



# Life at Hevreh

May 1 – June 30, 2021

# Hevreh is Reopening!

The path below is our roadmap to reopening. These benchmarks are not time-bound, showing what is planned if COVID vaccination trends upward and cases trend downward. Thank you for your understanding and flexibility as we bring you back to Hevreh.

April

Limited lifecycle events indoors

(25 attendees)



May  
Hybrid events outdoors

Lunch N Learn  
Creative Beit Midrash  
Torah Study  
Tot Shabbat  
(25 attendees)



June  
Hybrid events outdoors

Friday night services  
B'not Mitzvah  
(75 attendees)



Visit [hevreh.org/welcome](https://hevreh.org/welcome)

Register for events • Pre-screen • Learn procedure for when you arrive



FROM THE RABBI

RABBI JODIE GORDON

## Rabbinic Reflection

I've had a song stuck in my head for months now. The lyrics suddenly appear in my mind, unbidden, and for the rest of the day, I find myself humming them.

*And the seasons they go round and round, and the painted ponies go up and down. We're captive on a carousel of time. We can't return, we can only look behind from where we came, and go round and round and round in the circle game.*

The seasons do indeed go round and round. We've lived through a full year on the Jewish calendar. From Pesach to Shavuot, to Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot, to Chanukah, then Purim, and back again to Pesach. Now—we find ourselves counting the days, one by one, to Shavuot again. Time has certainly felt circular over these last couple of months, as we marked one full year of living through the Covid19 pandemic. As the tree outside my office window starts to bud once again, the enormity of the losses of the past year feel softened by the promise of spring. With each day, watching the thermostat inch its way toward sunny skies and warm breezes, my own personal store of optimism slowly grows.

In this moment, our Hevreh community continues to evolve and grow and change as well, as we anticipate some bittersweet *l'hitraot's* ("see you later"). Over these next two months, we will have the opportunity to say thank you and farewell to beloved members of our Hevreh team: Jodie Friedman, and student cantor Gabe Snyder. Both Jodie and Gabe have been instrumental (no pun intended) in bringing light and joy to our community through their work over the past years, and I hope you will join us in wishing them well, and celebrating their impact on us.

As you will see in the pages that follow, many people in our community have been hard at work putting together plans that will allow us to gather together in person, safely. As more and more of us receive vaccines, we hold two truths in our hands: we are safer than we were before, and we must continue to practice care and discernment when we gather. Like our desert-wandering ancestors, we are living in a moment of in-between, of "no more" and "not yet." We know that even as the Israelites' journey continued, there were stopping points along the way for rest and refreshment. One of the first tasks that our ancestors had in those moments was to raise their *Ohel Mo'ed*, their Tent of Gathering. This summer, we look forward to welcoming you for Shabbat and other occasions outdoors, underneath our own beautiful tent of gathering.

This is a season of change for us as a community, as we begin to emerge and chart a path toward our 'next normal.' My hope and prayer is that as the seasons change, we will continue to uphold the same kind of love, care, and inclusivity toward one another that we have demonstrated together over the past year.

Warmly,  
Rabbi Jodie Gordon

# JODIE FRIEDMAN'S FAREWELL



Dear Hevreh,

When I accepted the position of program associate at Hevreh in the summer of 2017, I did so with the intention to start a lifelong career working in the Jewish world. I didn't know anyone in the Berkshires, but had a good feeling about Hevreh and followed it. I bought a car, packed it up, and soon after found myself in Great Barrington.

Most of you don't hear from me directly. I am usually behind the scenes; before March 2020 I could be found setting up tables for meetings, putting out the snack

for our Hebrew Skills students on Wednesday afternoons, or ghostwriting the board member-administered Shabbat welcome for Friday nights. Once a year, on Yachad Shabbat, I was at my most front-facing when I delivered a d'var Torah. Now, though you may not know it, you see my work in a lot of places around Hevreh—when you receive our weekly email or the bulletin, when you check the website, when you join a Zoom meeting, when you sign up for a class. When new members fill out a membership profile, I get to be one of the first people to officially welcome them into Hevreh.

The past year in particular has begged an abrupt pivot from the work I thought I was doing. In creating procedures and completing tasks that we had never imagined, I have felt patience, trust, and support from you in navigating the strange new expectations of the world. As Communications and Engagement Manager, I've had the pleasure of connecting members to one another and connecting with members. Our 60 new households since May 2019 show that our members take this work seriously, and it is humbling to play a small part in the holiness of helping others deepen their relationship with a Jewish community.

Nearly four years since I moved to the Berkshires, I see in the rearview mirror that I could not possibly fit my time in the Berkshires as neatly into my car as I had when I came here. The skills gained and relationships built are too great for me to store away and move on from. I feel deep gratitude for my colleagues, our program partners, and Hevreh members, as each interaction has contributed to my growth. Through professional and personal experience, I'm so thankful to have made both a home and a community in this area and with all of you, my Hevreh.

The values held by Hevreh members helped inform the decision I have made for my next step. Our community is rich with resources: trust, knowledge, pursuit of justice. Especially through this pandemic, I have seen so many of you rush forward to help fellow members in any innovative way you could. This fervor for care, paired with a drive for excellence in all that we do at Hevreh, has pushed me to pursue a career in public interest law, so I can work to spread equity in communities that share these values. I am excited that come this fall, I will be a 1L (first year law student) at New England Law | Boston.

I look forward to visiting the Berkshires, perhaps at a time when we can shmooze around oneg after services, or when we can run into each other at the farmer's market and (\*gasp\*) hug.

