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JUNE 2025

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Planting with Purpose:
How to practice Tikkun
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Outdoors Issue?
How about...
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The Nature Rabbi

Prayerful Creations:
Bringing Natural Art into
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Planting with Purpose: How to practice Tikkun Olam in your own yard

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The Nature Rabbi

"I truly believe that the earth is our
greatest *Mishkan*, our holy sanctuary
and divine dwelling place. More and
more, I find my own deepest spiritual
practices in nature, strolling and
engaging in nature photography."
Learn how Rabbi Julie Hilton Danan
takes inspiration from nature.



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Rabbi Julie Hilton Danan

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FEATURE:

Outdoors Issue? How about... Out-of-the-Box Issue

"In honor of the *Jewish Living Delaware* 'Outdoors' Issue, I say let's
get REALLY outdoors—let's get 'out of the box' when it comes to
addressing antisemitism! But how?!" Read on for Rabbi Michael
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Prayerful Creations: Bringing Natural Art into Religious Spaces

Read *Jewish Living Delaware's* exclusive interview with
Cantor Deborah Katchko-Gray and Dr. F. Scott Gray—
the Lewes-based artists behind Prayerful Creations,
spiritual treasures for sacred moments in life.



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*Executive Committee **New Board Appointment ***One-Year Presidential Appointee

WHY FEDERATION?

BY **CARYL MARCUS-STAPE**, Board Chair
SETH J. KATZEN, President & CEO of Jewish Federation of Delaware

The Jewish Federation of Delaware supports a community-wide network of organizations that do two things:

- **Care for people in need here at home, in Israel, and around the world and;**
- **Nurture and sustain the Jewish community today and for future generations.**

Through our network of partners and agencies, we feed, clothe, comfort, and rescue people in need. We also inspire, educate, and connect people to their Jewish identity.

For more than 90 years, the Jewish Federation of Delaware has been raising funds to meet the ongoing needs of our local and global Jewish community. Federation continues to be the single largest annual fundraising arm for our Jewish community with thousands of people providing support to a community-wide network of organizations that care for people in need and nurture and sustain the Jewish community today and for future generations.

Federation truly supports the fabric of Jewish life in our community. By working with community leadership, we ensure that the programs, institutions, and values that enrich our Jewish community remain vibrant and strong. From feeding the hungry to helping the unemployed . . . from supporting families with needs to funding Jewish education and Israel experiences . . . the Jewish Federation is focused on addressing the most pressing issues facing our community every day.

Federation provides an effective and meaningful way for you to give Jewishly. With one gift, we address causes and issues of importance to our community. If you or someone you know receives financial or scholarship assistance, enjoys PJ Library books, or has been a participant on Birthright Israel, then you know how important the Jewish Federation is to our community. And this is just a small sampling of services we help fund.

During times of crisis and natural disasters, Federation responds. The Jewish Federation system has a long track record of carrying out big bold initiatives and

mobilizing great resources during times of crisis. We helped airlift thousands of Ethiopian Jews to safety in Israel, rescued and resettled more than one million Soviet Jews, and provided lifesaving humanitarian relief in Ukraine and Venezuela as well as during the most recent natural disasters in the U.S.

The extraordinary impact of the Jewish Federation can be felt around the community and around the world. In Delaware and the Brandywine Valley, we provide opportunities for Jewish culture to flourish and are working toward reaching our broad, diverse, and growing community.

In Israel, Federation provides funds for training and educational programs to break the cycle of poverty, enrichment programs for children at risk, and support for new immigrants to integrate successfully into Israeli society.

And Federation is active in more than 70 countries around the world. Through our broad network of partners and agencies, we actively seek out and support innovative solutions in order to provide basic necessities in life, rescue people in need, and educate, inspire, and connect people to their Jewish identity.

Federation's success is dependent on building and strengthening a vibrant and caring community that is committed to improving the world.

Especially in challenging times,
We Grow Stronger TOGETHER As One.



2025 Governor's Passover Seder

Rabbi Ellen Bernhardt led Governor Matt Meyer's Seder at Buena Vista. President Joe Biden honored the group by stopping by and participating in some of the Seder.

Photos provided by Rabbi Ellen Bernhardt



Helping ReGrow Israel

In Late April, Becky Capsi, Senior VP or Global Operations & Director General for JFNA Israel, placed a dedication sticker on a tractor in Nachal Oz that was donated with the support of Jewish Federation of Delaware's Goldinger Trust. The tractor is already making a real difference on the ground, helping the farmers of Nachal Oz move forward after such challenging times.

ReGrow Israel was established by Israeli farmers, NGOs, and agricultural experts days after the October 7th attacks and is supported by global leaders. Its goal is to help rebuild and strengthen agriculture and Israel's farming communities.

