Yes, you! Brush Up Your Yiddish!
The Library Committee’s One Book is a serious, scholarly, look at a language that tells the often painful, unvarnished story of its speakers - Jews in exile. And yet - hilarity ensues! See pgs. 12-13 for details, programs and interactive fun.

Also In This Issue
- Sign up for the 27th Annual Men’s Retreat, coming soon! Details, pg. 7, 17
- Invitation to the RRC Convention, pg. 20
- If you missed any of our community’s inspiring and uplifting addresses over the High Holidays, some are reprinted here:
  - Pg. 3 President Ellen Tichnor’s Talk
  - Pg. 15 Carol Towarnicky’s “Creation

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Rabbi’s Letter  by Rabbi Shawn Israel Zevit

Now it is 5779. The once-thin saplings have grown tall and blossomed as have many of our dreams. Now, as then, we continue to discover who we are and dream of who we might become. Now, as then, we treasure the past and face forward.

– Carol Towarnicky 5779
See Pg. 15 for complete poem

From the New Year into the Open Space of Cheshvan

As you read these words, we will have completed the entire cycle of Jewish Days of Awe and Sukkot for the beginning of the Jewish New Year. It has been a deeply moving, soulful and inspiring month we have been through together in community, launching us into the month of Marcheshvan ahead.

Traditionally considered “bitter Cheshvan” because of the absence of Jewish holidays, and for many of us the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the derailing of a permanent peace between Israelis and Palestinians in its wake, Cheshvan was designated as International Jewish Social Justice month some years ago. While that global Jewish initiative has faded, the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable emerged and our own tikkun work is only intensifying in the run up to the November election (it’s a mitzvah to vote- click here to sign-up to help Get Out the Vote!).

We have completed 30 years together as an intentional spiritually activist Jewish community. In the September Kol Shalom and on Rosh Hashanah I spoke of “30” being represented by the Hebrew letter “Lamed” and how it can serve as our guidepost for the year ahead. The Lamed is a word unto itself: Lamed means to learn and serves as the root for lamaod, to actively acquire knowledge and lilamed, to teach or actualize what is learned. Lamed is also used as a direction toward action – to move toward or to become. And the Lamed turns nouns into verbs and what might only be outwardly directed action into reflexive and reflective dimensions as well.

As we direct our attention, our action, our Jewish practices this year, let us also remember how Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan framed reconstructing Judaism “…as the evolving religious civilization of the Jewish People and a means to greater ends- the fulfillment of the individual, the responsibility of individuals to treat others as reflections of the Divine image, and the responsibility of each community to seek global (continued on page 14 )
Dear Friends,

I am writing this a few days before Yom Kippur knowing that you will be reading it sometime after we have moved through all of the Tishrei holy days. I hope that this time has inspired us to step into the New Year with strength, love, courage and clarity.

As I walk through these holy days I receive guidance from the river, from the birds from the canyons, tides and trees and from teachers whose words and insights touch my soul. I want to share with you some teachings that have guided me through this season.

**From Spiritual Activist Margaret Wheatley:**

*Warriors for the Human Spirit are awake human beings who have chosen not to flee.*

They abide.

They serve as beacons of an ancient story that tells of the goodness and generosity and creativity of humanity. You can identify them by their cheerfulness.

You will know them by their compassion. When asked how they do it they will tell you about discipline, dedication and the necessity of community.

**From Poet Mary Oliver:**

*Teach the children. We don’t matter so much, but the children do. Show them daises and the pale hepatica. Teach them the taste of sassafras and wintergreen… Give them peppermint to put in their pockets as they go to school. Give them the fields and the woods and the possibility of the world salvaged from the lords of profit. Stand them in the stream, head them upstream, rejoice as they learn to love the green space they live in, its sticks and leaves and the silent beautiful blossoms.*

Attention is the beginning of devotion.

— *Upstream Selected essays*

**From Writer and Activist Terry Tempest Williams:**

*This is what we can promise the future: a legacy of care. That we will be good stewards and not take too much or give back too little, that we will recognize wild nature for what it is, in all its magnificent and complex history—an unfathomable wealth that should be consciously saved, not ruthlessly spent. Privilege is what we inherit by our status as homo sapiens living on this planet. This is a privilege of imagination. What we choose to do with our privilege as a species is up to each of us. Humility is born in wilderness.*

— *The Hour of the Land*

**From Poet, Philosopher Priest John O’Donohue:**

*Blessed be the longing that brought you here And quickens your soul with wonder.*

*May you have the courage to listen to the voice of desire That disturbs you when you have settled for something safe.*

*May you have the wisdom to enter generously into your own unease To discover the new direction your longing wants you to take.*

*May you come to accept your longing as Divine urgency.*

*May you know the urgency with which God longs for you.*

— *To Bless the Space Between*

May this New Year dawn with love and blessing. May we rise together bringing goodness and healing with our words and actions. And in the words of the ancient psalmists: *May love and truth meet. May peace and justice embrace.* Psalm 85:11

Shana Tova,

Rabbi Yael
Capital Campaign Update

As we begin a new year together, it is a good time for a campaign update in real numbers. To date, we have pledges totaling $614,500+ of our $950,000 goal! Mishkan members John Schapiro, Nancy Post, Barry Dornfeld and Jean Brody have volunteered to be solicitors, so you may be hearing from them. Actually, feel free to contact anyone of them as well as Ellen Tichenor, Irv Ackelsberg, Keely Newman and David Piver as well. Lastly, invoices for Year Two pledge payments will be going out shortly.

