork—a standard 7th-grade load of math, science, English, history and Spanish at Friends Select—and other activities, including soccer and participation in the school play. Last year’s production was The Canterbury Tales, in the original Middle English, and Madeline played several roles. In lower school, she starred in The Little Mermaid.

In her minimal spare time, Madeline likes to lose herself in the quests of Skyrim or the adventures of Left for Dead, a video game about zombie survivors. Her literary tastes run to fantasy or romance; a favorite television show is Dr. Who.

But her tikkun olam project is emphatically down-to-earth: she’ll volunteer at her grandmother’s veterinary practice in New Jersey. “I’ve always had a thing with animals,” she explains. “If I petted a dog, it would stop barking. If I petted a cat, it would stop trying to run away.”

Her year of Bat Mitzvah preparation has taught Madeline not to procrastinate. And once she’s crossed the coming-of-age threshold, she hopes to stay involved in Mishkan through Food for Thought. “It sounds fun… making food while you’re thinking.”
Communal Meals with Rabbi Shawn!
By Karen Smith

Because such good things happen when we share meals with one another, we are starting to organize opportunities for members to make motzi with Rabbi Shawn in various communal meals throughout the year and the area. One set of opportunities is to gather at the shul before a Friday night Shabbat Service for a potluck.

Please consider coordinating a group of your friends, or let us help you gather a group of folks with whom you share an affiliation: Interfaith Families, Queer, Jewish by Choice, Grandparents, Families with pre-school Children, etc. Let us know your thoughts and we will help you identify folks, including new members, and help you organize it.

Kabbalat Shabbat Dates up for grabs: December 20, January 17, February 7, February 14, March 7, and March 21.

To start us off, Friday December 6, at 6:00 p.m., we invite Interfaith Families and their Allies to join Rabbi Shawn for a potluck before Kabbalat Shabbat Services. To help coordinate or just to RSVP, please contact Karen Smith at karensmith.fullliving@gmail.com

If you would like to organize one of these future dates, please contact Karen who will give you her full support.

Join in the POWER to make Philadelphia a City of Opportunity that Works for ALL!
Mishkan Shalom will host its first citywide POWER event on Thursday, December 12, at 7:00 pm.

Hundreds of POWER members from across the city will convene in a Leader Assembly in our own beautiful, historic building – and we need you there to represent our congregation.

Come feel the energy of a room full of enthusiasm and diversity!

Come see what all the excitement is about!

Come learn about POWER: An Interfaith Movement!

Clergy, lay leaders, members, and many friends will gather to learn about the progress of POWER’s three-part campaign for good jobs, a fair funding formula for our schools, and a path to citizenship. We will learn how POWER’s campaign will be related to the 2014 elections.

Mishkan Shalom joined with more than 40 member-congregations of POWER in June 2013. POWER (Philadelphians Organized to Witness, Empower, and Rebuild) is an interfaith movement that has brought together Philadelphians across lines of race, income level, faith tradition, culture and neighborhood to work for concrete policy changes in Philadelphia.

POWER’s mission and values align so closely with Mishkan’s Statement of Principles that it is a very natural fit for us. Steve Newman and Lisagail Zeitlin are your co-chairs for POWER.

Please let us know you plan to be there – contact Lisagail at lisagail@lisagailsmiles.com or call her at 610.639.5972, or contact Steve Newman at stevenewman1@verizon.net. Also, check out POWER’s website at powerphiladelphia.org
Mishkan Yahrzeit Memorial Dedication Set for December 14

Rabbi Shawn and Rabbi Yael will lead a dedication ceremony for Mishkan’s new Yahrzeit Memorial on Saturday, December 14, at 1:00 pm, following Shabbat morning services and the Oneg.

The ceremony will honor the memory of Mishkan loved ones whose names adorn amber glass tiles hanging from a suspended support structure in the main stairwell between the second and third Floors (or whose tiles have been ordered by Mishkan family members and are in fabrication).