L'hitraot,  
Jodie

## RABBINIC STAFF

Neil P.G. Hirsch  
*Rabbi*

Jodie Gordon  
*Rabbi and Education Director*

Deborah Zecher  
*Rabbi Emerita*

## ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Kate Van Olst  
*Director of Operations*

Ellen Marcus  
*Early Childhood Center Director*

Rebecca Wagner  
*Office Manager*

Jodie Friedman  
*Communications and Engagement Manager*

## BOARD

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### Dear Hevreh Community,

My term ends in June, so this is my last bulletin message to you as president of our congregation. I thank you for the honor.

I could not have imagined when I started that we would need to close our building and yet find a way to remain a community. But on March 13th of last year that is just what we did, without knowing when we might reopen or how we would run services. It was the power of our community, our need to be with one another, that kept us together as the weeks became months, and it is that power that will allow us to emerge even stronger. COVID-19 presented a threat. It also forced us to adapt and it strengthens us. Although we were confronted by sadness, isolation, and fear, we learned new ways to find joy, resilience, and connection.

In the process we have grown, adding dozens of new families to membership. Those families did not have to join, but were attracted by what Hevreh offers in Jewish life, learning, and community.

Religious school classes and adult learning have continued. The Early Childhood Center at Hevreh provides an important service to local families, especially in light of the pandemic, and it is thriving even under restrictions which delayed the opening six months and reduced the allowed headcount. We are expanding it this year.

We celebrated the High Holy Days of 5781 from the safety of our homes with a beautiful service and original Kol Nidre composition. Our on-line services and activities continue to be well-attended. We remain a vital community, learning, studying, and working together to improve ourselves and our world.

We will soon celebrate the reopening of our beautiful synagogue building to on-site services and meetings. We will have additional space to safely spread out in a new tent that can hold 75 of us for services and we will share those services on-line with those who chose not to attend in person. We will find that we are a different Hevreh than when we closed the building. We have learned to be more careful, certainly, and we have learned to extend our reach through technology so that those who cannot be present in the synagogue can still be involved members of the community.

All of these changes have been supported by the hard work of our board, our rabbis, and our staff. The rabbis and staff have dealt on a daily basis with the challenges that COVID-19 has presented. And while we grapple with those issues, we continue to deal with the rise of anti-Semitism and that threat to our safety.

Last year we benefited from a PPP loan, later converted into a grant, that helped to allay some of our extraordinary expenses. This year we do not have that to help us, but the financial strain of COVID-19 on the congregation remains, as does the financial burden on many of our members. We recognize that, and ask that you consider making an extra contribution if you are able to help cover those expenses and support Hevreh's programs for all of our members.

Our annual meeting is scheduled for the evening of June 2. With your support, Larry Frankel, our First Vice President, will become the next President of Hevreh and help guide us through our recovery. We will also say thank you to board members who are stepping down from their roles after time on the board: Julie Gale, Michèle Krieg Bauer, Elie Katzman, Debbie Harris, Brian Grossman, Rob Cohen and John Lipkowitz. Finally, I want to thank Suzanne Sawyer, who as outgoing Immediate Past President has filled an important role on the Executive Committee and as head of the HR and nominating committees. These people gave their time to all of us to make Hevreh a better place. And it would be unfair to not also thank the remaining board members and all of those who volunteer to be on our committees and make Hevreh what it is. Thank you all.

Please plan on attending the annual meeting, and consider volunteering to work on Hevreh committees so that our community can continue to fulfill its mission.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Rik Kabel, President

**As we welcome in warmer weather to the Berkshires**, preparations are underway for resuming in-person connection with our Hevreh. Our Board of Trustees has approved the purchase of a large tent that will be installed in our second parking lot to welcome group gatherings this summer. Events held at Hevreh will also be accessible for virtual attendance, via Zoom or live-streaming on our website. The plan is to use the tent for Hevreh and Minyan services and group meetings, but all use must be coordinated through the office and comply with COVID-19 guidelines.

When considering whether to connect virtually or in-person, Hevreh's Reopening Task Force has always considered three factors: Federal, State, and local regulations; public health data; and our Jewish values. After reflecting on all three, the Reopening Task Force has established the following guidelines for safe in-person gatherings:

- Low community spread and test positivity rates in Berkshire County.
- A countywide vaccination rate of 70% for high-risk individuals, that is those who are 65+ or who have two comorbidities.
- All members of our staff and adult members of their households are eligible for vaccination.

We continue to monitor the Berkshire County COVID data weekly. Once these safety benchmarks have been reached, Hevreh will embark on a phased reopening. Our hope and plan is that small gatherings will be possible by May and larger gatherings, including Shabbat, will be possible by June. Our commitment to the safety of our community is of the utmost importance. Similar to the Reopening Massachusetts plan, the exact dates may change depending on the public health data.

To welcome everyone to a space that is both safe and sacred, the following guidelines are in place for all in-person, outdoor gatherings at Hevreh:

- No one should attend if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, have had close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, or have been told to quarantine.
- Those who are particularly vulnerable to or who have not yet been vaccinated against COVID-19 are encouraged to stay home.
- Masks must be worn correctly at all times.
- Physical distancing of 6 feet must be maintained, although members of the same household may group together.
- We strongly encourage pre-registration for all in-person gatherings to ensure compliance with capacity limitations. Those who pre-register will be given priority when we expect to reach capacity limits.
- Current MA regulations prohibit social gatherings for food or drink service. We hope to resume Oneg and kiddush in the future, but for now plan to gather elsewhere for post-service socializing.