Photo provided by Jewish Federations of North America



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Sunshine & Social Connection:

Outdoor Wellness at Kutz Senior Living Campus

BY **DOMINIQUE RADCLIFFE**, Director of Development and Philanthropy

With summer just around the corner, there's a renewed sense of energy and optimism at Kutz Senior Living Campus. As part of its commitment to holistic wellness, the community is embracing the season with a fresh focus on outdoor activities that nourish both body and spirit. This June we're looking at the ways Kutz and seniors in the community can make the most of the great outdoors.

Physical activity plays a critical role in healthy aging, and at Kutz, movement is more than a routine—it's a joy. Residents can often be found joining in morning stretch sessions under the brightening sky, followed by gentle walks along the shaded paths that wind through campus. These low-impact strolls aren't just about steps; they're about mindfulness, conversation, and taking in the beauty of Delaware's late spring bloom.

Weekly outdoor chair yoga and seated tai chi classes offer an inviting way to improve flexibility, balance, and focus while enjoying the fresh air. With instructors who specialize in senior wellness, residents can participate at their own pace in a supportive, welcoming environment.

This summer, Kutz is excited to launch a brand-new therapeutic gardening program designed specifically for seniors. Set in a newly built raised-bed garden area, the program will give residents a chance



Photo Credit: Kutz Senior Living Campus

to grow flowers, herbs, and vegetables regardless of mobility level.

Gardening has been shown to reduce stress, improve mood, and stimulate cognitive function. By focusing on adaptive techniques and including sensory plants like lavender, mint, and basil, the initiative will engage residents physically, mentally, and emotionally.

“Gardening taps into so many parts of wellness,” says Wandaliz Natal, Kutz’s Director of Life Enrichment. “It offers a sense of purpose, creates community, and even promotes healthy eating. We’re thrilled to be bringing this experience to our residents.”

One of the standout features of outdoor programming at Kutz is the emphasis on connection. Whether it’s weekend live music on the patio, an intergenerational picnic with visiting family members, or a peaceful Sunset Shabbat service in the courtyard, there’s always something happening to bring people together.

These shared moments are powerful. Studies show that social interaction can protect against depression, boost immune function, and even improve memory in older adults. At Kutz, outdoor events aren’t just entertainment, they’re wellness in action.


Tips for Seniors in the Broader Community

For seniors outside of Kutz who are looking to stay active and well this summer, there are plenty of simple, accessible ways to incorporate outdoor wellness into daily life:

- **Walk and Talk:** Pair a short daily walk with a phone call to a friend or family member. It's great for both the heart and the soul.
- **Porch Exercises:** Use a sturdy chair for light resistance band workouts or stretching on the porch or patio.
- **Visit a Farmers Market:** Browsing a local market gets you moving and supports healthy eating habits.

- **Join a Local Walking Group or Senior Center Class:** Many community centers and synagogues offer outdoor programming in the warmer months.
- **Nature Journaling or Birdwatching:** A simple notebook and a pair of binoculars can open a whole new way to appreciate nature from a park bench or backyard.

At Kutz Senior Living Campus, wellness isn’t confined to the indoors or the gym. Wellness lives in every garden bed, every shared laugh, and every step taken under the summer sun. As June unfolds, the community is a vibrant example of how meaningful movement, social connection, and a little sunshine can make all the difference. For seniors everywhere, let this be a reminder: it’s never too late to get outside, get involved, and grow something new.


 Kutz Senior Living Campus is a Beneficiary Agency of Jewish Federation of Delaware


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Pride Shabbat

BY **CANTOR BRONWEN MULLIN**, Congregation Beth Shalom

It's hard to believe that this is already the third year of our annual Pride Shabbat!

When Rachel Mussaf first came to me in the spring of 2023 with the idea that Congregation Beth Shalom (CBS) should publicly declare its support for the LGBTQIA community, especially in support of queer youth, I was moved to tears. As one of the first openly queer students to be ordained by the Conservative Movement and the Jewish Theological Seminary, I never felt more appreciated and respected for my full identity than at CBS.

Our synagogue has been a loving and spiritually healing home for me and so many folks who come from historically marginalized identities who are looking for a place to build meaningful friendships and a community where diversity is held as an essential strength and something to be celebrated. We are a community that walks the walk and, now, going into our third year of Pride Shabbat, we are a community that also dances, sings,



and davens our values. Most importantly, we want you all to join us! Whether you've been in the CBS orbit before or you're just beginning to dip your toe into Jewish life in Delaware, we would love to celebrate with you!

This year is an especially important year to show up with our full hearts for Pride Shabbat. The number of anti-LGBTQIA legislations being passed and enforced throughout the United States is alarming and an affront to our most deeply held Jewish values.