As of this writing, Mishkan family members in the Yahrzeit Memorial include (by month of death):

- **Tishri**: Sara Laver, Fannie Frank, Martin Brenman, Geraldine Levinson, Francisco Ferrer Levinson, Frances R. Dichter.
- **Ḥeshvan**: Ellis Frank, Lesley Michaelson, Stanley Michaelson, Morton Perkiss, Sherwin Seldin, Robert Jerome Lipshutz.
- **Kislev**: Celestine Diener Goldwyn.
- **Tevet**: Samuel Laver, Cliff Rainey, Clare Solomon Feldman, Albert Schurr, Martin Wolf Block.
- **Shevat**: Pauline Bloom-Brenman, Samuel Joseph Smith, Isadore Rosenthal.

- **Adar**: Leonard Calloway, Julius S. Piver, MD, Muriel Madden, Barbara Levin Lipshutz, William I. Schapiro.
- **Nissan**: Anna Laver, Mary Lynn Elizabeth Carroll, Jerome Madden, Mary Towarnicky, Susan S. Schapiro.
- **Iyar**: Herbert Sher, Evelyn Grace Markson Smith.
- **Sivan**: Charles Needleman, Alvin Goldberg.
- **Tammuz**: Isadore Sborofsky, Violet Pope Smith, Channing Dichter.
- **Av**: Elizabeth Stalker-Calloway.
- **Elul**: Henry Laver, Jeffrey David Samuelsson, Bella Needelman, Corrine Goldberg Rosenthal.

The ceremony also will recognize those Mishkan members and the artist/fabricators who conceived the memorial and shepherded it to completion.

To order tiles for your loved ones, go to the Mishkan website, www.mishkan.org and click on the link at the end of the Yahrzeit Memorial Open for Donors article. There you will find a detailed description of the memorial and tiles, including photographs of sample tiles with names, guidelines for names, and the forms to complete for ordering.

For additional information, please contact one of the members of the Aesthetics Committee: Carole Boughter (YM coordinator), Joe Brenman, Bob Kaufman, Lance Laver (chair), Larry Needelman or Steve Perkiss (Board rep).

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**Editor**: Eileen Levinson

**Layout**: Adam Wenocur

**Distribution**: Maria Paranzino

**Contributors include**: Claudia Apfelbaum, Gene Bishop, Jennifer Coburn, Victoria Congelosi, Barry Sornfield, Anndee Hochman, Rivka Jarosh, Lance Laver, Yael Levy, Steve Newman, Maria Paranzino, David Piver, Sharon Rhode, Karen Smith, Carol Towarnicky, Ariel Weiss, and Shawn Zevit...Submit articles to levinsone@yahoo.com by the 15th of each month.

Submit articles before the fifteenth of the month to levinsone@yahoo.com
Update on Mishkan’s Strategic Planning Work

As you may be aware, Mishkan’s Board has approved the Strategic Planning Committee’s launching of our strategic planning process. We have begun to engage members of the community in strategic discussions, and will be inviting you to participate in a number of ways.

We have undergone significant change as a community over the last several years; we retain our core, and we are evolving. The Board feels that this is an appropriate time for reflection, discernment, and planning about the continuing relevance of our statement of principles, about what brings our current members into community together, and about what will continue to attract our core and new members. Our community has chosen a new rabbi for our future, who brings his own strengths, passions, and questions. Our membership has declined over recent years, and now we are on an upswing, attracting new members and school families, and bringing back former members. We have engaged some challenging questions about our future through our turnaround efforts, including ongoing work on the building and on the ideas behind the Interfaith Cultural Community Center. We want to use this strategic planning process to make sure we are building a vital and sustainable future for Mishkan Shalom.

The specific goals of our strategic planning efforts are:

· To explore the continuing relevance of our current mission as reflected in our Statement of Principles, and possibly revise that mission if appropriate
· To understand what our community is evolving into, what is its future will be, and how to increase member engagement
· To think strategically about how to ensure that we attract new members, students, staff, and donors, bring more people into our community and building, and sustain our synagogue in all ways

Our plan is a simple one – to engage the community in strategic conversations through already existing events and forums where possible, and through events we may schedule ourselves, such as a part of our upcoming Community Meeting on December 15, 9:45 a.m. We have already had some excellent discussions at a few events, including a new member Shabbat potluck, meetings of Men of Mishkan and Mussar, and a meeting of the teen group that Gabby organized. We want to use these gatherings to understand your views on our Statement of Principles, our current activities and offerings and what’s missing or could be strengthened.