May this be a good year for each of you and for Mishkan Shalom!

Letter from the President

by Ellen Tichenor

Address to the Congregation
Rosh Hashanah 5779

Hello everyone, and shana tova,

I admit it: I’m confused about the order of these Days of Awe. we start out in joyful celebration of the New Year, and then we repent. But isn’t that backwards? Shouldn’t we reflect on and repent our misdeeds before Divine grace liberates us to try again? Doesn’t the difficult journey come before the celebration? as we enter these Yamin Nora’im, it seems the other way around. So, are we supposed to be joyful or sober as the New Year dawns?

Especially after this past year, I would say “yes” to both choices. Yes! We are meant to enjoy our triumphs, and yes! to grieve our sorrows and defeats. We begin these days in the joyfulness of family and community to strengthen us for diving into honest reckoning with ourselves, so we can own our shortcomings but not be defined by our disappointments. As with life, this is not a linear process, so we begin in celebration before the open gates.

To start off, because many of you who heard me speak last year have asked: I did have surgery and my knees are doing very well. I’m very grateful for such a good outcome, as is our dog who I now walk regularly. And I will forever celebrate your wonderful support for me and Abby to get us through the recovery period.

Also Last Rosh Hashanah, we announced the launch of a Campaign called Mishkan@30: Regeneration. Let’s celebrate that here at the close of the first year of the campaign, which is also the close of Mishkan’s 30th year, we are more than halfway to our total goal. Our Campaign has brought forth great generosity from our community, and joyful anticipation of more to come. To those who have gotten us this far, THANK you. To those who will help make the second year of our Campaign even better – now is the time. Let your contribution of any size gift that feels good be your holiday mitzvah.

Mishkan’s theme for this year is the Hebrew letter Lamed. Lamed equals 30 in the Kabbalistic interpretation of letters in the Bible, and the letter itself means learner, whether teacher or student. Scholars say it looks like the crook carried by shepherds, meant to goad us, challenge us, as good teaching challenges us to learn. At Mishkan, we are all learners, studying, exploring and questioning our texts, listening to one another when we agree, and more importantly, when we don’t.

(continued on page 11)
In this month’s column, I want to explain the new and expanded way our congregational school will gather at the start of each school class period, and the larger philosophy behind this change.

Mishkan is the sixth Hebrew school where I have worked, and each school had a different way of handling the start of the school day. Some began with a codified assembly format, some had a briefer assembly that changed week after week, others never had any assemblies at all, except to mark a holiday or significant event (such as after the 2016 election for example).

As with anything in life, the question is: “Which is better?” There are pros and cons to all. Schools that have no assemblies, for example, give their teachers more classroom time – not an insignificant thing. My belief is that a weekly assembly can be tremendously beneficial, provided its content is intentionally designed. When kids gather together at the start of the day, a place is provided for them to come together and, engaging in shared songs or prayers, to develop a broader sense of connection with the school. In a school as small as ours, where kids often have friends of different ages, it also creates space for kids to maintain those connections.

Parents who so desire can also stay during the assembly, even sitting with their child if they wish (something kids in the younger grades love). It also creates a connection point for Rabbis Shawn or Yael; as their schedules permit, they have a chance to come in and engage with the kids.

Since we provide bagels and pizza before the start of school, kids who arrive just as school starts don’t have time to eat if they must head straight up to their classrooms. For stragglers who arrive late, it’s far better they arrive late to an assembly than to a classroom.

As for content in the assembly – that, I believe, is key. While it’s nice to have general words of welcome and some general remarks about whatever holiday is about to happen (and let’s face it, there’s a holiday like every other week in Judaism, right!!), an assembly has the potential to do something far more important: to help kids absorb central aspects of Jewish liturgy in their kishkes.

Some years ago, I attended a great lecture at a conference for Jewish educators known as CAJE (Center for the Advancement of Jewish Education).
out loud, many of the words they encounter are words that they already learned, through auditory reception – words like “Eloheinu” (Our God) and “ha-olam” (the world).

By the time you read this article, we will have instituted our own mini-service at the school assemblies – you’re welcome to join us! It will be slightly longer on Sundays than Wednesdays, just because we have more class time.

For the first half of the year, we will begin with a welcoming song (Rising in Remembrance), followed by the Bar’chu, the traditional call to prayer, and the Shema, followed by the first two blessings of the Amidah. In January we’ll either continue the Amidah, or look to something different, such as the V’ahavta or the Aleynu.

To wrap up, I would also like to invite you to consider getting involved in the school in several possible ways...Even if you don’t have kids enrolled, that doesn’t mean we couldn’t benefit from your gifts and talents! Please see our wish list at right.

– Rabbi Joysa

Can you help?

Mishkan’s congregational school is looking for:

- Substitute teachers (paid, to fill in when staff will be absent)
- Volunteer Hebrew tutors (to sit in the foyer during classes and provide one-on-one reading support to kids who need extra help)
- Fundraising subcommittee members (to help the ed committee brainstorm and execute some fundraising initiatives for the school)
- Used TV with USB port and DVD capability (Small enough to fit on a cart to be moved to different classrooms, but big enough for a group of 10 people to view)

I also extend an extra-special THANK YOU to our new 6th grade teacher Amy Goldman, who generously purchased a new Canon projector for our school; our previous one went AWOL a year or two ago. Amy has only known our community for a few weeks but she saw a need and filled it. Amy, THANK YOU! You truly went above and beyond!