**Phase 1:**

- Small group gatherings of up to 25 persons outdoors (under the sky)
  - Lunch and Learn, Saturday morning Torah Study, Creative Beit Midrash, Committee and Board meetings
- Religious School outdoors
- Select lifecycle events may take place in the sanctuary, with a limit of 25 persons.

**Phase 2 - All of the above, plus: (under the tent)**

- Larger group gatherings of up to 75 persons outdoors
  - Shabbat
- B'nai Mitzvah

You may have questions about the practical considerations of gathering. More information, including event registration and frequently asked questions will be available on our website at [www.hevreh.org/welcome](http://www.hevreh.org/welcome).

April 30, 2021 is our fiscal year end. Let's say goodbye to this past COVID year. Financially, Hevreh will break even or have a very small loss thanks in part to the PPP Loan we qualified for last spring.

**This upcoming year we will have some changes with the synagogues financial processes.**

We have added a new fund for you to donate to, an Early Childhood Center scholarship fund to help area families afford quality day care for their children. This new fund along with our other funds can always use additional donations throughout the year. The balances in the funds are all restricted to the area the fund is named for. Fund money can be used only with both the finance committee's recommendation and board approval. These funds help supplement the operating budget by paying for large purchases or projects. Part of the new tent for outside activities will be paid for with funds from the Building Preservation funds and temporary restricted funds (prior year surpluses).

We are changing our accounting program to a more intuitive program, making reporting and analyzing our financial goals easier. Currently the office staff is working to change over our customer relationship management (CRM) system which will allow you to go online and update your own personal information in the Hevreh database and pay your invoices directly from this online account. You can still call the office if you feel more comfortable having Kate or Rebecca process your payments.

Our fiscal year end will also be changing from April 30th to June 30th. The majority of our contracts are all July 1 – June 30th. In order for our fiscal year end to match up to our contract end dates we will be having a 2 month year (May – June) and then the full fiscal year (July – June). We do not want to send everyone 2 separate dues invoices, so you will be sent one invoice but for 14 months of dues costs. Your invoices will have the dues amount for the short fiscal year (2 months) and then another charge for the full year (12 months). We will talk about this in more detail at our annual meeting in June.

If anyone has any questions regarding these changes or the synagogue's finances please call me at 413-644-8908 or email me at [rwolin320@gmail.com](mailto:rwolin320@gmail.com).

**When you attend a gathering at Hevreh you can expect:**

- Pre-register: Sign up for events before you come so we can save you a spot.
- Pre-screen: You will be asked to affirm that you have no COVID symptoms before attending any events.
- Parking: Park in the first lot or the third lot. From the first lot, follow signs around the front of the building to the second parking lot or backyard/patio. From the third parking lot, walk over the footbridge to the second parking lot or backyard/patio. Please do not walk through the ECC play area.
- Tent: A 40'x60' tent will be located in the second parking lot.
- Seating: Bring your own chairs.
- Sharing the space: During Early Childhood Center hours, events will be held in the designated area.
- Welcome: A team of trained welcome volunteers will be here to greet you and make everyone feel at home. (If you would like to participate with the Welcome Team, please contact the Hevreh office.)
- Restrooms: Two portable toilets will be provided.
- Inside Hevreh: Except for limited lifecycle events, the building will remain closed.

If you wish to attend Hevreh events and services from the comfort of your own home, virtual attendance will continue through Zoom. Links will continue to be distributed by email each week. These will be hybrid events with attendees participating both in-person at Hevreh and online to make it possible for those joining from home to see, hear, and participate.

We look forward to gathering in person again and appreciate your patience and understanding as we carefully move through the reopening phases.

Sincerely,

The COVID-19 Re-Opening Task Force:

- Rik Kabel, *President*
- Rabbi Neil Hirsch
- Rabbi Jodie Gordon
- Kate Van Olst, *Director of Operations*
- Ellen Marcus, *ECC Director*
- Sandy Ashendorf
- Rachel Beckwith
- Dr. Dan Cohen MD
- Dave Halley, *Chair of the House Committee*
- Dr. Heidi Katz, PhD, *Co-Chair of the Ritual Committee*
- Dr. John Schreiber MD, MPH

**How wonderful it is** to have so many of the Hevreh community continuing to gather via Zoom for Shabbat Friday nights, even as we passed the one-year mark of our COVID lifeways. Torah study discussions on Saturday mornings have brought participants closer together, as has the Creative Beit Midrash. On the second Night of Passover, Rabbis Hirsch and Gordon led a lovely, hamish Seder that included recognition of COVID, and hope for the future. For Shavuot, on Monday, May 17, Rabbi Gordon led (should this read “will lead”) a Lunch-and-Learn study session, details of which are elsewhere in this Bulletin.

At the beginning of April, a survey was sent out to Hevreh members to assess the kinds of events and services that people would want to attend, as well as more detailed questions about what people’s current feelings are about attending High Holy Day services in-person in a variety of settings. The current re-opening plan, which will begin late spring/early summer, COVID conditions permitting, is that we will be holding on-site outdoor services and study, under cover of a tent or, if the group prefers, on the patio. For those who are not yet ready to gather, everything will also be offered virtually (that is, everything will be hybrid) at least through and including the High Holy Days.

High Holy Day planning has begun. The Rabbis in conjunction with the Ritual Committee are considering an array of alternative scenarios that are dictated by the knowns and unknowns of the COVID pandemic. Whatever plan is decided upon, we rest assured that the services will be spiritual and meaningful.