Please let us know if you want to join any conversations or the Strategic Planning Committee – we look forward to talking with you soon!

Mishkan’s Strategic Planning Committee
Barry Dornfeld, Rick Genzer, Marc Jacobs, Mordechai Liebling, Rod McNeil, Nancy Post, Rosalind Spigel, Ellen Tichenor, Gari Weilbacher, Rabbi Shawn Zevit
The Prophetic Voice and the POWER of Community Organizing
Steve Newman and Lisagail Zeitlin, POWER Co-chairs

Over the past few years, there have been multiple columns in Kol Shalom about POWER (Philadelphians Organized to Witness, Empower, and Rebuild), an interfaith organization dedicated to repairing the world by transforming our city (see www.powerphiladelphia.org). Thanks to the efforts of Rabbi Linda, Rabbi Shawn, and members of the Board, we have now joined 41 other churches, mosques, and synagogues, in POWER; and you have a perfect chance to participate in its remarkable model of political change when Mishkan hosts a Leadership Assembly in our sanctuary on Thursday, December 12, 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

There, we will discuss how to realize POWER's 2013-14 agenda: 1) securing a living wage for those working for city sub-contractors, 2) campaigning for a fair funding formula for Philadelphia schools, and 3) laboring for a more just and humane national immigration system. These commitments and POWER's broader engagement with the city all speak to the heart of Mishkan's mission, and we think that our membership in POWER has the potential to help bind our synagogue together, to concentrate our efforts on behalf of tikkun olam, and to tie Mishkan closer to the diverse world of Philadelphia, with all its profound challenges and glories. We also stand in good stead with our larger movement and many Reconstructionist congregations who are participating and taking the lead in their own communities through Congregation Based Community Organizing Networks. (See http://archive.jewishrecon.org/omer2008-cbco and http://www.jewishrecon.org/resource/step-step-cbco-guide.)

In attending various POWER events, we have been struck how true it is to its mission and organizing model. While Leadership Assemblies show the strength that comes with large numbers, the glue is actually one-to-one meetings in which we really get to know each other; not only the issues we're passionate about but the lives that have brought us to those issues. These conversations then inform the house meetings, and from there urgent topics of concern bubble up, leading to a yearly platform. We have also been struck by POWER's inclusiveness—it is a truly interfaith coalition—and its effectiveness. Its growing clout is attested to by the September vote at City Council to put a referendum on the living wage on the Spring 2014 ballot. That would not have happened without POWER's prophetic but also pragmatic approach to swaying our elected leaders. POWER also sponsors teach-ins on key issues, like the November 10 event on fair funding for education, and it holds political candidates to account, as in the Gubernatorial Candidates' forum it co-sponsored at Temple on November 23.

It this record of accomplishment and the promise of much more that has spurred the two of us to volunteer as Mishkan's POWER co-chairs and that has moved Rabbi Shawn to become active in its Clergy Steering Committee. We have attended other Leadership Assemblies; Lisagail and Margaret Lenzi have gone to New Member Training; and we are actively involved in reaching out to members at Mishkan, from members of the founding generation to those who have just joined. We have had many one-on-one meetings and this last week had two house meetings. We now believe we have the start of a critical mass at Mishkan, but we need to build on it. In short, we need you.

