



PSJC Newsletter



Fall 2024/5785

From Rabbi Carie



Recently, I found myself sitting on the stoop of PSJC, enjoying the quiet of these last weeks of summer and awaiting the arrival of Lior, our new *Shlichah*, and *Shinshiniyot*, Ella and Amit. As I sat there, I looked to the corner of the building and saw the engraved cornerstone which reminds us all that these walls have housed our community for nearly 100 years now.

Inspired by movies of the same name, I wondered: "If these walls could talk" what stories would they tell? Stories of those who dared to build this center for Jewish life in a then-quiet, not-so-Jewish corner of Brooklyn and place that stone there...stories of the generations who created not only this structure, but the community within, and then recreated it once more in the 80s. Imagine what these walls have seen: the celebrations, the loss, the music, the joy, the tears of a century, the struggles to define who we would be as a community, the conversations across difference...

Looking back on this year that is drawing to a close, I can imagine that if these walls could talk, they would no doubt tell remarkable stories about the joy of last *Rosh Hashanah*, the ecstasy of those last moments of *Yom Kippur*, the pleasure of sitting with friends and strangers alike in the open walls of the *Sukkah*, the delight we felt tasting Israeli wine with Elad, our *Shaliach*, during *Sukkot*.

The walls would also speak of the shock, the horror of that *Shabbat* morning, as news of the horrific attack of October 7th reached our community. These walls witnessed so much pain, shock, confusion, frustration, fear, and despair this year. They saw the many processing circles, the hugs, the security, the programming, the powerful conversations with *Resetting the Table* and at other moments when people stepped forward with bravery, compassion and a willingness to hear each other. They heard ***Acheinu*** (a prayer for the return of hostages), they bore witness as we as a community struggled to make sense of a different reality for Israel, for American Jews, for our world as a whole.

The walls have also seen us figure out how to celebrate *simchas* and holidays throughout this year of conflict and challenge, and how to try to navigate difference within our community. At PSJC, we are committed to the work of balancing pain and joy, fear and hope, and above all, of trying to create a space where all can know that they belong.

This summer, I spent a month studying at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, and one of my regular practices that month was to sit under a very old olive tree overlooking the walls of the old city of Jerusalem, at a place where the separation wall was also quite visible. And I would ask this same question about "If these walls could talk." They have seen so much — over millennia or just decades — they have been witness to so much. What wisdom might they share with me, about how to make it through these incredibly difficult days? How to find the hope that must exist? How to envision a new future? I left Jerusalem still listening for those answers. And now I turn back to our home here on 14th Street and 8th Avenue in Brooklyn, and I am listening to our century-old walls, and I am wondering what they will see in the year to come, in the next century. What stories will they tell about this building, about this new yard, and above all about this community, about the strong and diverse and caring people who come together in this space, to sing, to pray, to learn, to search, to meditate, to shmooze and eat, and engage with one another?

As the year 5785 begins, I pray that each one of us will step forward with passion and dedication, with openness and understanding, with a willingness to listen to others and to oneself, so that the story of this space and all within it will be one of goodness and connection, of opportunity and hope for us and for all who enter for today and for the next hundred years.

Shanah Tovah!





From Co-Presidents Martha Harrison and Elizabeth Wollman



*Let dreamers dream
What worlds they please
Those Edens can't be found.
The sweetest flowers,
The fairest trees
Are grown in solid ground.*

*We're neither pure, nor wise, nor good
We'll do the best we know.
We'll build our house and chop our wood
And make our garden grow.*

—Lillian Hellman and Leonard Bernstein, *Candide*

At the end of Voltaire's 1759 satire *Candide*, the title character and his cohort have survived countless hardships borne of political violence, religious conflict, disease and natural disaster. Disillusioned by a lifelong education insisting that his was always the best of all possible worlds, Candide resolves instead to live a peaceful, quiet life focused on his immediate surroundings: his fellow travelers, his little corner of the universe, his own garden.

Alas, Voltaire was easily as antisemitic as your average Gentile Enlightenment philosopher, but the moral of *Candide* jibes strongly enough with Jewish values that the Jewish American artists Bernstein and Hellman were inspired to adapt the novella into a 1956 operetta that's peppered throughout with winking references to Yiddishisms, Jewish life, and Diasporic culture. The stirring choral finale cited above is similar to a saying by the Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Schneerson: repairing a broken world demands more wisdom, effort and creativity than does merely inheriting one and hoping for the best. After all, the world we've been given is imperfect, but G-d has empowered us with tools we can use to create our own Edens.