Carol Beyer and Heidi Katz  
*Co Chairs, Ritual*

**Just prior to Pesach** weEngage coordinated another round of calls to all members of our congregation. Due to COVID many more members than usual were home to answer the phone, and our callers reported many satisfying and productive calls. We expect to engage in another round of such calls in the next few months, and anyone who would like to be added to our list of callers should contact Debbie Harris at [witchdeb@gmail.com](mailto:witchdeb@gmail.com).

On March 13, along with the Social Justice in Action Committee, we sponsored a Zoom Havdalah service just ‘cause we wanted to. At that time we suggested that anyone who wanted to could make a donation to a Just Cause, and SJA highlighted several local causes that could use help. We hope to sponsor more of these Havdalah services in the coming months, hopefully outside as the weather becomes more conducive and people are getting vaccinated and therefore feeling better about gathering in person.

Finally, on April 8 Alyson Slutzky, one of our newer members, facilitated a Zoom meeting for those families who joined our congregation since the COVID shut down to get to know each other. Personalized email invitations went out to these families. Hopefully this will spur some relationships between these members.

Julie Gale, Debbie Harris, and Shelley Rolf  
*weEngage Co-Chairs*

**A virtual meeting** for those interested in Hevreh’s Social Justice in Action (SJA) committee was held on March 9. We had a wonderful turnout of 16, including a number of new Hevreh members. Several others had expressed interest but were unable to attend.

Each person introduced themselves and mentioned areas of particular interest. We then provided a brief background history of SJA since its inception in early 2020 and discussed two events being planned. One is a discussion with Rabbi Hirsch and Michele Krieg Bauer on the bestselling book by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio, “The Undocumented Americans.” We hope you will read this book and join what promises to be a lively discussion on Wednesday, June 16. The second event, a discussion of the documentary, *Social Dilemma*, available through Netflix, will be in the fall. The movie clarifies how social media has become such a powerful influence in spreading conspiracy theories and “fake news,” especially among youth.

We then discussed ongoing and potential new initiatives. These include: Action Alert focused on doing outreach to legislators on critical issues, Voter Suppression and Creating a Religious Action Center in MA which will promote state-wide coordination of social justice issues.

Many attendees expressed interest in working on Voter Suppression. Debbie Harris ([witchdeb@gmail.com](mailto:witchdeb@gmail.com)) and Joan Brotman ([joanbrotman@att.net](mailto:joanbrotman@att.net)) have volunteered to co-chair the pressing work to be done on voter suppression. Please contact them if you are interested in getting involved.

On March 23-24 the Religious Action Center (RAC), Reform Judaism’s advocacy for social justice held two Zoom webinars focused on selecting its major 2021 focus. It was wonderful to see so many Hevreh members in attendance. The two issues being considered were voter suppression and reparations. A spokesperson for each outlined why the issue was important and then those in attendance (about 800 from across the country) were assigned to a breakout discussion group to choose their priority. We were told that the input from the two Zoom sessions would be tallied and we would be notified in early April as to which issue was chosen.

The RAC sees a vital component of racial justice work as developing our “awareness of our own behaviors, practices and policies through the lens of racial equity, diversity, and inclusion and to outwardly pursue targeted, strategic advocacy to begin changing laws and policies that create a more just and equitable society for all.” A Zoom webinar was held on April 28, beginning this exploration.

To learn more about the RAC’s advocacy, go to <https://rac.org/>

Carol Noble and Michele Krieg Bauer  
*Social Justice In Action Co-Chairs*

**By the time** you are all reading this, spring will be here and we will have had a lovely Rosh Chodesh event on April 21, with Julie Gale teaching a Zoom cooking class for us. We will have learned to make Tzibbole Pletzels, from her bubbe’s recipe. I’m sure we will have had a great time doing this, despite the fact that we will all wish that we could have done it in her teaching kitchen.

On Wednesday, May 12 at 7:30 pm Carol Noble and I will facilitate an ongoing discussion, following the very interesting and insightful ideas that Betsy Stone brought to us during her Sunday Scholar in Residence talk. It will be a continuation of talking about what we have learned during COVID, what has been positive and what negative, what losses we endured, etc. If you would like to join us, please RSVP to Michele Krieg Bauer at [talktome8888@gmail.com](mailto:talktome8888@gmail.com) by May 7. A Zoom link will be sent to you close to the date of the meeting.

We have not planned the next event yet... hoping that maybe we can do something in person. Emails will be sent out in late May for what comes next.

Hope to see you all soon.

Michele Krieg Bauer  
*Chair of Rosh Chodesh*

## SAVE THE DATE: TOUR DE BERKSHIRES

**Sunday, July 11**

**A day-long ride from Vermont to Connecticut.**

Join with other Hevreh bike riders for an incredible one-day journey down the length of Berkshire County. On this fun-ride we’ll start the day with our rear tire in Vermont, and end with our front tire in Connecticut. If you are a long-distance rider, or this is a challenge you would like to take on, we would love you to join in the fun!

COVID precautions will be taken.

More information forthcoming. If you’re interested in helping arrange the day, please reach out to Rabbi Neil Hirsch at [nhirsch@hevreh.org](mailto:nhirsch@hevreh.org).

## CREATIVE BEIT MIDRASH

Release your spiritual creativity with Creative Beit Midrash, meeting every other Saturday from 8:30 am-9:45 am.

MAY 8 & 22, JUNE 5 & 19

### My Noise Is Not Your Noise

Noise it is everywhere — I hear it - I feel it!  
It permeates my every pore — it hurts  
Then I think of noise that I do not hear as noise  
My dog incessantly barking — a woodpecker pecking on my house  
A baby's cry; its mother's desperate voice trying to bring quiet  
And I understand that what is noise to me  
Is perhaps sounds of comfort to you...