So please come to the Leadership Assembly on December 13. Please contact Lisagail (lisagail@lisagailsmiles.com) or Steve (stevenewman1@verizon.net) if you have any interest in or questions about POWER. We'll continue to contact as many people as possible. We know that many of you already have important commitments to tikkun olam, but we fervently believe that POWER offers a way not to diffuse, but intensify that prophetic energy and to bring Mishkan into better touch with the life of Philadelphia, to meet folks we might not otherwise meet, to learn about their struggles and triumphs, and to join together in a vision for a common future of fair wages, not deprivation, of well-funded education, not scandalous inequality, of mutual recognition and citizenship, not demonization and deportation. Please join us.
Mindfulness Shabbaton, with Rabbis Myriam Klotz and Yael Levy
Saturday, December 21, 10:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
By Carol Towarnicky

Mishkan member Rabbi Myriam Klotz, a nationally-known teacher of Jewish yoga, will co-lead an afternoon of meditation and movement with Rabbi Yael as part of an all-day Jewish Mindfulness retreat on Saturday, December 21, at Mishkan Shalom.

The theme of the Shabbaton is Hineni – Hebrew for “Here I Am.”

"In every moment," says Rabbi Yael, "we are called to be present to ourselves, each other and the mysterious unfolding of life. We will focus on answering this call as our ancestors did."

The full-day retreat begins with an interactive Torah study at 9:00 a.m. led by Rabbi Shawn. Rabbi Yael Levy will lead a Mindfulness Shabbat service with Rabbi Myriam from 10:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Following the service will be a silent lunch: Participants are asked to bring their own vegetarian lunches and their own mugs and utensils. Drinks, fruit and snacks will be provided. The afternoon program starts at 1:00 p.m. and ends with 5:30 p.m. with havdalah. Participants may attend any or all three of the day’s events.

All are welcome: Previous mindfulness or yoga experience is not necessary. You may bring a yoga mat, meditation cushion or blanket, if desired.

While the morning Torah study and contemplative Shabbat service are free, the afternoon program, which is sponsored by A Way In Jewish Mindfulness program, requires pre-registration and payment, with a suggested donation of $36, $54, $72 or $108.

For more information and to register, visit http://mishkan.org/awi, email info@jewishmindfulness.org or call (215) 508-0226x2.

The illumination between yoga practice and Judaism is mutual, says Rabbi Myriam. “The Torah can help illuminate the experience of the yoga," she says, "and it does a feedback loop: the openings in the body more deeply reveal some of the teachings the Torah offers.”

Rabbi Myriam is the director of Yoga and Embodied Practices for the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, has been a pioneer of using yoga as a tool to engage the body as a Jewish spiritual practice. The yoga poses are borrowed from Eastern religious culture, she says, but the spiritual expression through the body is rooted in Jewish tradition.

There are references in Torah to lifting up the hands and bowing to the ground as an expression of powerful prayerful moment. In the Babylonian Talmud, she says, one rabbi teaches that “when you bow, bow so fully, so deeply, that each one of the vertebra cracks open.”

The Mindfulness Shabbaton is a special invitation to experience a Mindfulness approach to Jewish liturgy and Jewish approach to yoga.
Journey of the Children Exhibit Opening Ceremony – December 11

ElViaje de los Niños [Journey of the Children] – an exhibit of colorful dioramas and paintings, and personal testimonies describing the harrowing journey of Mexican children across the border into the U.S.— is currently on display in the Heschel-King Room; and we will have a dedication ceremony there on Wednesday, December 11, at 6:00 pm.

Nora Hiriart Litz, the printmaker/artist and social justice activist who worked with the Mexican children (now living in South Philadelphia) to create the dioramas, will speak at the ceremony. Nora anticipates bringing some of the children to tell their stories as well. Mishkan’s Hebrew School classes will attend the ceremony, which is also open to the public.

According to the exhibit’s statement, “Litz’s main goal was, and continues to be, to help these children find their voices through art so that they can begin to express their hurt and find a way to heal their wounds.” Exhibit attendees can hear the children’s stories (in Spanish or English) via audio tracks at each diorama, which include images of the children’s communities in Mexico and also the perils of their crossings.

Besides the children’s dioramas, the exhibit includes small paintings and poems from immigrant adults describing their journeys across the border, a map showing typical journey routes and walking times, and one diorama made by a coyote (head smuggler) about his experiences with the emigrants. There is also a long sheet of brown paper (“the desert”), one end representing Mexico and the other the U.S., where Litz “asked the children to draw the things they encountered between locations.”