The rabbinic concepts of *Betzelem Elohim* (that everyone is created in the image of G-d) and *Kavod haBriyot* (that all life is to be honored and protected as a holy creation) are on the line for Jews around the country, but Delaware has been a leader and a force for good. Our very own Congresswoman Sarah McBride has become a national figure, both for representation of the LGBTQIA community and her commitment to the greater project of unity in this country and the protection of the most vulnerable.

This year at Pride Shabbat we are honored to have Ivy Harlev, the first woman to be named as the CEO of the Siegel JCC as our guest speaker. Ivy has tirelessly fought for strengthening the joy and connection of the Jewish Community in Delaware and, as an openly gay woman, has served as a role model for so many of us when it comes to bringing your full self to the work you are most passionate about.

**Please join us
for Pride Shabbat!**

**June 20, 6 PM, BYOD
(Bring your own Dinner)
with a musical and
celebratory Shabbat
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**We can't wait
to be with you!**

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Each month, Rabbi Peter H. Grumbacher, along with rabbis from around the state, answer your questions about Judaism.

**Have a question?
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Send your questions to:
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What is your view about Revelation?

RABBI NICK RENNER,
Congregation Beth Shalom

Happy Shavuot! Although maybe “happy” isn’t totally the right word. If you haven’t celebrated the holiday recently, it marks the revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai. It serves as one of twin moments that essentially make us who we are as Jews—Redemption and Revelation.

Redemption, the first part, is the Exodus from Egypt—the Passover story, and the moment that really transforms us from a loose collection of wandering familial tribes into an Israelite nation. In many ways, it shows us the ways in which we would be defined by our relationship with holiness in the world.

Revelation offers us our end of the bargain. The words of Torah, and how we can live in sacred ways as human beings and as Jews. Jewish tradition holds that this event was witnessed by the entire Israelite nation—an estimated 600,000. The communal nature of Revelation provides an important model within Jewish tradition: rather than being based on the experience of a single prophet, the Torah was received by an entire people.

But here’s the thing—the collective part of Revelation wasn’t only for that entire generation that stood at Sinai. It lives with us too, and the way that we engage with it is through the iterative, evolving process of interpretation, responsa, argument, and exegesis. The whole idea behind Talmud and Rabbinic Judaism is that revelation

isn’t a static thing, but rather, that it’s ongoing, and we’re part of it.

If you’ve been at a 13-year-old *b’nai mitzvah* celebration and heard a young adult chant Torah, you, the student, and everyone in the room was part of this project. If you were present at the naming of a baby and entering them into relationship with Torah and holiness, you were part of it. If you recited the blessing over shabbat candles, or heard kids in our community chant the *motzi* prayer, then you were part of it, as well.

And so Shavuot, the holiday of Revelation, is about the broadest sense of our collective Jewish self. It’s the widest aperture view on our ancestors, our grandparents, and parents, and the entirety of our community today. If you’re part of our Jewish community, you’re part of that chain of transmission that goes back to Torah, reverberates through the generations, and makes us Jewish in Delaware today. So, at Shavuot, we celebrate that Revelation means ALL of us. Rather than “happy” Shavuot, let me wish you an Ongoing Shavuot! That being Jewish today is just the latest iteration of being part of Revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Glad you’re with us!

RABBI PETER H. GRUMBACHER,
Rabbi Emeritus,
Congregation Beth Emeth

Many of you know my favorite statement, namely, “Never let the facts interfere with the truth.” This is especially true with regard to revelation. The great moment on Sinai is a powerful story, not factual in my opinion. Nevertheless, it is true; that is, somehow we received the Torah. Some believe it was Divinely written, while I and most liberal Jews—clergy and otherwise—see it as Divinely Inspired. Forget about the mitzvot that were no longer viable once sacrifices ended with the destruction of the second Temple; those of the ethical and moral kind do indeed have a Divine quality about them. They are powerful and enduring.

If something isn’t factual, how can it be celebrated? Shavuot commemorates revelation, just as Pesach commemorates our exodus from Egypt and our freedom from bondage. Both are part-and-parcel of,

I hesitate to say the cliché, tradition. So, we celebrate the gift of those laws that structure society. In Christian tradition there is the view that Judaism is the religion of law while Christianity the religion of love. As I point out to so many, without law there is no society, and God LOVED us, so regardless your view of revelation, somehow we became beneficiaries of this priceless gift of Divine love.

In his book—one of my favorites which I recommend to you despite it being over 80 years old—*Peace of Mind*, the late Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman wrote, “God is revealed to [us] daily in the humble thornbushes of fine men and women . . . [We] come face to face with the Divine personality which is truth-demanding, love-creating, justice-seeking in its nature.”