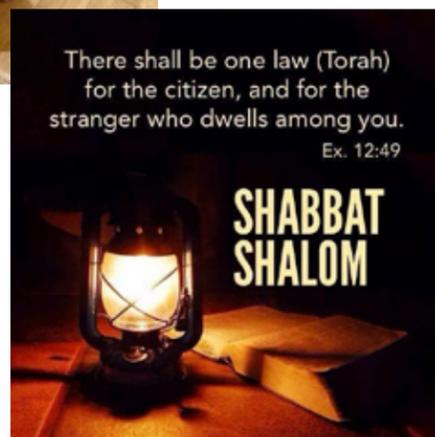
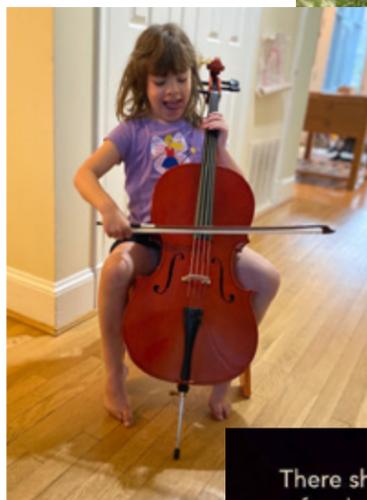
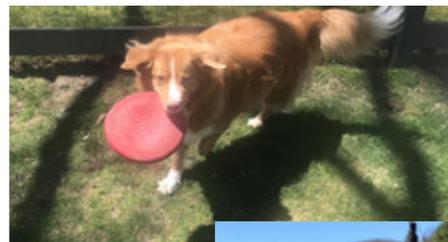
I sit with others, yet each alone — meditating, lost in oneself  
A soft, mesmerizing voice guides us  
I float into a spiritual paradise, lost in thought  
And then, harshly, this magic moment shatters  
Jarring sounds fill my being — jangling, banging  
Discordant chimes persist, chilling my body and soul  
My eyes open, I am back in the now!!!!

The chimes keep jingling, clanging, dinging  
I look around. Except for the cacophony of the chimes  
There is nothing but meditative silence  
All those around me are absorbed in their inner selves  
I am startled — what am I hearing that you are not?  
And I ask, are these sounds comforting to you my friends  
Are they not, also an intrusion on your being?

I observe, slowly beginning to appreciate  
Noise is a synonym for life! It is so simple!  
YOUR NOISE IS NOT MY NOISE — what irks me, brings you joy  
No two beings are alike — no two sounds are heard the same  
We need to listen — to embrace the other's noise  
To learn to tolerate that which we find to be strident  
To blend our noises into one enchanting harmony...  
A harmony that brings Shalom —Peace — to you, to me

Written February 2021

Jadwiga Brown



## LUNCH N LEARN

### LUNCH AND LEARN WITH RABBI GORDON

Wednesdays 11:45 am-1 pm

6 sessions || May 5-June 9

Join Rabbi Gordon on the patio at Hevreh (weather permitting) or via Zoom for a six week exploration of liturgy through the eyes of both classical and contemporary commentators. We'll use Mishkan T'filah as our "textbook," so if you do not have a copy at home, please arrange to pick one up through the Hevreh office. Each week we'll explore a different prayer/rubric of prayers and uncover both its traditional roots and modern implications.

### SHAVUOT LUNCH AND LEARN: FIVE BOOKS, FIVE FACES OF TORAH

Monday, May 17 11:45 am-1 pm

Outdoors on the patio at Hevreh, weather and Covid permitting!

Join Rabbi Gordon for a festival celebration of Z'man Torateinu, as we celebrate Torah in all its forms on the holiday of Shavuot. Shavuot invites us to celebrate all that is revealed to us through Torah, and this year, we will make our way from Bereshit to Devarim, engaging with five facets of Torah that are revealed in each book. We invite you to bring your favorite Torah text to share as part of our introductions.

Social distancing and mask protocols will be observed.

## special shabbatot

### TEACHER APPRECIATION AND FAREWELL TO JODIE FRIEDMAN

Special Kabbalat Shabbat Service: May 7 at 6 pm

Please join us for a special Shabbat service as we celebrate our Religious School faculty and madrikhim, and say l'hitraot to Jodie Friedman. Religious School families are invited to make a suggested donation of \$18 per student to Hevreh with a memo for "Teacher appreciation" so that we can celebrate our faculty with gifts of appreciation.

### CONFIRMATION SHABBAT

Special Kabbalat Shabbat Service: May 14 at 6 pm

Join our Confirmation Class for a special Shabbat service as we mark the end of another year of learning, and celebrate with senior Daniel Munch as he graduates from high school and concludes his religious education at Hevreh.

### FAREWELL TO STUDENT CANTOR GABE SNYDER

Special Kabbalat Shabbat Service: June 8 at 6 pm

Join Hevreh as we say l'hitraot (see you later) and todah rabah (thank you) to Gabe Snyder, who has served as Hevreh's cantorial intern for the past two years. We were so lucky to have student Cantor Gabe with us in person, as well as accompanying our services over Zoom for the last year, and hope you'll come to wish him well as he continues on his path toward Cantor.

# new member spotlight

## WHY BEGINNER'S HEBREW IS THE BEST LEARNING EXPERIENCE EVER

Ellen Herman

Having joined Hevreh last summer, I read the email announcements with eagerness—wondering how could I get engaged in the middle of a pandemic when I know very few members?