– R. Joysa

Mishkan Teens 2018-19

We offer a great array of programming for Mishkan teens led by Rabbi Joysa Winter, our Education Director. And we are always eager to hear ideas from teens and parents. Contact R. Joysa at rabbijoysa@mishkan.org.

Here is a range of programs geared just for our teens:

**Teen Leadership Seminar** (with Rabbis Shawn and Joysa) - This Seminar is a pre-requisite for 10th or 11th grade students preparing for Confirmation in the Spring. Mark your calendars: Sundays, 10:30 a.m. – noon Times may vary depending on activity: Sept 30, Oct 28, Dec 1 (Shabbat School), Jan 19 (Shabbat School), Feb 24, Mar 17 or 24 (Purim Carnival), April 28, May 19 (lunch).

**Quad-Shul Teen Youth Social Group** (brings teens together from Mishkan Shalom, Or Hadash, Jewish Children’s Folkshul and Germantown Jewish Centre): Dates and programs TBA

**Food for Thought with Gabby Kaplan Meyer.** This monthly cooking class explores Jewish culture and cuisine while preparing foods for members of our community. Meets one Wednesday evening per month. **Wednesdays, 6:15 - 8:00 p.m.:** October 3, Nov 7, Dec 5, Jan 9, Feb 6, Mar 6, Apr 3, May 8, June 5

**Hebrew School teacher’s assistants** and assisting other Mishkan Shalom programs.

**Confirmation:** We offer our older teens (Grades 10 and 11) the opportunity to prepare for Confirmation by following a Pathway to Confirmation which suits their individual needs and interests. Contact Rabbishawn@mishkan.org for more information.

Full information, fees, registration and dates available at https://mishkan.org/teen
Tikkun Olam

Two Families Enter Sanctuary in Mishkan’s Backyard — YOU Can Help Support Them!

By Rabbi Michael Ramberg

This year’s Sukkot resonated powerfully with global, national and local themes of the fragility of shelter and the necessity that we band together to make our shelter as strong as possible, take care of one another, provide hospitality to strangers and remake our society into one that welcomes immigrants rather than threatens them.

One powerful demonstration of this reality can be found just over 2 miles from Mishkan at the First United Methodist Church of Germantown (FUMCOG), where the families of Suyapa, Oneita and Clive and six of their children have taken sanctuary, publicly defying cruel and unjust deportation orders that would put their lives in danger and tear apart their families. The families are working closely with the New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia, which Mishkan Shalom helped to found 10 years ago.

With this happening so close to our synagogue and many of our members’ homes, we have a great opportunity to act on our values and make a significant contribution, not only to benefit these two families but also all those who would be helped by the powerful ripple effects of a victory against the deportation machine. You will be hearing more about how to get involved from Sharon Barr, who will serve as our liaison to the families’ sanctuary campaign.

On Wednesday morning, September 5th, the families made public their decision to take sanctuary and were ritually welcomed into FUMCOG with an interfaith ritual that started on the steps outside the church and continued indoors, including Rabbi Shawn leading us in Avinu Malkeinu. Here’s the Inquirer’s coverage, which includes a quote from Rabbi Shawn!

(Continued on next page)
Quite a few Mishkan members were at the sanctuary launch. Here are some of their reactions:

I had such mixed emotions standing there: anger that we needed to be there; fortunate that I was able stand freely with my daughter; and so sad that these and other families are forced into sanctuary settings. I had tears watching and listening to the families.

– Gail Bober

I believe that welcoming the stranger is an essential Jewish value. While we fight for humane immigration laws and policies, we also welcome into our community people who suffer because of inhumane policies and violence and poverty in their home countries. I was honored to stand with Mishkan and other faith communities and members of our village” to welcome families into sanctuary in our neighborhood. I encourage other Mishkaners to help us extend a hand of welcome.

– Sharon Barr

It was so moving to hear from members of the two families. Their bravery was remarkable. It made me think about the efforts of my ancestors in the 1880’s to make a home in this country.

– Susan Schewel

Our welcoming of two families seeking sanctuary at FUMCOG just before Rosh Hashanah was so powerful and moving, and I was proud of the number of Mishkan Shalom members who showed up in solidarity. We can never underestimate what showing up means an enormous amount to the families and individuals seeking a home.

– Rabbi Shawn

Menschwork: 27th Annual Jewish Men’s Retreat

Our Annual Retreat - “Man Up! Mensch UP!: Choosing a Life of Compassion Integrity and Spirit.” is from Friday Oct. 19 thru Sunday, Oct. 21 at the Hazon/Isabel Freedman Retreat Center, Falls River, CT. Register at: www.menschwork.org. Questions? Contact Yosaif August (august@yestolifecoaching.com) or Marc Jacobs/Co-chair (phillymarc1@yahoo.com). Carpooling contact: Mark Heller (mheller873@aol.com).

by Yosaif August

For over a quarter of century, Jewish men have been gathering at our annual retreat.

They’ve come from Maine to Virginia (with some “outliers” in California, Colorado, Montana and South Carolina), from the whole spectrum of Jewish life experience and current practice, sexual orientations, and ages ranging from their late teens to their 80’s, They’ve brought their fathers, sons, brothers, friends – often with a goal of deepening those relationships.

We say “Amazing Things Happen When Jewish Men Gather. For many of us these gatherings have been a place that has stimulated, supported, sustained our personal transformation – how we are in our relationships, our communities and in tikkun olam in the wider world.

(continued on page 17)
Talia Newman
October 6

The family legend is that Talia, then five years old, cast the deciding vote—perhaps the only vote—about which synagogue her parents should join.