If we do not believe in the Torah-description of revelation, the smoke and fire, the absence of a bird’s song, and so many other consequences of God’s masterful power, so be it . . . join the crowd.

But celebrate what it is that we have. No other people has such a treasure trove of law and lore which has inspired and moved even those who are not Jewish.

I recall vividly discussions I would have with our 10th-grade students around this time of year. Shavuot meant Confirmation, and when I answered what exactly was meant by “confirmation” as I saw it, I told them, “Best to redefine it as ‘consecration,’ when you appreciate your new maturity and can confront your Jewishness, when you can question anything you like and need not accept the answers of your rabbis and teachers. You consecrate yourself to the search for meaning, and you confirm your determination not to dismiss, rather open your mind, to everything we have found sacred over the centuries.”

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PLANTING with a PURPOSE:

How to practice Tikkun Olam in your own yard.

BY ELAINE SCHMERLING



Spring is the time for planting! Flowers are budding! Birds are singing! Plants are out at garden centers to buy. But did you know that your choices of plants impact the environment?

Judaism has a rich tradition of stewardship of the Earth.

We are commanded to take care of creation (Genesis). From a commandment in Deuteronomy to not destroy trees in wartime, the rabbis then deduced *Bal Tashchit* (Do Not Destroy) as an ethic to protect the natural world.

But what if I told you that we are losing “biodiversity”—species and numbers of all kinds of plants and animals—at a record rate, partly because of our gardening choices? Although many reasons are out of our control, we CAN make better choices to bring back birds, butterflies, fireflies, and more to our yards.

Plants native to our area have adapted over thousands of years to support whole ecosystems. If you like birds, consider this: all birds feed insects to their young. Even seed-and nectar-eating birds cannot survive without insects. And of all the insects, caterpillars are the perfect baby bird food, often providing 75% of the food birds feed their young. Exotic shrubs and flowers from other continents—plants typically sold at many retail and box stores—rarely support this web of life. Worse, many have escaped to our “natural” areas that we set aside for wildlife.

Woodlands are too often now smothered with invasive plants. These invasive species can kill trees and out-compete natives. Even beautiful spring flowering bulbs like daffodils are escaping and can alter the soil pH away from what is needed for our native wildflowers to thrive.

Don’t know what to plant? Mt. Cuba hosts the premier display of native plants to the “Piedmont,” our geographic plateau. Visit their trial gardens and display areas which rival any gardens for beauty. Use their plant finders; read their finished reports online to help select the best plants! We have more resources than ever before, including Brandywine Conservancy’s online native garden hub. See YouTube videos from “Delaware Naturally” at delawarenaturally.org. Find a native plant sale near you. Go to a quality nursery and ASK for native plants (if we don’t ask and buy, they won’t sell!).

Think of the “ecosystem services” your garden can provide in addition to beauty. Doug Tallamy, a University of Delaware professor, has inspired many people with books such as *Bringing Nature Home* and *Nature’s Best Hope*, as well as podcasts and YouTube videos. He shows that we have more acreage in mowed grass (that supports very little) than all our national parks combined! Therefore, he started a “Homegrown Park” movement (<https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>) to help homeowners reverse the tremendous biodiversity losses happening in our lifetime.

Photo Credits: Elaine Schmerling



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Think of what grass-mowed areas you could instead plant with native trees and shrubs that can absorb more stormwater, as well as produce more oxygen and support more life than mowed grass. WE have some power to help reduce flooding and change the trajectory of species losses.

Would you, your children, and your grandchildren like to see butterflies? Read what you can plant to not just attract them for nectar—like “Butterfly bush” from Asia, which does not support a single caterpillar or insect which feeds birds—but to actually support them and feed their babies. Many caterpillars need specific plants to eat, such as the amazing Monarch butterfly which migrates to Mexico. Its caterpillars only eat milkweed, and its population is in severe decline. There are several different varieties of beautiful milkweeds which may be tamer for your garden. But there are others—how many of the 120 different butterfly and 131 moth species native to Delaware have you seen? Our state butterfly, the Tiger Swallowtail (large yellow and black) is the most plentiful, but even that has been declining.

Decaying logs, leaves, and debris can also be an important habitat and decompose to recycle nutrients back to the soil. Many butterflies, for example, overwinter as larvae in leaves. The Black Swallowtail larvae even mimic leaves to escape predation. The Evening Cloak butterfly overwinters whole under logs.

Did you know that firefly larvae overwinter in leaves? We watch them all summer like fireworks in my neighborhood! What child isn’t delighted by them? Yet they too are declining. In heavily landscaped neighborhoods where all the leaves and stalks are carted away each fall and replaced with purchased mulch (when leaves do a better job and are free!), and/or where the houses are surrounded only by mowed grass, people may not see fireflies at all on summer nights.