Hebrew class... Haven't taken one of those since college and of course years of religious school—when your parents made you go to Hebrew school “because Susan is going.”

The difference now is that I wanted to learn. An added benefit is that I was able to meet lots of new people who also wanted to learn. People often ask me what I do for fun—what may sound strange to some is I have fun learning and working.

Our learned teacher, Rabbi Hirsch, makes it so meaningful and so much fun. He not only helps us learn the letters and the words—yet more importantly—the meaning. He has so much patience. I am sensing that teaching adults is not much different than teaching children. We are all somebody's children. An added benefit is that we formed study groups. Sharon Hotchkiss said, “practicing in smaller study groups in between classes was very helpful.” We all agree with that.

Cheryl Binder said that she too “really felt a sense of accomplishment learning Hebrew with Rabbi Hirsch and this group. During quarantine I was able to spend more time studying and therefore saw real improvement. Hevreh is an important community in my life and I look forward to worshipping in person and seeing all my friends and classmates soon.”

In addition to Hebrew class, I started going to Shabbat services—and I can now read the prayers! Leading the Shabbat Service on February 19 was a highlight for the class. If you had told me a year ago that I would be part of a class leading the service on Shabbat—I never would have believed it. What talent; some were singing, others chanting, and one brave member played the piano.

Now we are learning grammar. Well I never had a good teacher of English—at least that was my excuse. So, I am even learning English grammar from learning Hebrew grammar. According to Larry Frankel, “by studying Hebrew, it allows me to connect in a more meaningful way with our prayers.” “I feel more connected to Hevreh,” said Rebecca Wolin, “and my spiritual side as I am now learning a new language that has meaning to me.” Sharon and Martin Lewis said, “Hebrew class gets our brains working. It gives us an hour to enjoy the banter between the students that study together and listen to Rabbi Hirsch share some very amusing stories.”

Learning Hebrew is more than just learning a language, the prayers I memorized when I was a kid now have real meaning. Some of us that haven't already been Bas or Bar Mitzvah are considering B'nai Mitzvah. We talk about taking a trip to Israel together—yet first let's meet in person. Another form of engagement for me is that I became involved with the leadership and with others we created the Governance Committee. So many opportunities and so many friends. Much to do, people to meet, relationships to build and learning to do. All because of Hevreh. I can't wait to meet you all in person.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ACTION BOOK READ

*The Undocumented Americans*, by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio

Wednesday, June 16 at 7:30 PM

In her recent critically acclaimed book describing the experience of undocumented Americans, Karla Cornejo Villavicencio traces through the various challenges and opportunities that many within our community face. As a community who knows the soul of the stranger, and is committed to immigrant justice, join with others from the Social Justice in Action committee for an exploration of this beautiful and challenging book.

This session will be held virtually, via Zoom. More details to come.

# UPCOMING B'NOT MITZVAH

Eliza Pratt

June 5, 2021

Hello, my name is Eliza Pratt. I live in Great Barrington with my parents, brother, and two rescue pets Norie and Nellie. I go to W.E.B. Dubois Middle School and have been learning at Hevreh since I was three years old. When I am not at school, I spend my time dancing at Berkshire Pulse. My favorite dance forms are ballet, jazz and modern. My Torah portion is Shilach, in it the Jewish people learn that they will remain homeless in the desert and only their children will enter the promised land. My mitzvah project ties into this theme of homelessness, as I will be helping the homeless pets of Berkshire County this summer. I look forward to becoming a full member of the community through the Bat Mitzvah process and to celebrating this event with all of you.



Ava Mozian

June 19, 2021

My name is Ava Mozian and I will become a Bat Mitzvah on June 19th 2021. I live in Lenox with my parents and my 11 year old brother Max. I am currently in 7th grade at Lenox Memorial Middle and High School. I enjoy baking and spending time with my dog Pepper.

Having adopted Pepper during the pandemic, I have become aware of the difficulty many families have providing food for their pets during these difficult economic times. For my Mitzvah Project, I will be raising money for the Berkshire Humane Society to provide food for pets whose owners do not have the financial means to provide them food.

On my Bat Mitzvah, I will be chanting verses from Parshat Chukat. This portion of the Torah addresses themes of rebellion and exclusion—themes that are especially meaningful and resonant in today's world. Becoming a Bat Mitzvah during the pandemic has presented significant challenges, but I look forward to celebrating it with my family.

Sadie Honig-Briggs

June 26, 2021

Hi, I'm Sadie Honig-Briggs, I'm 13 and I'll be getting bat mitzvah'd in June of this year. You might know me as 'the girl who carries a stuffed cat on her shoulder'. I live in Tyringham, a tiny town just off of Lee with my parents, Rebecca and Josh, my little brother, Miles and sister, Noa, and our dog, cat, guinea pigs, lizards and whatever other animals we can find in the backyard. I'm a seventh grader at W.E.B. Du Bois Middle School. I love to read...all the time, and write mediocre novels that I never finish. You might be able to find me taking a long walk with my dog after school, hanging out with my siblings, or watching movies on our porch with my friends in 30 degree weather. My Torah portion, Parashat Balak, is about Bilam, Balak, a talking donkey, and about how humans can be blind to the issues, and people around them. I'm trying to help erase one of these instances of blindness with my mitzvah project. People can be blind to how differences are beautiful, so I am finding books for young children to teenagers that have diverse protagonists, whether that diversity is in their gender, skin color, sexuality, or religion. I hope some of you will help me with it when the time comes! To me, becoming bat mitzvah'd is especially important, because women have had to fight hard to be able to be recognized in the Jewish community. I'm so excited to become a part of our small Hevreh community, and larger Jewish community when I stand at the bima this summer.