“I went to pre-school at Germantown Jewish Centre. My parents said, ‘Okay, do you want to join there or go to Mishkan?’ I guess we visited one day, and we had some friends who went there. I picked Mishkan.”

She laughs. “I have no memory of this.” But Talia does remember going to Shabbat School, talking about the holidays and taking hooqim (electives) about Jewish art. She does remember the gradually dawning idea that her bat mitzvah was “a real thing.

“I was nervous because I was going to actually learn Hebrew,” she recalls. Talia began preparing last November, working with tutor Sharon Sigal. “Her strategy was to learn the words, then learn to sing the trop, then put them together. She recorded it on my phone, so I speak it along with her voice, then sing, and eventually I am able to do it.”

Her parasha was a familiar story: Bereshit (Gen. 1:1-6:8), with its repeated litanies of creation—plants and animals, Adam and Eve. What intrigued Talia most were the stories between the lines, especially the midrash about Lilith, described in Jewish mythology as Adam’s first wife, sprung not from his rib, but from the same dirt God used to create Adam.

“The idea of Lilith rebelling and running away actually has a long history….When Sharon introduced that to me, I thought: Maybe that can be the focus of my speech. I’m focusing on Lilith and feminism. There were a lot of different versions of the story: that Lilith was a demon who stole newborns, so mothers would pray to her, like a kind of goddess. She had a lot of names: Wind Spirit and Hairy Goat Demon. Much later on, she started to become a symbol of feminism.”

For her tikkun olam project, Talia, a voracious reader ever since she mastered Dr. Seuss rhymes in kindergarten, helped a family friend gather, sort and alphabetize books for an elementary school that, like most in Philadelphia, lacked a functioning library.

“I really love reading, and I want other people to be able to read those books,” she says. Her current literary tastes tilt toward fantasy and historical fiction; she’s also a writer, currently at work on a fantasy novel called The Dragonfly Girl.

Talia is also an archer, a pastime she picked up while on a summer trip to London with her family. “I’ve been doing it for almost three years. I’ve never been great at team sports; archery, you just do for yourself. It’s 70% mental and 30% physical. Obviously, you have to have strength to draw the bow back. But it’s also about looking through the sight at the target and not letting it shake. You can’t have any distractions, or it just won’t work.”

Preparing for her bat mitzvah has also been an exercise in focus. “I really thought I was not going to be able to do it, but I feel like I’m really close. I’ve learned so much about my parasha and the history of it. It’s a huge thing, and I think I’ll be really proud of myself when I’m done.”

Jed Cohen
October 13

In the end, Jed decided not to talk about the torrential rain. Or about the pairs of furred, four-legged creatures that filled the ark—even though it was his passion for animals that led him to choose parasha Noah in the first place.

He decided to focus his d’var Torah on the Tower of Babel and what the verses of Genesis, chapters 6-11, suggest about the uses and abuses of power today. (continued on the next page)
Before undertaking close study of the parasha, he says, “I don’t even think I’d heard of the Tower of Babel. When Noah realizes that the flood is over, with the dove and everything, once they’re back on the land, [the text] skips a few generations, and then a group of people decide to build a big tower. They say, ‘Let’s build a tower so we can make a name for ourselves.’

“God sees the tower and decides that the people are trying to become powerful. So God spreads them all across the earth and gives them different languages so they can’t understand each other.

“I just thought it was interesting, partially because it’s an explanation of why we have different languages,” Jed says. And while towers don’t seem so significant today—they’re all over the landscape, after all—the ambition and power they represent is still a problem. Jed thought about recent events, including the separation of immigrant families at the U.S./Mexico border.

“A question I have for the community is: What’s the difference between simply wanting power and oppressing others to get power?”

Jed’s been part of Mishkan since first grade; early memories include lighting havdalah candles, sniffing the spices and singing with Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer, his first Mishkan teacher. “Gabby was very calm and flexible,” he remembers. “And all the kids were nice. I was never the biggest fan of Hebrew School, but it was not terrible.”

When his bar mitzvah drew close enough to feel like a reality, Jed worried a bit about performing in front of an audience; he’s not shy one-on-one, but he can become self-conscious before a large group. It helped to work with tutor Michelle Greenfield, who taught him to identify different trop “families” and color-code them before tackling a new aliyyah.

“I did like thinking about the parasha and just digging deeper,” he says. “The most fun part was when Michelle and I were using a Hebrew/English dictionary to translate the part I’m leyning, word for word.”

For his tikkun olam project, Jed will parlay his passion for animals into volunteer work at Saved Me, the animal rescue shelter from which his family got their dog, Ophelia. “I’m trying to help the animals and learn more about them,” Jed says. “I’ve always felt like…though it’s very important that we help people who need it, animals have never gotten as much attention. We shouldn’t put ourselves over them.”

Jed’s interests are eclectic: he loves fantasy novels, soccer and video games. He also loves the inclusive spirit at Independence Charter School and at Mishkan. “I would say we’re a Jewish community that’s focused not only on Jewish things but on the world around us…and where people, even those you don’t have a strong relationship with, are watching out for you.”

Max and Maya Rogers
October 27, 2018

He remembers trying to transliterate “Mom” into Hebrew letters. She recalls sitting in a circle before going into the Hebrew School classroom. He remembers learning to recite the challah prayer; she loved playing on the boulders outside the building.

They’re not twins—Max is a 13-year-old 8th grader and Maya a just-turned-12 6th-grader—but it made sense for them to blend their strengths into a bar/ bat mitzvah service that will incorporate Max’s way with words and Maya’s love for music.