We know that these last few years have been exceptionally difficult, and that stressors related to the state of the world, the Israel/Hamas war abroad

and the sociopolitical environment at home continue to weigh very heavily. But we also know that it's time for this community to buckle down, join together, generate joy...and tend our gardens.

Like Voltaire, Bernstein and Hellman, we're referring to gardens both literally and figuratively. First, the literal one: Thanks to the skill, foresight and energy of PSJC's Fundraising and Yard Committees, and to the enthusiasm of PSJC members, we've raised the funds required to finally renovate our yard! We didn't draw a single cent from PSJC's operating expenses; this was, in fact, a very strict condition of the project. We are excited to break ground, and to come together as a *shul* this fall to help make our literal garden grow.

Now to the figurative garden: our building, which turns 100 years old in 2025. This most auspicious birthday corresponds with Rabbi Carie's 25th year of leadership at PSJC and Rabbi Hayley's first full year as Associate Rabbi.

It may seem crass to mention money, but we'll be mentioning it a great deal in the coming year because it is, unfortunately, impossible to tend literal or figurative gardens without it. Maintaining the health of any congregation has become increasingly challenging and expensive. Absolutely everything — from credit card fees to zoom and internet subscriptions to repairs and maintenance to security we now rely on — costs much more than it did before the pandemic, and PSJC hasn't done much fundraising to ensure its own future for many years. We need, quite urgently, to get back to business: we need your help and support to protect and cultivate our own little patch of land.

The health of our *shul* and the promise of its future rely almost entirely on PSJC's members. We hope we can together face the coming year with hope and generosity.

The board will soon be unveiling news about the 100 Years Project, which will celebrate the history of our *shul* and allow us to rejoice in the community we've built and perpetuated, honor our leaders and rebuild our dwindling coffers. Keep an eye out for announcements! Please pitch ideas for events related to the *shul's* centennial to the 100 Years Project Committee. If you are able, dig deep or contribute often.



Remember: Jewish joy is vital, even in — especially in — the most foreboding of times. Please join us in celebration, and please give back to PSJC so it can flourish well into the next century. Join us as we let in more sun, cultivate our little corner of the universe — and make our garden grow.

Thank you, and *Shana Tova*.

From Hayley Goldstein Associate Rabbi



If you have a trained eye, Brooklyn is full of medicine. Beyond the blaring sirens, you will find linden trees in late spring that fill the air with their intoxicating scent. Besides providing sweet-smelling air, linden is also known for soothing anxiety, summer colds and fevers. Gripping the gate of the Ft.

Hamilton entrance to Greenwood Cemetery are the tendrils of my favorite plant, passionflower, showing off its otherworldly flowers that bloom for only one day. The wild, fringe-like petals unfurl in the morning and by nightfall, they've already begun to wilt. The flowers, tendrils, and leaves can help with insomnia, anxiety, and muscle spasms. If you walk through the streets of the South Slope, you will find towering mullein in people's front yards. With its fuzzy soft leaves and tall, slender stalk of bright yellow flowers, mullein supports lung health, can soothe a chest cold or cough, and can be an emotional support in times of grief.

The list keeps growing as I wander the streets, parks, and cemeteries: deep purple elderberries, ecstatic-looking echinacea flowers, lush silvery-green mugwort. These plants are perfectly situated to ease the stresses that seem to multiply in our often chaotic borough, almost as if the Divine knows where they are needed most.

In this year post-October 7th, my eye has been searching for hope, healing, and medicine. I have been looking for what can help us get through this time, what light might be available around us that we may not be able to see. When I look around the garden that is PSJC, I see medicine in the form of laughter at *kiddush*, deep *kavannah* as we continue to pray for an end to this war and the return of our hostages. I see medicine in the form of our 20s and 30s *Shabbat* dinners on Friday nights and our

schmoozes in the park on Saturday evenings, through book clubs and *Mah Jong* and sandwich making and advanced *Talmud* and so much more. Each gathering, each moment of connection, is a thread in the fabric of our community, weaving together a tapestry of support, resilience, and hope, and creating sacred spaces where healing and transformation can take place.

This past year since I started at PSJC, I have been grateful to grow our 20's and 30's constituency, hosting regular events like *Shabbat* games in the park, potlucks at my home, a 20's and 30's book club, Fourth of July fireworks at Coney Island, and more. Now that we have a core group, I feel so inspired by the community we could continue to create together. In this past year, I've watched friendships blossom, seen individuals step into leadership roles, and felt the growing sense of camaraderie that strengthens the foundation of what we are building.