### ECC Update

"Inch by inch, row by row  
Gonna make this garden grow  
All it takes is a rake and a hoe  
And a piece of fertile ground"  
(The Garden Song)

With winter truly behind us, we are embracing the warm weather and all that it encompasses. Children in all the classrooms are exploring the changes in the landscape, noticing buds, shoots, and blossoms. Everyone is learning about how plants grow, and many are taking on the planting and caring of the seeds. After sprinkling parsley seeds in the dirt, we've heard, "How come I don't see anything?" Waiting is not easy.

Painted hand and footprints have grown into a vegetable garden in the infant room. Other classes grew actual seeds—placing sugar snap peas in clear plastic bags along with moist cotton balls to encourage them to sprout. The children observed the roots growing before the seedlings were transplanted into soil. Morning meeting had the children envisioning what fruits and vegetables we could grow. A dandelion found its home just outside one classroom threshold, providing an opportunity to try and figure out how such a seed found a home there.

Nourishment, time, changes, growth—it's childhood in a nutshell and we get to experience it in a myriad of ways. Planting and watering, observing and drawing, digging and climbing, listening to non-fiction books about plants and reading the pictures of other stories. A Tiny Seed by Eric Carle, Tops and Bottoms by Janet Stevens, and The Carrot Seed by Ruth Krauss are just several of the many read-alouds. The planting theme is integrated into many areas of the classroom including a gardening nursery in dramatic play, flower part matching games, and multiple media artwork.

We've also noticed the changes in our animal friends—the woodpecker pecking, squirrels scurrying, and bugs buzzing. Soon the children will observe caterpillars transform into butterflies in the classroom and then release them to enjoy the Hevreh grounds. Through movement and imaginations, we too can journey from creeping caterpillar to fluttering butterfly.

And of course, a gardening discussion would not be complete without a reference to the children themselves. Their families have planted well and we as educators work to provide the "fertile ground", so the children have what they need to blossom. We feel blessed to see them expand physically and emotionally. At Hevreh we are growing the landscape of the future.

L'shalom,

Ellen Marcus  
ECC Director



# RELIGIOUS SCHOOL NEWS

## May Calendar At A Glance

**May 1: Final Yachad Shabbat (10am on zoom)**  
Join student cantor Gabe Snyder and Rabbi Gordon for the final Yachad Shabbat of our school year, where we'll offer a special blessing to our 5781 B'nai Mitzvah class.

**B'nai Mitzvah Class Get Together** (in person at Hevreh, 6-8 pm)

**May 2: No School**

**May 7: Teacher Appreciation & Farewell to Jodie Friedman Shabbat** (6 pm on Zoom)

**May 8: Confirmation Class Get Together** (in person at Hevreh, 6-8 pm)

**May 9: Religious School Scavenger Hunt at Hevreh** (10-11:30 am)  
Including K'tanim, Bonim, and Tzofim

**May 14: Confirmation Shabbat** (6 pm on Zoom)

**May 16: Last Day of Religious School Celebration at Hevreh** (10-11:30 am)  
Including Tiny Talmidim, K'tanim, Bonim, and Tzofim

### Dear Religious School Families,

This year has been truly unique: unlike any that we could have ever dreamed of. The challenges were real, and we do not underestimate the work it took for you and your family to commit to being a part of our learning community this year. So first, a note of gratitude to each one of you, who found the Zoom links, charged the devices on Saturday nights, read the teacher emails and gathered the markers and glue sticks, cheered your kids on to settle in for another morning of online learning, cooked alongside us on Chanukah and Passover, drove through with food donations to drop off, and sang and prayed along with us from your couches. Thank you for making this community richer by your presence.

For all of the challenges and limitations of this year, I have no doubt that there were also moments of real joy and

connection, as well as significant learning that took place. A debt of gratitude is owed to our faculty: Terri Sash, Patty Fire, Dave Halley, Avi Dresner, and Rob Fire. Each week, our teachers stretched their creativity, always showing up for their students with a warm smile. Our madrikhim ensured that each online gathering was lively and engaging for our students, and so we thank: Shira Sawyer, Ruby Citrin, Mia Cohen, Makayla Wax, Daniel Munch, Aliza Munch, Ben Gross, Evie Grossman, Aria Grossman, Aidan Burns, Levi Citrin, and Eden Zuckerman-Hood.

Finally, this year brings a bittersweet ending to our time with Jodie Friedman, who has served as our Religious School Program Coordinator since 2017. On a personal note, I will miss working alongside Jodie, and miss her humor, flexibility, and passion for this work. Our community has been blessed by her

experience and commitment to Jewish education, and we wish her only the very best in her studies in the years to come.

As always we are grateful to the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for their significant support of our Religious School program. **Did you know that the JFB contributes a third of the total cost of educating each student to us each year?** We hope that as we mark the end of another school year, you'll consider a contribution of any size to the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires in return.

We look forward to sharing more about plans for the 2021-2022 school year soon!

Until then, we look forward to celebrating with you through the month ahead as we wrap up this year together.

Warmly,  
Rabbi Jodie Gordon

**Tot Shabbat**  
Monthly on Saturdays, 9am

**MAY 8 AND JUNE 12**  
In person at Hevreh, weather-permitting.

All are welcome to sing and dance their way into Shabbat with your friends from Hevreh! Our Shabbat morning experience is a terrific way to center your family for a day of rest and special time together. Join the rabbis, and student cantor Gabe Snyder for a lively Shabbat experience each month, and as always- all are welcome.