At first, Max wasn’t keen on the idea of leading a service. “I was nervous because I didn’t want to (continued on the next page)
Both siblings love Mishkan: the teachers’ kindness, the emphasis on social justice (Max has helped for two summers with the Interfaith Community Building Group), the flexibility to create a bar/bat mitzvah ritual that fits their skills and temperaments.

Maya says the occasion isn’t exactly a ticket to adulthood. “It’s not like I can say, ‘I just had my bat mitzvah and now I can drive a car.’ But I feel like an adult in some ways because I did a big thing for my family.” Her brother agrees. “It’s a turning point in that I’ve accomplished something really big that’s not just for me.”

Maya’s learning differences made it hard for her to learn Hebrew, but she can express herself fluidly at the piano. For their bar/bat mitzvah, she’ll read the English, play a few songs and talk about their tikun olam project, a local clean-up effort that challenged them to be participants instead of bystanders.

On a family walk in the Wissahickon, Maya and Max noticed the trash strewn in the woods—“gross and random stuff,” Maya says, including food wrappers and dirty diapers. “It was wrong that people do that to nature.”

Both siblings love Mishkan: the teachers’ kindness, the emphasis on social justice (Max has helped for two summers with the Interfaith Community Building Group), the flexibility to create a bar/bat mitzvah ritual that fits their skills and temperaments.

So they started hiking with garbage bags and trash-picking tools in hand. Max made a connection between that act and their parasha, Vayera (Gen. 18:1-22:24), the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. “God destroys the city because there are a lot of bad people. But there are a lot of bystanders who are being just as bad by not helping. Taking walks and not picking up trash is being a bystander.”

The more they thought about that idea, the more instances both Max and Maya found in their own lives. At Woodlynde, Maya’s school, one friend persisted in just watching, silently, as another girl was unkind to Maya. Now, when Maya sees someone being bullied, she tells the perpetrator to stop.

At Bala Cynwyd Middle School, Max remembers a day when some troublemaking kids fled the room to escape a teacher’s censure. “I apologized on behalf of the grade,” he says. Another time, he befriended a new second-grader who was standing alone at recess. “I went over and asked if he wanted to play with me. Now we’re pretty good friends.”

When not preparing for their bar/bat mitzvah, Max plays baseball, and Maya gravitates to reading and art. She’s an ice skater who loves to glide, while Max prefers to speed-skate, then bash into the wall for a dramatic stop.
I had an extraordinary conversation with a cousin in a restaurant a couple of weeks ago, when we were both seated at the end of a family table. I’d never spoken with her in any depth, mostly because things she’d said about Israel and Palestine over the years made clear to me that we did not agree. I had judged her as another Jew who was closed to any criticism of the state of Israel or awareness of the plight of Palestinians. But this time, perhaps because she lives now in Woodstock, NY, an historically progressive town, I was curious to know how living in that community has impacted her with regard to her position on the conflict.

Our conversation lasted through the entire dinner and beyond. She told me about her strong relationships built over many years in Israel. I told her about the things I had witnessed in a trip ten years ago with Rabbis for Human Rights. We didn’t trade arguments so much as talked about how we know what we know. Our ways of knowing were not cause for argument, but for understanding and sharing our journeys. By the end, I wanted to read some articles that have influenced her thinking, and she had agreed to look at reports and videos on the B’t’selem website. She started out thinking that acknowledging the complexity of the issue was good enough, it kind of got her off the hook. But later in the conversation she had decided that when next she travels to Israel, she will go to the West Bank to find out for herself what Palestinian reality looks like. The most startling comment from her came when we joined up with the rest of the family. She thanked me and said, “This is the first time I have ever been able to talk with anyone on either side of these issues. When we don’t agree, and we can really talk, we learn!”

Here at Mishkan, we learn through respectful, honest exchange, but as essential as that is, we are not simply learners. We do not ignore what we learn. To ignore from the Latin means to “not know.” The Oxford English Dictionary defines it first as “refusing to know,” implying that we do know something, but we don’t want to know it. Wow! I’ll say! There are so many things I don’t want to know, that I dearly wish weren’t true. But at Mishkan, we do not refuse the responsibility that comes with knowledge. We pray in our seats and with our feet, we stand up, and we join with others in bending the arc toward justice. We celebrate goodness everywhere we see it, and we do our best to bring more goodness into the world.

So I want to welcome each of you to these Days of Awe with Mishkan Shalom. This may be your first time with us. Maybe you’re looking for a place where your children are taught Jewish values based on our three pillars: Prayer, Study, Repair of the World. Or for a community where people care for one another and they show it. Perhaps you are returning to Judaism, as I did, after many estranged years. Or you’re new to the area. Or maybe you simply don’t want to have to join a synagogue to pray. You are welcome here.

To any here who are members of Jewish Voice for Peace or IfNotNow, and came in need of a prayer community where Israel/Palestine is both discussable and actionable:

At Mishkan we pray for and we stand for human rights.

To those who suffer from racism (and that’s all of us):

At Mishkan we pray and stand together against white privilege;

And we pray and stand together to oppose racism.

For we who may lose our right to marry, to declare our gender, to own our bodies, to stay in this country, to keep our children:

At Mishkan we pray and we stand together with you and for you.

As we learn to open our hearts to the whole of life at this threshold of the Jewish year 5779, we pray that others will learn to open their hearts too.

I’ll close with a little story and something I started thinking about in services this past Friday.