The diorama sculptures “touch upon the many hardships the children faced—from leaving family behind in Mexico, to border control security, to secretly moving from ‘safe house’ to ‘safe house’.”

For additional information, please contact Joe Brenman or Lance Laver of the Aesthetics Committee, which is coordinating the Mishkan exhibit.

The Gimel Class Kabbalat Shabbat Service: A Congregant’s Reaction by Jennifer Coburn

Last night at the Gimel class Kabbalat Shabbat, I received a delightful and surprising gift. With the full expectation that I would need to grit my teeth and ignore the “family aspects” of the service, I apprehensively attended services – hoping beyond hope that somehow I’d be able to extract my “fix” of personally fulfilling adult Kabbalat Shabbat davening.

Instead of the isolating experience I worried I’d find, the sweet sparks of wisdom of the Gimel Class students and their loving interactions with their teacher and their parents drew me into the Gimel Class Kabbalat Shabbat Experience.

The 3rd grade students performed their ancestors’ stories with such enthusiasm, I couldn’t help but marvel at their teacher, Julia. I felt so proud to be part of a community with the wisdom to hire a teacher who can so engage and inspire her young students!

The parents imparted loving advice to their children as they embark deeper into their path of Jewish education, and their loving connection felt like familiar community.

Suddenly, Rivka and Rabbi Shawn transitioned us easily into the Kabbalat Shabbat service with song and music. David Piver adapted his reading of his Shabbos poem to captivate the children’s imagination (and elicit the giggles of us adults). And we all davened together. Bubbling, loving, warm, meaningful, deep welcoming of Shabbat. Together as a community.

And I would not have had it any other way.

Submit articles before the fifteenth of the month to levinson@yahoomail.com
Reconstructionist News
By Victoria Cangelosi

New Movement Leader Announced

Rabbi Deborah Waxman, Ph.D., is the new president elect of RRC, it was announced earlier this month. She will take office on January 1.

Waxman, a historian of American Judaism, brings a vision well suited to today’s landscape. As many readers will know, a recent study by the Religion and Public Life Project of Pew Research found that three quarters of U.S. Jews feel “a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people,” although 42 percent of those say they have no religion. Waxman offered a decidedly upbeat take on the study: “Reconstructionist Judaism brought to the forefront of Jewish thinking the concept of Jewish peoplehood, and our approach continues to offer pathways for non-religious Jews—inviting them to explore and ideally deepen their experience of Judaism and Jewishness,” she said.

Waxman previously served as vice president for governance at RRC. She also serves on the faculty, teaching courses on Reconstructionist Judaism and practical rabbinics. From 2002 to 2012, she was a High Holiday rabbi for Congregation Bet Havarim in Fayetteville, NY.

Learn more about our president elect at www.rrc.edu/MeetDeborahWaxman.

Registration Is Now Open for Summer 2014 at Camp JRF!

Recognized as one of the “Top 10 Jewish Camps,” Camp JRF provides innovative, creative and engaging programs for youth entering second through 12th grades. As an inclusive community, we welcome children from a wide variety of family structures, religious practices, and socio-economic backgrounds. At the center of our Reconstructionist philosophy is a deep commitment to building a community in which all are welcome to grow and thrive. And it wouldn’t be camp without all the fun of summer – swimming, sports, arts, music, friends, and so much more! One, two, three, and four week sessions, plus a five-day Family Camp program, all in the beautiful Pocono Mountains! For more information and to register, call 877.226.7573 or visit www.campjrf.org.

Four Basic Mah Jongg Classes in January
January 9, 16, 23, 30
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
At Mishkan Shalom, 2nd floor
Come learn the game of strategy and luck, and then join the ongoing Mah Jongg players at Mishkan on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of every month.

Cost: $60/Mishkan members, $72/non-members

Mah Jongg is a great way to meet new (and fun!) people and to take a break from your busy lives!

Registration: office@mishkan.org

It’s the end of the Year: Let’s Eat!
Join us for a Kabbalat Shabbat potluck
December 20 at 6:00 p.m. before services.