Many native bees overwinter in dry stalks. Carting away all this “debris” every fall may be killing beloved butterflies, fireflies, and more. Consider some spots for “leaving the leaves” and stalks—if not as mulch, perhaps at some side and back areas. HOW we garden matters.

Can we change our aesthetic to include living creatures? Certainly Mt. Cuba’s gardens show how it can be done beautifully. If you only hire landscapers, is there a way to work with them to preserve life as part of their services?

Native bees, especially bumblebees, are important fruit and vegetable pollinators. Not only are European honeybees in decline, but so are our native bees, which can substitute for honeybees for many crops. People have tried, but cannot invent machines to do bees’ work for any reasonable cost.



It is much more cost-effective and efficient to let bees do the job—but they need help. They need plants, especially asters and goldenrods (keystone species), to survive. There are hundreds of varieties of each—many non-aggressive. Another consideration: most insects, including bees, are very sensitive to chemicals which should always be used carefully.

Native shrubs are huge supporters of wildlife and often have lovely fall color, like the pinkish Pinxterbloom azalea. Its huge pink azalea flowers are frequented by bees, unlike the Asian varieties which are evergreen. Native Spicebush supports bees when in bloom, hosts the Spicebush Swallowtail butterfly’s caterpillar, and makes a nutritious fall berry for birds. Native viburnum shrubs (NOT the Asian varieties) are powerhouse shrubs, with bees visiting the flowers while the plants feed over 100 species of caterpillars. Their berries ripen in the fall and are high in fats, exactly what migrating birds need to fuel their long flights. Most non-native shrubs typically produce berries very low in fat, more of a “candy” type food for them with low nutrients that cannot sustain birds’ migrations as well.

We have more information than ever before on how to save our planet and the amazing creatures in it. We just need to act. One garden at a time, one plant at a time. I hope you can consider adding native plants to YOUR yard. Look at the Homegrown national park site—Doug Tallamy suggests adding one “keystone species” per year. Think of it as protecting the earth, practicing *Tikkun Olam*—repairing the world. ■

About the Author:

ELAINE SCHMERLING is a Delaware Nature Society, National Wildlife Federation, and Certified Wildlife Habitat Steward. She is also Natural Lands Steward of Ardentown and is currently Chair of the Arden Club Gardeners Guild. She has resided in Arden for 32 years and is an active member of the Jewish community.



Outdoors Issue? How about...

Out-of-the-Box Issue

BY **RABBI MICHAEL BEALS**, Temple Beth El

The statistics are grim. According to the latest annual State of Antisemitism in America Report released by American Jewish Committee (AJC) on February 12, 2025, online and on social media continue to be the places where American Jews encounter the worsening trend of antisemitism from a variety of sources including white supremacists on the far right and anti-Israel extremists on the far left.

Roughly seven in 10 (69%) Jewish adults report experiencing antisemitism online or on social media—including those who say they have been personally targeted and those who say they have seen or heard antisemitic incidents. This increases to eight in 10 (83%) among young Jewish adults.

Of the U.S. adults who witnessed antisemitism in the past 12 months, the majority (70%) say they saw it online or on social media.

Roughly three-quarters (77%) of American Jews said they feel less safe as a Jewish person in the U.S. because of the October 7 attacks, with nine in 10 saying that antisemitism in the U.S. has increased since that fateful day. In honor of the *Jewish Living Delaware* “Outdoors” Issue, I say let’s get REALLY outdoors—let’s get “out of the box” when it comes to addressing antisemitism!

But how?!

To quote my favorite USS Enterprise Captain: “ENGAGE!”

We simply cannot afford to slink into our echo chambers and silos where everyone echoes our own views and validates our points of view. I admit it’s comforting to retreat there. It’s like going back to your old room when you were a kid, and things were safer. But it is not healthy to stay stuck in the room of your youth. To grow means to experience discomfort with new people in new experiences.

First things first. We ALL need to be better educated Jews. Start with our own *Jewish Living Delaware*, but don’t end there. Include the *Jewish Forward*, *HaAretz*,

The Jerusalem Post, Join Izzy and Stream Israel for \$6/month, attend Jewish Federation briefings or anything Yuval Moha—our *shaliach*—is planning, read books on Israel, learn Hebrew. Also read books from the Palestinian perspective. Maybe start with something safe, like *The Lemon Tree: An Arab, A Jew and the Heart of the Middle East* by Sandy Tolan or *Letters to my Palestinian Neighbor* by Yossi Klein Halevi. BBC and NPR can be maddening on their Israel coverage, but if you only listen to Fox, you won’t understand where the anger against current Israeli policy is coming from—although even if you do understand, it won’t explain antisemitism.