## DONATIONS

### BREAKING BREAD KITCHEN

The LePatner family  
*In honor of Patty Fire*  
 Elaine Friedman  
*In memory of Arthur Nechempkin*

### BUILDING PRESERVATION FUND

Bette & Philip Gladstone  
*In memory of Gussie & Harry Adler*  
 Steven & Joyce Pyenson  
*In memory of David Hanna*  
*In memory of Alan Morgenstein*  
*In memory of Elaine Baum*  
*In memory of Robert Drucker*  
*Wishing a speedy recovery to Robert Landau*  
 Suzanne & Tom Sawyer  
*In memory of Dora & Charles Gladstone*

### CARING COMMUNITY

Bethany & Adam Baron  
*In memory of Teddy Herbst*  
 Lisa Sloane & Sally Nason  
*In memory of Bob Nason*  
 Rebecca Wolin  
*In memory of Susan Booth's father*  
 Marty & Shelley Rolf  
*In memory of Ron Meyers*  
*In memory of Herb Kantor's father, Martin Kantor*

### EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER FUND

Rebecca Wolin  
*In memory of Susan Booth's father*

### GENERAL FUND

Sharon Hotchkiss  
*In memory of Alan Morganstein*  
 Marion Adler  
*In memory of Phyllis Weiss*  
 Myrna Hammerling  
*In memory of Herb Kantor's father, Martin Kantor*  
 Denyse & Harold Adler  
*In memory of Lorna Strassler*

### MUSIC FUND

Lois & Michael Storch  
*In memory of Muriel Storch*

### RABBI GORDON'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Ben & Elaine Silberstein  
*In memory of Herb Kantor's father, Martin Kantor*  
 Lois & Michael Storch  
*In memory of Robert Storch*

### RABBI HIRSCH'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Rebecca Wolin  
 David Strassler  
 Lois & Michael Storch  
*In memory of Sol Storch*

### RELIGIOUS SCHOOL FUND

Deborah Berkman & Benjamin Rosenblum

### SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

Lisa Sloane & Sally Nason  
*In memory of Bob Nason*

*If you recently made a donation to a fund at Hevreh and did not see it here, it will be included in the next edition of Life at Hevreh.*

## SIMCHOT & SORROWS

### SIMCHOT

#### A huge Mazel Tov goes out to...

Rik and Jan Kabel on their new home.  
 Lisa Berman on the bat mitzvah of her granddaughter.  
 Josh Blank and Emily Rosenberg on the birth of their daughter, Olivia Wren Rose-Blank.  
 Rebecca Hyman on the birth of her son.  
 Amy Lindner-Lesser on her retirement and end of her tenure as the President of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires.  
 Lisa Frankel on her appointment as the incoming President of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires.

### SORROWS

#### Our heartfelt Condolences go out to...

Lynn Meyers on the passing of her brother, Ron.  
 Farrah, Ben, Makayla, and Effie on the passing of their mother, mother-in-law, and grandmother, Ilisa Sulner.  
 Stacey Kay on the passing of her husband, Phillip Wallach.  
 Sara Koffman on the passing of her daughter, Deb.  
 Toby Axelrod on the passing of her mother, Peggy Axelrod.  
 David and Alan Strassler on the passing of their wife and mother, Lorna Strassler.  
 Herb Kantor on the passing of his father, Martin Kantor.

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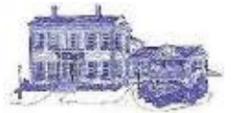
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# SUPER TZEDAKAH WEEK

2021 Community Campaign Kickoff - May 23-28

## MAKE YOUR PLEDGE TODAY!

Your gift to the Jewish Federation's 2021 Community Campaign – whatever it is you can give – will help bring dignity and care to the vulnerable and elderly, build and strengthen the Jewish identity of our children and young adults, support vital community programs, and create meaningful Jewish life across the Berkshires and beyond.



**Three easy ways to make a gift:**

- Respond to the solicitation sent to your home.
- Pledge or donate online at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org).
- Call Federation at (413) 442-4360, ext. 10 or email [federation@jewishberkshires.org](mailto:federation@jewishberkshires.org) and they will record your pledge and send you a confirmation.

Thank you for making a difference!

**Dignity Drive – Combat Feminine Hygiene & Incontinence Poverty**

Bring dignity to a neighbor in need by dropping off new packaged menstrual and incontinence products at the following locations between May 1-28 to be distributed to local food banks and social service organizations.

- The Co-op Market, Great Barrington
- Concepts of Art, Lenox
- Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, Pittsfield
- Williams College Bookstore, Williamstown



**Get the Scoop... Jewish Community Day  
High Lawn Farm, Sunday, May 23 from 1-3 p.m.**

Enjoy free homemade ice cream and fun for ages 0-99! Explore the farm, meet the cows, check out the artisanal cheese shop and learn the history of this Berkshire gem all in a socially distanced outdoor setting. PJ Library story time, farm craft, and hula hoop fun for the young and young at heart. Rain Date June 6.

Register for these events at [jewishberkshires.org](http://jewishberkshires.org)

**Mitzvah Madness LIVE! May 23 at 5 p.m.**

Grab the kids and grandkids to explore all the ways they can make the world a better place. This virtual but interactive program with *mainstages* theater will stretch their imaginations, and get their bodies moving. PJ Library families will receive an at home mitzvah project as well!





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**SAVE THE DATE:**  
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**Wednesday, June 2 at 7 pm**

More details to come.