Submit articles before the fifteenth of the month to lewinsone@yahoo.com

December 2013-Kislev/Tevet 5774
Capturing Two Lifetimes of Speaking Truth to Power
By Margaret Lenzi

Some 500 people crammed into Mishkan Shalom to see the many facets of what 80 looks like, as Gloria Steinem and Arthur Waskow shared their lives of activism and visions for the future in a gala celebration on November 3 supporting the Shalom Center. While the evening was filled with musical performances, special guests, great food, and camaraderie, the centerpiece was Dr. Dan Gottlieb’s interview.

The two honorees recalled formative and challenging times, along with lessons learned from them, and left us with hopes for a future bursting with freedom and transformation.

The Past & Roots of Activism

As a psychologist, Gottlieb wondered about the roots of activism - Are you born with the genes or do you acquire it? For Gloria and Arthur, it was a little of both.

Noting that little kids all over the world say, “It is not fair;” Gloria believes that there is something within all of us that harbors a deep sense of fairness, if it is not burned out of us as we age. “If we did not have empathy from one human being to the next,” she continued, “the species would not have survived.”

Both had some family history of activism. Arthur recounted four generations of activists in his family. Gloria’s grandmother was the first woman elected to the Toledo Board of Education, was a suffragist, and addressed congress. Filled with memories of her mother’s love for FDR and what he did to help poor people during the depression, Gloria came to realize “…that government could make a difference in our daily lives.”

Gloria also talked about her roots as a feminist. Although Gloria had an abortion in 1957 when she was 22, she didn’t talk about it for 15 years until the women’s movement made it safe to do so. In the first issue of Ms. Magazine in 1972, 400 well known women, including Gloria, made their abortions public and demanded legalization. Gloria remembered that “Only then, and that is the difference between 1957 and 1972, did I say to myself, if one in three women seek abortions, why is it illegal and that was the beginning of unraveling and deep questioning.”

Arthur and Dan Gottlieb both shared their brushes with death - Gottlieb had a traumatic accident when he was 35 which resulted in partial paralysis; Arthur had life threatening throat cancer and debilitating treatment two years ago. But both made a conscious decision to choose life.

Arthur recounted a moment when he thought it would be easier to die. But then he found a reason to choose life: “Love. Love for Phyllis. Love for my grandkids. And Love for twirling Torah so that it turns into social decency and social action.”

Now & the Future

So what does the future hold? Gloria and Arthur believe that we are living in perilous times, but yet we are on the cusp of a new age of possibilities.

Both recognized that we are facing dangerous problems: constant violence, a global economic mess and ecological disaster. At the same time, there are good things happening: the gains of the women’s movement; a more diverse country; turning away from two wars; and questioning the wealth of the 1%.

Gloria compares this time in our country to the experience of a battered woman when the most dangerous time is right before the escape when the abuse is worse and right after the escape when she is free but there is a strong pull to return to the abuser. Like a battered woman, she sees that our country is on the verge of escaping our dangerous conditions and breaking through to a future where we can create a better world and be free.

Arthur feels that we are living in God’s Earthquake where we have three choices: Ignore it and do nothing; Find something to hang onto from the past; or Dance in the earthquake. Arthur urges us all to dance in the earthquake: “This is hard to do, when the dance floor is whirling, swirling, tipping, toppling, but it is the most life-giving response.” But doing so, we change what is, into what could be - a theme that has run through Arthur’s life.

As the audience left the celebration that night, they seemed to be joined in dancing through the earthquake, as they worked to escape to freedom and a transformed world.

continued on page 17
More words from Claudia Apfelbaum, who attended the event... continued from page 16
Whenever Arthur and I cross paths, at the synagogue or the coop, I feel a sense of loving Arthur and being loved by him. For a national treasure, he is just a wonderful human man.
Gloria spoke with humility and honesty and felt like a person you could turn to and be friends with easily. I'd love to take a hike in the Wissahickon with her! They are, as someone said, "Holy trouble-makers!" So should we all be!
And, to a degree, so we all are.