Next—reach out. Invite your non-Jewish co-workers, your kids’ teachers, principals, coaches, directors, heck even your senators and congressperson to your kid’s bar or bat mitzvah. Make sure your rabbi is good at explaining stuff because it’s a LONG haul. And just because you invite this interfaith crew to the service and kiddush lunch does NOT mean you also have to invite them to the party—they’re different events.

With the seders now safely in your review mirror, did you invite anyone new to the seder? How about somebody new to your table who was NOT Jewish, who perhaps never attended a Passover meal before, with the rich retelling of our collective experience with 400 years of slavery, all designed to make us more empathetic to the marginalized living in our society today? Or what about inviting some non-Jewish leaders to the informative programming hosted by our JCRC, headed by Rabbi Ellen Bernhardt? Or maybe you could pen a helpful Op-Ed to *The News Journal* on an issue dealing with Israel or antisemitism?

And when was the last time you attended an interfaith Iftar to end one of the fast days of Ramadan with your local Islamic Center? Or what about a lecture at your neighborhood church? It’s important to not only invite people IN, but to be willing to reach OUT and experience other people’s home religions too. And whenever possible, it is vital

to be good allies to those experiencing marginalization. I can think of no better place to start than our Delaware Ukrainian community who are feeling terribly abandoned by the United States at the moment. But there are also many interfaith volunteer activities going between most of our synagogues and churches within our communities—spending time volunteering with people from different faith communities is a wonderful way to build new friendships with people unlike ourselves, as we join in common causes to address shared concerns.

Social media is a very tricky place to build bridges as people are not very accountable for what they write on a computer—I have seen some really nasty material on other people’s posts. Sometimes I gently challenge, especially when I read a comment I know to be incorrect from personal experience. But in general, Facebook, Instagram, X are not healthy places to go for information or to combat antisemitism. However, I still take a look at the repugnant stuff just to see how our detractors frame their attacks. I know I began by suggesting to engage, but sometimes you can learn more by simply observing.

What do “Going Outdoors” and “Going Out of the Box” share in common? Both activities suggest moving from the comfortable to the uncomfortable—all for the sake of experiencing something new and hopefully growing. Even more basic, “Going Outdoors” and “Going Out of the Box” both demand MOVEMENT. You can’t get stuck, you can’t be complacent as you “Go Outdoors” or “Go Out of the Box.” And perhaps that’s the final point: BE EMPOWERED. You needn’t be housebound. You needn’t be a victim. Keep moving. Keep growing.

Chazak v’amatz!

Be strong and of good courage! ■



THE NATURE RABBI

BY **RABBI JULIE HILTON DANAN**, Seaside Jewish Community

Photo Credit: Julie Hilton Danan

As a rabbi, I find inspiration in nature as well as ancient texts. I believe that the Earth is our sanctuary, our precious garden of Eden in the vastness of space. In my work, I use nature photography, Soul Strolls, and more to inspire love of our planet so that we care for it for future generations.

Some people started to call me “the nature rabbi,” and I embraced it. As a rabbi, I take my community outdoors for contemplative “Soul Strolls” on some Shabbats. Seaside Jewish Community has enthusiastically welcomed these experiences, since our members already loved Havdalah on the Beach and other outdoor programs in our spectacular coastal location.

My soul was awakened to nature in the Texas Hill Country. When I was 12 years old, my parents bought the “ranch,” a small county place near Utopia, Texas, 90 miles from our home in San Antonio. We started going up there on weekends during the mild Texas winter, when nature presented a palette of browns and grays. Once we had been away a couple of weeks and didn’t realize that the seasons were changing. We arrived late Friday night, and on Saturday morning, I got up before the rest of the family and made my way down to the river.

As I stepped outside our backyard and descended the wood and stone steps to the riverbank, I felt like I was entering the movies and stories that captivated my childhood imagination—Dorothy landing in Oz or the children passing through CS Lewis’ magic wardrobe, but they had stepped into winter and I was stepping into spring. Everything that had been brown and subdued over the past months was suddenly, vividly green and alive! Giant cypress trees pushing skyward, purple-flowered vines tumbling down the limestone cliffs, the cool now green Sabinal River flowing tantalizingly below. Doves cooed, hawks soared, bees buzzed, and flowers bloomed.