I was working with a team, leading week-long experiential courses in leadership and Conflict Management in a large company. During an especially challenging session, when two people in a small group were literally yelling at one another, one of my colleagues suddenly grabbed an empty chair and very dramatically set it down right into the center of the group…and then he forgot why he did it. He just stood there. In the confusion, the tension in the

(continued on page 19)
Read and Reflect on Our One Book Mishkan for 5779:
Born to Kvetch: Yiddish Language and Culture in All of its Moods,
by Michael Wex

A Great Read for the Fall
Autumn has arrived, bringing the pleasure of adding the new One Book Mishkan selection to our reading lists. Born to Kvetch lends itself nicely to audio-listening on long walks among beautiful fall foliage, or cuddling-up in your favorite reading chair – inside or out – as the weather cools, just a bissle.

Our 14th Annual Program Series Takes Shape
Either way, there’s plenty of time for reading before our Book Discussion. The Library Committee is working to set a date soon after the election, so stay tuned for details. And, we’re exploring the wonderful world of Idishe Kino (Yiddish cinema) for just the right selection for our annual Saturday Night at the Movies. Have you got a favorite? Have a title you think would fit the bill? Let us know!

And we’re thrilled to announce the return of Arts Night, a springtime favorite, when we’ll enjoy staged readings of classic Yiddish tales along with music from the rich Yiddish repertoire of songs and klezmer.

Lend Your Talents to our One Book Planning
We welcome all members to join us in planning our program series for 5779, whether it’s a potential film title, an offer to help plan – or perform in – Arts Night, joining the committee, or a suggestion for engaging members of our Mishkan community.

In Born to Kvetch, author Michael Wex explores attitudes and experiences of the language used by most of our ancestors over 1,000 years. We’d like to extend that effort by exploring the attitudes and experiences of our own community, today, towards Yiddish language and culture.

While most Mishkan members descend from Eastern European Jewish immigrant Yiddish-speakers, many members don’t share this cultural heritage: non-Jewish spouses and partners; Jews by choice; Jews from Sephardic backgrounds.

What’s been your experience of Yiddish? Were you raised in a Yiddish-speaking household? Do you speak Yiddish? Understand it? Know some words and expressions? Are you from a non-Yiddish-speaking background? What’s been your experience with Yiddish spoken around you?

The Library Committee invites your comments and reflections on your experiences with Yiddish, and we’d love to publish your responses in future issues of Kol Shalom. (continued next page)
One Book Mishkan: Born to Kvetch: Yiddish Language and Culture in All of its Moods, by Michael Wex

Send us your comments or your favorite Yiddish phrases, words…and curses, too! I’ll start the ball rolling with one of mine, below, a combination blessing and curse....

My Favorite Yiddish Phrase, by Sharon Rhode

Gei, gei gesunterheit! Translation: Go, go in good health!

Innocent enough, “gei, gesunterheit” is a perfectly lovely, sweet phrase bidding goodbye and good health to a visitor. However, if said visitor has left you annoyed or irritated, one need only change inflection to turn the blessing into a curse. (Well, not really a curse, just not so much a blessing, anymore.) This irritably-inflected “GEI gesunterheit!” is usually accompanied by some raised arm/hand motion, waving away the offending party in mock disgust.

And, if one’s level of ire is raised sufficiently – or, one’s desire for irony – the addition of an extra “gei” succeeds nicely to spice-up the meaning: “GEI! GEI GESUNTERHEIT!” “Go! Go! See what I care!” is, thus, nicely layered over “Go in good health.”

Like many Yiddish expressions, meaning and intent are carried in the delivery. Personally, I only use this expression when I am mock-irritated, so I deliver this non-blessing only in mock disgust, exaggerating my arm/hand motions accordingly. Most importantly, I only use this expression with those I love, or am quite fond of; folks who appreciate a bit of Yiddish humor and depart with a chuckle.

Send reflections, Yiddish favorites, offers of participation in our One Book programs and any general questions or suggestions to: library@mishkan.org.

See you in the Library!
justice and peace amongst all communities. We need to do more than emphasize Jewish survival; we must also make Jewish civilization function in the service of these transcendent ends.”

How can the Mishkan Shalom we have nurtured from a seedling to this day, or the Mishkan Shalom many of you have come on board with in full bloom, continue to grow, flourish and stay relevant in our day? How we take care of ourselves as we heal a broken world? What do we need to sustain ourselves as a community and as individuals while rising to the times we were made for.

As Dr. David Teutsch wrote in Reconstructionism Today a number of years ago:

“We can create communities of commitment. Becoming a Kehillah Kedoshah, a holy community is an aspiration that can deepen and brighten our lives. If we want greater meaning in...life; if we want it to provide the type of guidance that we know we really need; if we want to be attractive to future generations; if we want to be authentic in our own time and in the light of generations that have gone before us, then it is time to think about the steps we want to take on the journey toward holiness, and toward mutual commitment of community. Those are the echoes I hope we hear whenever we hear the extraordinary Biblical pronouncement, “You shall be holy for I your God am holy.”

Let us examine, explore and commit to move forward (the Lih/Lamed!) in strength and deeper engagement. As Mishkan Shalom member Rabbi Phyllis Berman wrote in her pre-Rosh Hashanah message to us:

“Now is the time according to Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., for us to act on the ‘fierce urgency of NOW,’ living fully in the present moment in every aspect of our lives.”