This upcoming year, my personal goal is to increase the medicine — the healing potential — within the PSJC community. To continue monthly Alternative services on *Shabbat* morning to help us increase our collective *kavannah*, to teach *Talmud* in the SVARA style (which is radically inclusive, celebratory, and just plain fun), to keep growing our 20's and 30's cohort and see what leaders want to be supported to step up, to sing and learn over *seudat shlishit* together as we say goodbye to the last glimmers of *Shabbat*, and so much more. In a moment where our world feels ever so fragmented, these intentional gatherings remind us of the wholeness and light that is possible when we come together.

In this year which has felt thick from the shadow of October 7th and the ongoing war, I have been deeply grateful for the medicine this community has offered to me personally. Through your warm embrace, your willingness to sing tunes that may be new to you, your curiosity and presence. I don't know what new healing light we will discover in this upcoming year, but I know that it will be beautiful and so, so needed. As we move forward together, I am confident that the seeds we plant now will grow into something even more meaningful and transformative, offering hope and healing to all who seek it.

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As we say during this whole High Holy Day season in Psalm 27:

קִוְיָה אֶל־ה' חֲזַק וְיִאֲמָץ לְבָבְךָ וְקִוְיָה אֶל־ה'

Look to God; be strong and resolute, hope in God.

May we be blessed to find hope through looking to the Divine that is around us, in linden trees and passionflower tendrils and in laughter, prayer and *Torah*.

From Aileen Heiman Director of Education and Engagement



Summer months are spent planning ahead for the next year, hiring new teachers, writing new curriculum, spreading the word to prospective families about our programming. This summer

was no different, except that in addition to the ongoing conversations about Hebrew skills and field trips and holiday planning, we also did a deep dive into conversations and learning around Israel. The events of October 7th and subsequent war between Israel and Hamas in many ways turned the Jewish world upside down and in other ways amplified internal struggles about Zionism, Israel, and Jewish identity. At PSJC Hebrew School, our goal has always been about creating safe space for students to ask challenging questions of themselves and their community as they navigate their identity development. I have been exploring numerous frameworks for learning as a participant in The Jewish Education Project's Israel In-Depth Fellowship and one of their educator trips to Israel early this summer.

This fall we will incorporate a new integrated Israel curriculum. The framework begins with the big question: "what does it mean to have a Jewish home?" and explores aspects of the question in each grade level. First graders will look at examples of different synagogues built in Israel and around the world as part of their synagogue unit, while third graders will look at modern cities in Israel and the Middle East that overlap with Abraham's journey. As part of their history studies, fifth graders will do a deep dive into the role that longing for return to Jerusalem played in the establishment of Jewish prayer, while sixth graders will explore the role of

philanthropy and connections between Diaspora communities and Israel as part of their *tzedakah* unit. The learning is not centered on providing answers, but rather on asking each other questions about what it means to feel at home. This exploration is directly connected to our goal to incorporate social-emotional-spiritual learning (SESL) at every level of our curriculum and how answers might be found through a lens of Judaism.



Matt Eilenberg
teaching *Torah*

One of the most important components of community-based Jewish education is that none of this learning exists in a vacuum, as we are also able to then expand these conversations to parents and the synagogue membership as a whole. We will think not only about what Israel as a Jewish home might mean to each of us, but also the values that build our personal Jewish homes and how PSJC can be a home for each of our community members. This fall we kick off a new way of thinking about membership, not as belonging "to" PSJC, but rather belonging "with." We strive to make each of our members feel a sense of belonging, whether it is in services on *Shabbat*, as part of our *rodfei tzedek* work, planting in the new yard, joining the PAI book club, or an opportunity we have not even thought of yet. Membership is not transactional or unidirectional, but rather a relationship in which we want you to feel that you belong. This year we are proud to host a *Shabbat* of Welcome during *Sukkot*, taking advantage of the new sacred green space we are creating in our yard, and we invite you and friends to join us to learn more about all the ways to get involved.



Scenes from Hebrew School



Shabbat is not the only time to find a way to connect, but it is a wonderful opportunity to take a break from the weekly routine and try something new. We continue this year to partner with PJ Library on a series of programs for families with young children, including pop-up playground, Tot *Shabbats*, and creating a new “prayground” space in the back of our sanctuary after the High Holy Days. In addition to our main *Shabbat* services, do not forget about *Lev Tahor*, *Shabbat Kulanu*, *Kabbalat Shabbat Kulanu*, alternative *Shacharit* with Rabbi Hayley and more! Check the calendar for our new monthly sessions of *Shabbat Glee Club* with Amie, a chance for kids of all ages (or grownups!) to learn a new song, practice some harmonies and hand motions, and then sing from the *bima* in the main sanctuary. Our *Shinshinit*, Ella, will host a monthly *Chug Ivrit* (Hebrew club) for kids to play games, learn new Modern Hebrew words, and enjoy special snacks!