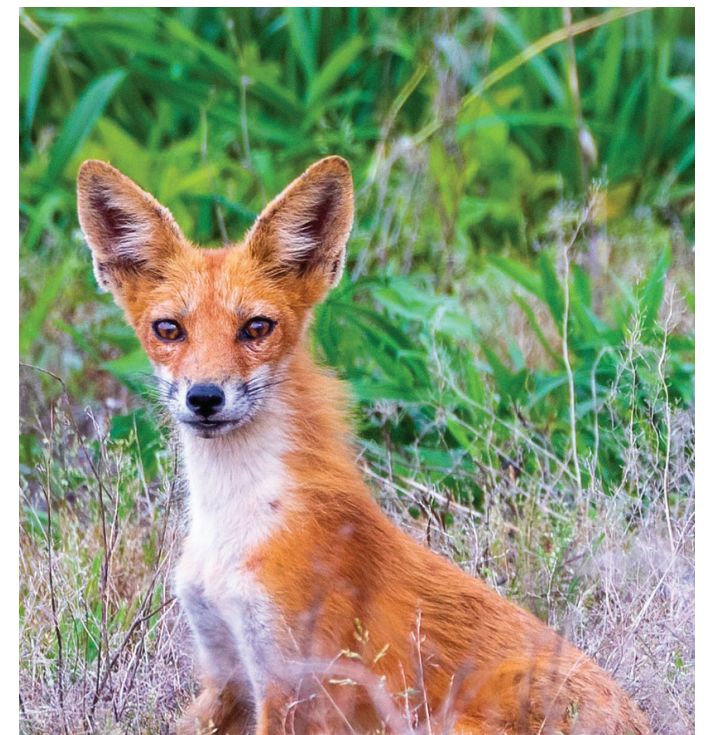
When I got to the banks of the river, I was in awe. I felt the boundaries between me and the world dissolve, and time stood still as my awareness seemed to melt into a sense of oneness with my surroundings. When I emerged from my reverie, like a swimmer surfacing from a deep dive, I searched for something to say that was worthy of the moment. The only thing that I could think of was one of the few prayers that I had learned in my sporadic Religious School attendance: *Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheynu, Adonai Echad*. At that moment of unitive awareness, I instinctively offered back the Jewish declaration of cosmic unity.

It would be a long time before I had such a powerful mystical experience again, but that moment in the Hill Country sent me on my spiritual quest that has lasted a lifetime and eventually led me to become a rabbi.

In the meantime, though, I continued to find a spiritual connection outdoors, and—like so many—it happened at summer camp. Around the same time as my experience in the Hill Country, I attended a Jewish “Y” camp in the Poconos where my parents had worked in their youth. Although the camp wasn’t

heavy on Jewish content, the vibrant experience of Shabbat at camp shaped me forever. At home, all I knew about Shabbat was that my mom put a Kleenex on her head, waved her hands three times around some candles and sang a blessing. At camp, I realized that Shabbat was a 25-hour holistic experience: changing from our grungy weekday clothes into Shabbat white and dancing down to the lakeside amphitheater as the sun set to sing and dance and welcome the Shabbat queen. I made up my mind to experience that again.

Between the ranch and camp, I was well on my own winding path to a calling of service in the Jewish world, and nature would always be a part of that. When I finally entered the ALEPH Rabbinic program decades later at age 36, many important moments in my training would take place at outdoor gatherings, particularly at Elat Chayyim retreat center in the Catskills (now incorporated into Isabella Freedman), with its woods and organic garden.



Judaism is a religion tied to land—first to the Holy Land, and to the planet itself: “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.” Our holidays are connected to the seasons in agricultural Israel, our ritual objects are full of nature motifs, and once a year we spend most of a week in a leafy hut! As I’m learning right now in an online class with Dr. Melila Hellner-Eshed, the Zohar—that great book of Jewish mysticism—emphasizes that Torah and encounter with the divine happen best as one strolls outdoors. Indeed, for the mystics, nature is the outer garment of the Shechinah, the divine presence herself.

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With the rise of environmental consciousness, nature and spirituality are coming together once again. At Seaside, we have a Green Team leading our environmental mitzvah projects, and our religious school families participate in such events as Tikkun HaYam's Reverse Tashlich (<https://www.repairthesea.org/>), an international beach clean-up day prior to Rosh Hashanah.

Today, the ALEPH Rabbinic program in which I studied offers studies in "Earth-Based Judaism," and across Jewish denominations there is a burgeoning movement of JOFFEE (Jewish Outdoor Food, Farming, and Environmental Education), typified by such organizations as Adamah (<https://adamah.org/>) and Wilderness Torah (<https://wildernesstorah.org/>).

As an adult, I've been fortunate to live in proximity to beautiful natural places that nourished my soul, including four years in Israel when I was in college and starting a family. Back in the States, I continued to connect to the Texas Hill Country, before life took me to Northern California, the Hudson River Valley of New York, and now to the beauty of Coastal Delaware (with a pit stop and ongoing connections in the Philly area). Thanks to these wanderings, my family and I have gotten to experience some of the most diverse and spectacular scenery that our country has to offer.