Book Celebration! December 22\textsuperscript{nd}
Chapters of the Heart: Jewish Women Sharing the Torah of our Lives

As a long time member (Nancy) and a returning member (Sue) of Mishkan Shalom, we want to extend a warm invitation to all Mishkan members—old and new—to attend a special celebration of our new book, Chapters of the Heart: Jewish Women Sharing the Torah of our Lives (Cascade Books, November, 2013).

This collection of personal spiritual essays by Jewish women grew out of our own experience as Jews at Mishkan and throughout our lives. We invited 18 of our friends—rabbis, therapists and spiritual teachers—to join us in exploring how Judaism helps them to understand the events and challenges of their lives.

Mary and Lance Laver have graciously agreed to host an afternoon gathering on Sunday, December 22\textsuperscript{nd} from 2:30-4:30 at their home in Bala Cynwyd. We will be joined that afternoon by some of our contributing authors who will read short selections from the book, followed by plenty of time to socialize, buy books ($18.00 each) and enjoy some tea.

Please let us know that you are coming! Just go to our wonderful website, www.chaptersoftheheart.com and click on "contact us." An e-mail will come up, ready to go, and all you need to say is, "I'm coming on the 22\textsuperscript{nd}." Let us know if you are bringing any friends as well. We will then write back with full details and look forward to celebrating with you.

Rabbi Nancy Fuchs Kreimer
Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell

Submit articles before the fifteenth of the month to levinsone@yahoo.com

December 2013-Kislev/Tevet 5774
May their memories be a blessing.

Abraham Kauffman-12/1-Kislev 28
Father of Tracy Kauffman

Marvin Levin-12/6-Tevet 3
Father of Barrie Levin

Samuel Laver-12/8-Tevet 5
Father of Lance Laver

Glenn C. Forrester-12/9-Tevet 6
Grandfather of Anna Forrester

Michael Towarnicky-12/12-Tevet 3
Father of Carol Towarnicky

Sara Weinreb-12/13-Tevet 10
Mother of Lisa Weinreb-Mervis

Edward Gartman-12/14-Tevet 11
Grandfather of Robin Berenholz

Cliff Rainey-12/15-Tevet 12
Partner of Eileen Levinson

Phyllis Hausman Loeb-12/18-Tevet 15
Mother of Deenah Loeb

Herman Louis Weisberg-12/18-Tevet 15
Father of Lawrence Weisberg

Mortimer Abeles-12/20-Tevet 17
Father of Judy Mock

Clare Feldman-12/22-Tevet 19
Mother of Jim Feldman

Goldie Goodman-12/22-Tevet 19
Mother of Mark Goodman

Hyman Kraff-12/24-Tevet 21
Father of Sue Ellen Liebman

Lena Merovitz-12/24-Tevet 21
Aunt of Tracy Kauffman & Tony Wood

Albert Schurr-12/25-Tevet 22
Father of Cindy Perkiss

Bernard Kleppel-12/26-Tevet 23
Father of Judy Kleppel

Charles Trey-12/27-Tevet 24
Father of Beu Trey

Eve Konow-12/29-Tevet 26
Mother of Andrea Konow

William Iser-12/30-Tevet 27
Father of Lynne Iser

Esther Muhlstock-12/30-Tevet 27
Mother of Susan Kershman

Mae Hausman-12/31-Tevet 28
Grandmother of Deenah Loeb

Emanuel Schwager-12/31-Tevet 28
Father of Michael Schwager

Submit articles before the fifteenth of the month to levisone@yahoo.com
Mazel Tov

We extend a hearty mazel tov to Maddie Vlan and her family as they celebrate her becoming Bat Mitzvah and to Doron Henkin and Victor Hall on the occasion of their marriage. Also a very belated mazel tov to Helen Halstuch and Jonathan Nidock on the occasion of their marriage last February!

Condolences

We extend condolences to Doron Henkin and his husband Victor Hall on the loss of Victor’s sister-in-law Meren Abud and goddaughter Kimberly, to David Kleiner and his family on the death of his mother, Ruth Kleiner, to Sandy Sborofsky and her family on the death of her mother, Lenore Sussman Sborofsky, and to Nancy Post and her family on the death of her close friend Bekki Lee. May Victor, David, Sandy, and Nancy be comforted among all the mourners of Jerusalem and all humanity, and may the memory of their loved ones be for a blessing.