Scoops on the Stoop!

Whether you are new to PSJC or have been here for years, I'd love to meet you for a cup of coffee and learn more about how you can belong with us! *Shana tova u'metukah*, may you have a sweet and happy new year and may it be one of health, happiness, and peace for all of us.



More scenes from Hebrew School

From Cantor Judy Ribnick



Shalom! A friend who works as an opera coach once made a helpful suggestion when I told him that I was going to an opera I hadn't seen before. He advised that I should listen to the music beforehand and “become friends” with it,

rather than meet it as a stranger at the performance.

I want to pass on the same advice and offer an accessible tool to help us deepen our experience of the *Yamim Noraim* (Days of Awe) as individuals and as a community: the PSJC High Holy Days Music site. This collection is found in PSJC.org under “Spiritual Life” and contains more than 100 prayers, songs and melodies that we have sung at PSJC over the years. It is a repository of the sounds that helps lift our spirits and bring our yearnings to life.

PSJC High Holy Days Music is a place to listen to melodies that are new to us, refresh our memories from previous years, and enjoy some of our “favorites.” The prayers and songs are listed in the order in which they appear during RH and YK. Not sure where to find the 3- part *Shema* chant, the *Hashiveinu* melody we open and close the *Yamim Noraim* with, the *Muncasz Chasidic B'Rosh Hashanah* or the *Kaddish Chasidi*? You'll find them in the “Alphabetical Listing” section.

In the site, you'll find prayers and songs that span generations, geography, and genres of Jewish life: Settings of Medieval piyutim (religious poems); *Chassidic* melodies from *different* sects, including some from communities that were almost decimated in the *Shoah*; *Mizrachi*, *Sephardic*, Spanish-Portuguese; *Ashkenazic*; *Yiddish*; Israeli, American, Canadian, South American, Sufi, folk and more. Melodies by Woody Guthrie, Leonard Cohen, Debbie Friedman, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Shlomo Carlebach. Also find chants, rounds, Jewish renewal music, and a range of contemporary sounds from new artists, all with musical links, transliterations and translations.

Beginning in 2008, many of these recordings were made in Angela Weisl's basement, with Angela as the technician and Rabbi Carie Carter as the enthusiastic conductor, as I sang, unaccompanied, into a hand-held microphone. When Covid came, I began

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to record melodies on my iPhone at home. Over the years, I've also added audio and video links to newer melodies and settings.

I am grateful to Rabbi Carter, Angela Weisl, PSJC executive directors and office administrators and others, who provided the encouragement and support to create this site and to enhance it each year. Thank you too, to Elizabeth Schnur, who overhauled the site this summer - word by word and link by link - making it more user-friendly, accurate, and ready for the *Yamim Noraim*.

I encourage us all to explore PSJC High Holy Days Music to help greet the days ahead like a friend and not as a stranger, and to help lift and deepen our experience. I look forward to davening and being together with you.

From Stephanie Cooke PSJC Administrator



Fall is upon us, and we couldn't be more excited to share what's happening at PSJC this season! We have an excellent lineup of fall and winter programming that we're eager to share with you. Please mark your calendars for *Selichot*, *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, *Sukkot*, and more as we prepare for these meaningful High Holy Day gatherings.

We're also pleased to announce the completion of our security grant initiatives. Thanks to your support and our staff's diligent work, we've enhanced safety measures throughout the synagogue. This investment ensures our space remains secure and welcoming for all who enter.

You'll notice a space transformation when you enter through the yard entrance. This improvement enhances our congregational experience and opens up rental opportunities and allows for additional community programming. The refreshed yard space will be versatile and inviting for our members and outside events. This couldn't have been done without your generous donations and support. A big thank you to all!

I am humbled to be a part of a synagogue so passionate about its community and the world beyond. I look forward to working together as we continue to enrich our community, creating a space where everyone feels welcome and valued.

A special thank you to our wonderful maintenance team, headed by Patrick Francis, along with Giovanni, Kieran, and Tye, our volunteer extraordinaire Gregory, and our office assistant Antonia, whose contributions have made all of this possible.