My heartfelt prayer for all of us is that the journey we are taking together will help us lay the foundation for the coming month and the year ahead in which we become more of who we can, engage the world as emissaries for social change and justice, heal the hurts in ourselves and those we have contributed to in others, and find in this loving and imperfect community, the Presence of the Sacred in our lives and in the world around us.

I invite you to join us in this journey and see this moment as incredible opportunity to create a new future together embodying our foundational principles that direct our individual and communal souls.
CREATION MYTH

Summer of ’88:
Before the Beginning,
We were a disparate assortment of seekers
Who hungered for a meaningful Judaism.

Some still were angry
Over the rift at our previous home,
A bitter division
Over what a synagogue should be
and do.
Some were intrigued by the idea
That a tent could be raised
To shelter people
Who felt unwelcome
Or invisible
In Jewish spaces
Because of their views
Or their circumstances
Or whom they loved.

All were inspired
By an eloquent and bold
spiritual leader
Who insisted
That Jews must hear
And act
On the teachings of the Prophets.

Over a hot summer
Of meetings,
Constructing
A Statement of Principles
To define us,
We discovered the name
That perhaps had been there
All along:

Mishkan Shalom:
Sanctuary of Peace
Dwelling of Wholeness

The race to be ready
Was hard work:
Finding a place to worship
And learn
In an old school building,

Organizing a cooperative
To share the work
Of setting up and taking down
folding chairs
Of cleaning bathrooms,
Of composing newsletters
With typewriters
On paper.

In the last days
Of Elul,
A package arrived
Carrying a sacred Torah
Saved from the Shoah,
Now ours to read from
And to remember always
Our obligation
To Speak Truth to Power.

Finally, Rosh HaShanah 5749:
Thirty Years Ago
Today.
In Rented Space at a Friends’ Meeting House,
New companions
Together raised Tallitot
Above their heads,
Creating an actual tent.
Together, out loud,
We called Mishkan Shalom into being.
The first part of Creation was complete
And it was good.

In the future would be a search
for our own building
And a continuing struggle to pay
for and maintain it.
In the future we would grapple with differences
About feminism, Israel, Iraq,
About the ways we governed ourselves
And treated each other.
We would add a prayer for the peace of Yishmael
To the prayer for Yisrael in the kaddish,
Knowing our fates are entwined.

In the future would be many chances
To welcome new members,
To delight in children coming of age
And to grieve the losses of beloved friends

In the future we would celebrate valued members with special needs.
We would pioneer a way to
direct our hearts through Jewish Mindfulness
And join with other faith communities
To pursue justice
In the city, the country and the world.

A strong rabbinic partnership would be forged
With a community longing to come together again.

Now it is 5779. The once-thin saplings
Have grown tall and blossomed
As have many of our dreams.

Now we hear echoes of years past
As we again share space with a different faith community
And classrooms with a different school.

Now, as then, we continue to
discover who we are
And dream of who we might become.

Now, as then, we treasure the past
And face forward.

– Carol Towarnicky
G'milut Hasadim/Acts of Caring

by Gene Bishop and Stephanie Shell

**Mazel Tov**

We offer a hearty mazel tov to Talia Newman, Jedediah Cohen, Max Rogers and Myra Rogers and their families, as they become bnai mitzvah this month. Another double mazel tov to Alyse Salzman Flowers and Jonathan Flowers who were married on July 1 and celebrated the birth of their granddaughter, Manoa Harper Bacho Halpin, on September 1.

**Love and Support**

This month we send our ongoing love, support, and prayers for healing to Mishkan members Keely Newman, Eilen Levinson, Ray Kaplan, Teya Sepinuck, Erica Eisenberg, Jane Lipton, Adam Tuttle, Claire Needleman, Robin Berenholz, Bernice Bricklin, Mark Goodman, Jane Hinkle, Denise Kulp, Robin Leidner, George Kaplan-Meyer, Nathan Horwitz, Lior Feldman, Miriam Samuelson, and Natalie Gorvine. **We also send ongoing love, support, and prayers for healing to all those in need of healing but who seek to remain private.**

We are keeping Carol Dombroski (mother of Brian Dombroski), Natalie Caplin (mother of Wendy Caplin), Eleazar Shimon Hakohen ben Shoshana v’Ahron Yosai (father of Rabbi Shawn Zevit), Sarah Rivka bat Elizabeth (mother of Rabbi Shawn Zevit), 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 Brennan), Edgar Galson (father of Wendy Galson and father-in-law and mother-in-law of Susan Windle), Don Levinson, brother of Eilen Levinson, and Julie Post and Joseph Post (sister and father of Nancy Post) and in our prayers as well. May they all experience a refuah sheleimah (full healing).

**Are you receiving Acts of Caring via email?**

Acts of Caring now goes out to all Mishkan members. It is our communication central for sharing life cycle events and community needs for help. If you are not receiving Acts of Caring, please check your spam, or if you have gmail, your solicitations folder (Acts of Caring is distributed by Constant Contact). If you unsubscribe from Ma Hadash, intentionally or accidentally, you will also be unsubscribed from Acts of Caring. Please contact the office for clarification.

**Acts of Caring**

Acts of Caring lets 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 email: actsofcaring@mishkan.org.

**HINENI--HERE I AM**

If you could use a little help because of illness, or joy (new baby!) or you know of a Mishkan member too shy to ask, please email actsofcaring@mishkan.org and we will reach out. Hineni offers concrete support to members in need of short term help, including meals, visits, transportation, etc. If you would like some help, but do not wish a public solicitation, please contact the rabbis, or actsofcaring@mishkan.org and we will speak with you privately and seek to arrange help. Our Hineni coordinators are Lisa Mervis and Chris Taranta.