Love and Support

This month we send our ongoing love, support, and prayers for healing to Mishkan members Gabe Meadows Adels, Robin Berenholz, Bernice Bricklin, Jim Feldman, Mark Goodman, Jane Hinkle, Sue Jacobs, Jay Kravitz, Denise Kulp, Robin Leidner, Sue Stehman, and Zea Piver.

We are keeping Jeannette Tumolo (sister of Sue Stehman), Pat Lynn (partner of Barrie Levin), Arnold Schein (father of Susan Schein), Laikee Zelitch (mother of Simone Zelitch), Debra Ellen Coran (cousin of Beth Joy Rosenwald), Sarah Bradley (mother of David Bradley), Debra Singer (sister of Karen Singer), Patrick Windle (brother of Susan Windle), Sal Berenholz (father of Robin Berenholz), Jackie Berman-Gorvine (daughter-in-law of Natalie & Harold Gorvine), Lorna Michaelson (mother-in-law of Joe Brenman), Eva Galson (mother of Wendy Galson and mother-in-law of Susan Windle), and Julie Post (sister of Nancy Post), in our prayers as well. May they all experience a refuah sheleimah (full healing).

Acts of Caring is a Yahoo Group listerv that lets all of us in the Mishkan Shalom community learn about significant events in the lives of our members. In this way, we can reach out to one another in times of grief, illness, and joy. To reach us simply e-mail: actsofcaring@mishkan.org.

HINENI — HERE I AM

If you have life circumstances that would be helped by short-term emotional support and/or help with concrete tasks please contact Lisa Mervis and Sharon Sigal at ActsofCaring@Mishkan.org or please phone Sharon at (610) 574-1705 or (610) 649-0274.

We will reach out to the community and coordinate help with needs such as transportation to doctor appointments, meals, errands, as well as visits.

Are you receiving Acts of Caring via e-mail?

Yahoo has recently changed its group’s platform and we are concerned that some members are no longer receiving Acts of Caring e-mails. If that is you — or if you have never received them but would like to - you must sign up yourself. We want you to know about the joys and sorrows of our community!

Joining Acts of Caring is easy: simply go to http://groups.yahoo.com/group/actsofcaring and if you are a new user, click on “sign up” at the top. If you want to change the e-mail address at which you receive Acts of Caring, you can do this by editing your profile. Need help? Contact Gene Bishop or Ariel Weiss at actsofcaring@Mishkan.org.

Got Nachas? Sharing your good news is a marvelous way to connect our community! Please don’t be shy - send all lifecycle events you would like to be posted to our e-mail address: actsofcaring@mishkan.org. Please notify us if you want a name added to, or removed from, our “Ongoing love, support, and prayers of healing…” list.
t'filot

Join us for Torah Study every Shabbat Morning at 9:00 a.m. in the Library.

**Tuesday, December 3, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.** – Rosh Hodesh Tevet Celebration in the Chapel

**Friday, December 6, 7:30 p.m.** – Kabbalat Shabbat Service, led by Rabbi Shawn in the Chapel.

**Saturday, December 7, 10:00 p.m.** – Shabbat Service – Vayigash – Led by Rabbi Shawn.

**Saturday, December 14, 9:00 a.m.** – Tot Shabbat, led by Rivka Jarosh; 10:00 a.m. – Shabbat Service – Vayehi, led by Rabbi Yael and Rabbi Shawn. 5:00 p.m. (Minha) Madeline Vlam will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah. Led by Rabbi Linda and Rabbi Shawn.

**Friday, December 20, 7:30 p.m.** – Kabbalat Shabbat Service, led by Rabbi Shawn in the Chapel.

**Saturday, December 21, 10:00 a.m.** – Shemot – A Way In Mindfulness Day, with Rabbi Yael, Rabbi Myriam Klotz and Rabbi Shawn

**Saturday, December 28, 10:00 a.m.** – Væra – Shabbat Service, lay led.