The Cooke Family in Buffalo

Positive Aging Initiative (PAI) Update

PAI hasn't been spending large sums on advertising campaigns this past season, but we have been following our own platform: "Something for Everyone!" We think it's been a winning approach for our membership.

We thank Jan Orzeck, Helene Santo, and Loretta Lurie for getting PAI *Mah Jong* off the ground and adding this traditional game to our calendar. The group meets once a month at PSJC after Saturday Services and once a month on a weekday evening at a member's home. *Tai Chi* sessions continue to build balance and ease of movement for participants, and will continue in the Fall — new members are welcome!

We have offered opportunities to explore Brooklyn neighborhoods during our Walk & Talk trips, which have been led by dedicated walker Sue Herskovitz. Recent trips to Williamsburg and Red Hook have proved great social and culinary events, and will be followed up with a walk through Prospect Heights in September.

The PAI Book Club has continued to provide engaging discussions of an eclectic mix of titles nominated and voted on by its members. Recent titles have included *The Glass Hotel* by Emily St. Vincent Mandel, *Enter Ghost* by Isabella Hammad, *The Candy House* by Jennifer Egan, and *This Other Eden* by Paul Harding. The Club will discuss Barbara Kingsolver's award-winning novel *Demon Copperhead* in September, and has already determined a set of interesting titles for the 2024-25 season. Managed by members Michael Rieman and Marjorie Rothenberg, this group has developed an identity of its own while also welcoming new members.



For its continuing commitment to intellectual stimulation, we are proud of the contributions of members and guest speakers to our “Shared Wisdom” series. We have had the opportunity to learn about “The ABC’s of IPO’s” from Betsy Minkin, “The Mystery of CRYPTO” from Peter Holmes, the role played by a woman named Frances Buttwin in popularizing the stories of Sholem Aleichem in a talk on “the Unsung Heroine of Fiddler on the Roof” given by Jan Huttner, and a discussion of “Family Research” offered by long-time contributor Daniel Soyer. We even had a presentation on dealing with the loss of pets, a source of grief we don’t often hear about, given by guest speaker Ken Dolan-Del Vecchio. Michael Rieman offered a presentation on poetry that focused on the relationship between man and nature; Michael plans to continue explorations of both traditional and contemporary poetry.

Michael Rieman and Marc Weiner introduced a new program in which members get together to read plays. The first play was Oscar Wilde’s comedy *The Importance of Being Earnest*, a laugh-out-loud work. We expect that this will be the start of another winning series!



PAI Passover Sing-Along

We also had a Passover Sing-Along with music both familiar and unfamiliar (thank you, Roz Koch, for hosting). In addition, we participated in a second PAI *Shabbat*, a time when PAI members took on major roles in conducting the service — and of course sharing refreshments afterward!

We think our platform has been working, and our goal is to increase both member participation and the range of experiences we offer. Of course, like the political parties we hear about all the time, PAI is on the lookout for the “rising stars” of our membership who will continue and strengthen our offerings in the years to come. Perhaps you are one of them?

You can contact us, to learn more about PAI, to offer suggestions, and explore leadership opportunities by emailing us at: positiveaging@psjc.org.

- Michael Rieman



PAI Williamsburg walk

PAI Book Group



***Pitput* Update**

Pitput (chit-chat), our online conversation group for Hebrew speakers of varying proficiency, ably led by Michal Tamuz, returns from its summer vacation on Sunday, September 15 at 11am. The hour-long format involves a beginning and ending song — usually with contemporary music videos — that bracket a topic-based Hebrew conversation. *Pitput* welcomes new participants to join us — if you can basically communicate just well enough to get around in Israel, are extremely fluent, or even a native speaker, please join us in the conversation! Zoom information and future meeting times can be found on the calendar on the PSJC website.

- E. Schnur

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Co-Board Presidents

Martha Harrison and
Elizabeth Wollman

Rabbi Associate Rabbi

Carie Carter
Hayley Goldstein

Director of Education and Engagement

Aileen Heiman

Administrator

Stephanie Cooke

Newsletter Editor/Designer

Elizabeth Schnur

Photos courtesy of Adina Lerner and Aileen Heiman



Speaking of Israel Update

Rabbi Carter spent a month in Israel, as part of a three year “Sabbatical” program of the Shalom Hartman Institute. This program takes participants twice a year to Israel and organizes monthly Zoom sessions for the remainder of the year, all aimed at strengthening our relationship with and understanding of Israel.