**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 email address: actsofcaring@mishkan.org.

(continued on next page)
In case you missed it, our Acts of Caring coordinators shared these thoughts with the community on Yom Kippur.

We who stand here – Gene Bishop, Stephanie Shell, Chris Taranta, Ariel Weiss, and Lisa Mervis – are the faces behind the Acts of Caring emails, and the organizers of Hineni – here I am. We are a community building group – not a messaging service, or a catering service. We stand here today to make three requests:

1) Open our emails, even if you do not know the person or the family. Share in the joys and sorrows of our community. You will find meaning in being present as others experience life transitions and if ever you are the subject of a posting you will find an outpouring of love and support.

2) Share with us your news especially of joy – babies, marriages, public awards and recognition. Don’t assume we know of the blessings that have come your way. Instead let us know about them with photos when you have them.

3) Don’t be embarrassed or ashamed to ask for help, thinking you are not as sick as the next person, or as needy, or that having a new baby or a partner with a temporary disability won’t be any added work in your life. It is a mitzvah for the community to help. If you would like help, but would prefer to remain private, let us or the rabbis know. We have secret ways.

We know many Mishkan members have medical issues they wish to keep private, but who are in process of healing. We have added a line in our Kol Shalom column, a misheberach for all those who are healing privately, so consider yourselves the recipients of prayers and well wishes even without an email.

We can be reached at actsofcaring@mishkan.org.

We wish all in need a refuah sheleima – a healing of body and spirit.

– Gene Bishop and Stephanie Shell

“Man Up! Mensch UP!: Choosing a Life of Compassion Integrity and Spirit”

(continued from page 7)

These retreats, in recent years at the Hazon/Isabel Freedman Retreat Center, are planned and led by our active participants – mostly lay people. We also have rabbinic leadership, provided by Rabbi Shawn. There is a robust connection of Mishkan men to the retreat. Reb Shawn and I were the co-founders (26 years ago!), David Piver and Marc Jacobs, and I have co-led these events, four of us serve on its Wisdom Council (guiding group) and a growing number of Men of Mishkan are active contributors to its leadership.

Two years ago we took a big step Menschwork, a 501c3 non-profit organization, to develop and sustain our work. We are excited by the possibilities it now presents to us.

This year’s retreat will be held October 19-21st. It’s theme is “Man Up! Mensch UP!: Choosing a Life of Compassion Integrity and Spirit.” It is a shabbaton, using the parasha (this year it is Lech Lecha) and a springboard for our work together. There are joyful services, small group sharings, and many other activities to connect, learn, reflect, have fun.

To register, simply go to www.menschwork.org. There are also a limited number of scholarships available. We also have a special fellowship program for men under age 35 who want to participate. This program has already yielded a number of significant contributors to the heart of our work.
President’s Letter

(continued from page 11)

t group abated, though the conflict itself wasn’t re-
solved. But After that, whenever we weren’t settled
on the design for a course or how a consultation
should proceed, we joked about trying “the empty
chair intervention.”

The empty chair came around again one day when
our founding rabbi, Brian Walt, was himself learning
and starting to teach about meditation. He quoted
Rabbi Nachman of Breslov: “When one sits on the
chair, one is a mensch!” This caught my attention
because of the event I just described, but I honestly
had no idea what it meant. Now, perhaps a little
wiser myself than I was then, I think I get it. When
ONE SITS on the chair, then..ONE — whole person
-- is truly present. My colleague had temporarily
abandoned himself, even though he was physically
there. But when we can inhabit our chairs with all of
ourselves: the parts to celebrate, the parts that are
cringe-worthy, the parts that cry and the parts that
hope..then we are fully here at the start of the New
Year. Then we can feel the joy and also do the work
of personal regeneration. Individually and collectively,
we are all in and available – Hineni – to turn and to
change and to make something new.

May we all become mensches in these chairs today,
and on our journey through the Days of Awe togeth-
er. I stand and pray for a sweet and healthy New Year
for every one of you.

With you, with love,
Ellen

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On three things the world rests:
Study, Prayer, and Acts of Caring

Mishkan Shalom is part of Jewish
Reconstruction Communities, in
Association with the Reconstructionist
Rabbinical College.

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With you, with love,
Ellen
AN INVITATION FROM
RECONSTRUCTING JUDAISM!

_Shana Tova_! Our Convention from November 15th-18th is almost totally full, and we want to make sure to offer opportunities for our local communities to experience Convention.

We are very excited to offer members of our Philadelphia area congregations the opportunity to attend our _Shabbat_ morning services and programs including Torah Study, a choice of four _Shabbat_ morning services, and the Torah and Concluding service with the entire Convention body.

Torah study begins at 8:30 a.m. followed by davening at 9:45 a.m.

The afternoon workshops begin at 2:00 p.m.

You are also welcome to attend the _Shabbat_ afternoon workshops.

(This offer does not include lunch.)

To attend Shabbat programming at no charge

**REGISTER HERE**

[https://reconstructionistevents.wufoo.com/forms/x1vz4s1j0pujod7/](https://reconstructionistevents.wufoo.com/forms/x1vz4s1j0pujod7/)

Be a part of the Saturday night Celebration and Nefesh Mountain Concert beginning with _Havdalah_. The cost to attend the celebration is $50, and you can register here at the [Convention Website](https://reconstructionistevents.wufoo.com/forms/x1vz4s1j0pujod7/).

The celebration begins at 7:30 p.m.