On May 5 we joined with other Brownstone Brooklyn synagogues in the annual *Yom HaShoah* (Holocaust Day) commemoration, held this year at Brooklyn Heights Synagogue. One week later we participated in the annual *Yom Hazikaron* (Memorial Day) ceremony, remembering Israel’s fallen soldiers and victims of terrorism, hosted this year at Kane Street Synagogue. The speaker was Nissim Louk, father of Shani, ז”ל, who was kidnapped from the Nova Music Festival by Hamas on October 7, 2023 and later murdered while in captivity in Gaza.

On a happier note, on May 14 we joined in the community-wide celebration of *Yom Haatzmaut* (Independence Day) at the Hannah Senesh Community Day School.

The following *Shabbat*, May 18, we hosted a delegation from Sheba Medical Center, Israel’s largest medical complex and trauma and rehabilitation center. Among the speakers was a 20-year old IDF soldier who had been seriously wounded in Gaza, who shared his very difficult and moving story.

On June 10, we again joined a community-wide event at Kane Street Synagogue. Dr. Yizhar Hess, Vice Chairman of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), spoke to us about our relationship with Israel. All Jews, regardless of where they live, may vote in the WZO elections, and Dr. Hess challenged us to identify a PSJC captain to help get out the vote for the next election, scheduled to take place in 2025. For more information, contact Joel Levy.

On June 22 Aileen Haiman shared with us her recent experience in Israel on a trip organized by the Jewish Education Project. This project seeks to help Hebrew schools think more deeply about how they teach about Israel since Hamas’s terrorist attack on October 7 and the subsequent ongoing war.

Following *Shabbat* services on July 20, Tamara Haimov, a volunteer with Eran’s Angels, spoke to us about the work of that all-volunteer organization to help soldiers and all people (Jews, Druze, Chris-

tians, Bahá’í, and Muslims) who are affected by the war between Israel and Hamas and Israel and Hezbollah. Thousands of Israelis from the southern and northern border areas remain as internally displaced persons within their own country.

- Joel Levy

Return of the *Shinshinim*

We are excited to say *B'ruchim HaBaim* (welcome) to our new Brooklyn *Shlichah* (emissary), Lior Lekner, her husband Omer, and their three children, Yarden, David and Amalia. Lior is very excited to get to know PSJC and to work with us to build connections between American Jews and Israel and Israelis — particularly at this challenging time.

Lior is joined by our two Brooklyn *Shinshiniyot*, Ella and Amit. Ella will be helping in our Hebrew School and will be with us two *Shabbatot* a month, so there will be many opportunities to engage.



Lior, Ella
and Amit

Lior and Family



An Update from the *Hevra Kadisha*

The *Hevra Kadisha*, the Jewish burial society, is involved in the very important and meaningful work that occurs after someone dies, leading up to the funeral and burial. We are taught that the soul of a person goes through a process of ascent that begins when someone passes away.

Two of the primary responsibilities of the *Hevra Kadisha* are *Shmira*, guarding, or sitting with the body of the deceased, and *Tahara*, preparing the body of the deceased for burial according to Jewish ritual.

In ancient times *Shmira* involved watching over and protecting the body from physical harm until the time of burial. In modern times, *Shmira* involves reciting psalms or other relevant pieces of poetry or prose, or quietly meditating or singing while sitting with the person who has died. This is something that we do for the person who has passed away as well as to bring comfort to their family members and friends, who know that their loved one is being cared for according to Jewish wisdom and tradition.



The other important work that members of the *Hevra Kadisha* do is *Tahara*, preparing the body of the deceased according to Jewish tradition. This involves the ritual washing of the body, recitation of parts of *Shir Hashirim*, the Song of Songs, and dressing the deceased in special white garments reminiscent of the special garments the worn by the priest in the temple in Jerusalem on *Yom Kippur*.

The rituals and practice around death and mourning in Judaism are very ancient and also hold great relevance and value in today's world. They enable us to show respect to the deceased and to comfort the mourners, and they help us think about our values and how we wish to live our lives.

There is much to learn and much to give by being involved in the *Hevra Kadisha*. We invite you to learn more and to join us in this important and meaningful work.

Please reach out to us at hevra.kadisha@psjc.org for more information about the PSJC *Hevra Kadisha*.

- Eden Wofsey and Florence Hutner
Co-Chairs PSJC *Hevra Kadisha*

PSJC's Award Winning *Rodfei Tzedek* Group

PSJC *Rodfei Tzedek* group has won one of HIAS' first annual Pathways Awards for outstanding work on behalf of refugees, asylum seekers, and other forcibly displaced people. As HIAS notes, we are "At an unparalleled moment in human history with more than 120 million people forced to flee their homes...[the awardees] embodied the Jewish value of welcoming the stranger that is core to our tradition." PSJC won in the Trailblazer category, which is designated for, "the top congregations in the country who have led on unique projects, volunteer efforts, and/or emergency response to crises." Kudos to Lisa Altschuler, Laura Wolff, Rachel Danzig and the many hardworking members of *Rodfei Tzedek*. An overview of the group's work leading up to the award, follows below.

PSJC joined the HIAS Welcome Campaign many years ago and was a founding member of the Brooklyn Synagogue Coalition for Refugees in 2017. Since then, and specifically in the past year, our *Rodfei Tzedek* Committee and the congregation have taken numerous kinds of action to support refugees, including:

- ◆ In Feb 2023 and 2024, PSJC celebrated Refugee *Shabbat* featuring a relevant *dvar Torah* by Rabbinic Fellow Talia Kaplan highlighting the importance of advocacy for refugees, and presentations by speakers from the Central American Legal Assistance (CALA) and HIAS.
- ◆ At both our annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service and Hebrew School *Tzedakah* Fair in 2023 and 2024, we collected Metrocards for refugees served by HIAS's local affiliate, Commonpoint Queens.
- ◆ For the past three years PSJC Hebrew School students have showcased HIAS and collected donations at the *Tzedakah* Fairs.
- ◆ Since January of this year, PSJC has been hosting CALA pro se clinics once a month. PSJC members have been assisting asylum-seekers by working with them to fill out their asylum applications, providing snacks, and taking care of children during the clinic.
- ◆ This year and every year since 2017, the *Rodfei Tzedek* committee has run a "Letter Writing in support of Refugees" table at PSJC's MLK Day of Service, directed at designated Senators and Representatives. We have collected on average over 100 letters each year.
- ◆ During Advocacy Week in April 2024, nine PSJC members and Rabbi Carter met with Rep. Dan Goldman and two of his staff members. In April 2023 several PSJC members met with three of Rep. Goldman's staff members. In addition, Laura Wolf represented PSJC at the Advocacy Week meetings organized by the Westchester Coalition with staff of Senator Schumer and Senator Gillibrand. In 2017, and *Rodfei Tzedek* members participated in the Brooklyn Synagogue for Refugees Coalition meeting with Representative Yvette Clarke's staff.
- ◆ Rachel Danzing has represented PSJC at meetings organized by the Manhattan Synagogue Coalition and the NYC Synagogue Coalition on the Refugee and Immigration Crisis (SCRIC), including Advocacy Week meetings with Senators' Office staff.

Yasher Koach to the *Rodfei Tzedek* leadership and members! Kudos too, to the Hebrew School and many congregants who stepped up to participate in *Rodfei Tzedek* projects. We can all be proud of their amazing work.

- Adapted by E. Schnur from material submitted to HIAS by Laura Wolff and from HIAS documentation.



Update from the Yard and Fundraising Committees

Phase one of our yard beautification project is complete!

If you've been by the *shul* lately, you've seen big improvements in PSJC's outdoor space. Working with Field Form, a noted Brooklyn landscape architecture firm, our Yard Committee advanced a plan that would protect the space from flooding while transforming it into the green oasis PSJC deserves. With input from our community, we settled on a vision that would affordably serve our congregation's needs for a beautiful outdoor sanctuary for worship, learning, social gatherings and more. An inviting new yard will also serve PSJC's revenue needs by attracting more event rentals from our community and beyond.



Deep dry wells and gravel enhance yard drainage

We offer our deep appreciation to the dozens of donors whose generosity enabled the Yard Committee to complete phase one, which included design, drainage and paving. While we will seek every way to complete this work as affordably as possible, there will be more opportunities to donate trees, plants, benches and other finishing touches as the space continues to evolve.



Paving Stone Installation



Liz Wolman, Faye Penn, Carrie Sadovnik and Sharon Tepper
Prepare to break ground!

One of our goals — as well as the board's — was to complete this work in time for next year's festivities marking the 100th birthday of our building and the 25-year anniversary of Rabbi Carie's tenure at PSJC. While the garden is a glorious step forward, we have significant financial needs that will be the focus of our fundraising efforts this fall and beyond. You'll be hearing more about our plans to secure PSJC's future for the next 100 years over the holidays. We look forward to your continued support.

- Faye Penn, Fundraising Committee: Carrie Sadovnik, Yair Reiner, Nicole Shaw, Sharon Tepper and David Tepper, and the Yard Committee



Jewish Garden Thoughts



How can a person of flesh and blood follow G-d? ...G-d, from the very beginning of creation, was occupied before all else with planting, as it is written, "And first of all, the Eternal G-d planted a Garden in Eden." [Genesis 2:8] Therefore... occupy yourselves first and foremost with planting. (Leviticus Rabbah 25:3).



"Let the fields rejoice and all that is in them; let the trees of the forest sing for joy." (Psalm 96:12)



If not for the trees, human life could not exist. (Midrash Sifre 20:19)



Once Honi was walking along the road when he saw a man planting a carob tree. Honi asked, "How long before it will bear fruit? The man answered, seventy years." Honi asked, "Are you sure you will be here in seventy years to eat from the fruit?" The man replied, "I found the world filled with carob trees. Just as my ancestors planted for me, so I will plant for my children." (BT Taanit 23a)



Avodah Update

While some believe time is a flat circle, the Hebrew calendar is set up as a directed spiral. The ebbs and flows of the Hebrew calendar repeat but, ideally, we have grown and changed since our last cycle. To borrow an analogy from my current back-to-school anxiety, during the lead-up to the *Yamim Noraim* (Days of Awe), we look back to our previous marking period to see how our grades have changed in the year that passed. Were we able to improve our previous report cards by correcting mistakes from the past? While there may no longer be time to cram and improve our results for this imminent grading period, can we set ourselves up with some good study habits to help ensure future success?

At the *Avodah* committee, some things have certainly changed. This will be the first *Yamim Noraim* cycle without our intrepid leader, Angela, at the helm, though she is still heavily involved as a member of the committee and coordinator of many of the services. Please feel free and encouraged to register any compliments with Angela and others on the committee, but try to remember to lodge any complaints, *chas v'shalom* (Heaven forefend), with me this year. The *Avodah* committee endeavored, where possible, to bring new voices to the services this year. Hopefully, you will be inspired to lend your voice and talents to future iterations of the *Yamim Noraim* services.

I also want to note that some cycles seem to last much longer than the regular yearly allotment. While the intercalary *Adar Sheni* made 5784 a longer year than average, more poignantly the relativistic effects of our communal anguish over the attack on 10/7, the ongoing crisis of hostages still held by Hamas in Gaza, and the resulting war and military actions has certainly made this closing year feel interminably longer.

This October will be filled with many communal observations of the tragedy of October 7, 2023. Some will occur on the Gregorian anniversary, which this year falls between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. Other commemorations will occur on the Hebrew calendar anniversary, which is *Shmini Atzeret*. As we have done throughout 5784, the *Avodah* committee and the Rabbis are working to

provide opportunities for thoughtful commemoration of October 7th and the ongoing conflagration, both specifically at PSJC and in concert with other community-wide events. Hopefully, you will find PSJC's inaugural observances meaningful and reaffirming, but, of course, grief is unique, complicated, and deeply individualized. So, if we are not meeting your needs in this deeply challenging moment, please let me know and we will do our best to make sure the community is supported during this difficult and sensitive time.

- Eli Wolfhagen, Chair

From the Cemetery Committee

PSJC holds rights to gravesites at Beth David Cemetery (in Elmont, Long Island, near Belmont Race-track) and New Mount Carmel Cemetery (in Glendale, Queens, near the Jackie Robinson Interborough Parkway). Graves in these cemeteries, like others in and around New York City, are scarce and valuable — but members of PSJC in good standing may purchase them from PSJC at favorable prices (as of January 1, 2024, \$1,350 per standard grave in Beth David Cemetery; \$1,800 in Mt. Carmel). The Board has approved price increases to \$1,800 and \$2,700, respectively, on July 1, 2024.

The Cemetery Committee is authorized to complete the paperwork on behalf of PSJC relating to these three cemeteries. You can get more details about purchasing graves, registering deeds with the cemeteries, restrictions regarding burials, etc. by contacting the office, the Rabbi or the Committee (email: cemetery@psjc.org). The Committee works closely with other PSJC working groups regarding end-of-life issues: the *Hevra Kadisha* (*taharah*, *shmirah*, etc.); the Simple Funeral Plan (funeral and burial); the *G'mach* supporting ill members, *shiva*, supporting grieving members, etc.).

- Matthew Eilenberg



SAVE THE DATE!

Sunday, October 20th
PSJC Communal BBQ

Fantastic fleishigs and vegetarian variety. Always a yummy, fun time!