When I finished my rabbinic studies in 2000 and graduate school in 2009, I turned to a new project, making a website about Jewish symbols in nature. Since I'd been shaped by summer camp and retreat centers, I aspired to create a kind of virtual retreat center where people could ponder the meaning of these symbols in Jewish tradition and their own lives. I incorporated Jewish texts, personal experiences, nature photography, video clips, soundtracks, and meditations. As social media grew, I added accounts on Facebook and Instagram, too. Recently, I started a Substack blog, "GPS for Your Inner Landscape."

One thing led to another and soon I was getting serious about the art of nature photography. Eventually I started a second website devoted to that: inspiredimages.zenfoliosite.com. But I didn't really grasp how much this holy hobby meant for me until others pointed it out for me. In an exercise at a group meeting during a rabbinic fellowship, we were asked to describe some mundane object that we used each day, and our relationship to it. I chose my camera. Others in my circle noticed my enthusiasm:

"Do you realize how you light up when you talk about your camera?"

"You become more animated."

"This is your unique gift as a rabbi! Embrace it and share it," they said.

Since coming to Seaside Jewish Community here in Coastal Delaware, I've used nature photography as a tool in my rabbinate. Not only do nature photos adorn some of the synagogue walls, but during High Holiday services, held at a local church, nature photos are shared on large overhead screens at various points during the service. I use prints of my photos to make cards and small gifts that I use in pastoral care and education. I've been experimenting with other ways to use photography in my work, such as making photo calling cards for chaplains and printing a book with photos representing the "six days" of creation.

I truly believe that the earth is our greatest *Mishkan*, our holy sanctuary and divine dwelling place. More and more, I find my own deepest spiritual practices in nature, strolling and engaging in nature photography. I love to share my experience of the outdoors with congregants, colleagues, and others, which I hope will inspire all of us to connect with our community, our heritage, and our planet. ■



Prayerful Creations

BY EMMA DRIBAN, Editor

Bringing Natural Art into Religious Spaces

In this year's February issue of *Jewish Living Delaware*, Cantor Deborah Katchko-Gray shared a piece with us about Sacred Sounds Reborn. In our correspondence, I learned that she and husband Dr. F. Scott Gray are also art hobbyists, making beautiful crafts inspired by the nature surrounding their new home in Lewes.

Deborah shared, "Living in Lewes, I was guided by a friend to know the thrill of sea glass hunting. A walk on the beach became an adventure and a delight in discovering sea glass and unusual shells. My husband joined me and loved finding driftwood—we now both love creating with these natural elements."

Among their pieces you will find mosaic-decorated string instruments and mirrors, driftwood Shabbat candle holders and menorahs, and more. Deborah and Scott call these #PrayerfulCreations—spiritual treasures for sacred moments in life.

Now, their Prayerful Creations are available for purchase, bringing the beauty of art and the outdoors to our at-home religious practices.

In April, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to sit down with the artistic duo and learn more about their creations and the inspirations behind them.

1. Tell us a bit about your craft. What inspired you to start making?

Deborah: I began with Swedish weaving. I was always interested in colors and patterns, making tallises and then challah covers and table runners, things like that. When we came to Delaware, my friend Robin was really into sea glass hunting. I had never even heard of it, but apparently it's a big deal in this area. I started walking the beach with her and delighting in finding sea glass and interesting shells. I began collecting them. I thought, *I like patterns, I like colors, I like to be creative; it might be fun to make something with these!* I started

with ukuleles, violins, mirrored frames, and cellos. I love getting these discarded instruments—instruments that were literally going to be in the garbage—and turning them into something beautiful.

Scott: About two years ago, I was trying to figure out what I was going to do in retirement. We were in a thrift store, one of those places where they have all kinds of items you can go through. We were walking through, and I happened to see a shelf with a piece of driftwood with some candle holders on it. That one was being sold for an extraordinary amount of money, but I saw it and thought to myself, *oh that's kind of interesting, maybe I can do something like that.* I decided to investigate what it would take to do it, and it wasn't much in the way of tool investment, but it takes a bit of skill and a steady hand. So, I started looking for driftwood when Deb went out looking for sea glass. I'd take a big bag and haul stuff home that seemed like a good size for Friday night candle holders. I had a few pieces that were too big and I thought, *well maybe I can make a menorah out of this.* At this point I've done maybe a half dozen menorahs, but it all just turned out to be something that was doable and a different kind of art to make. Our same friend, Robin, who introduced us to the sea glass is also into collecting antique glass insulators. It can be hard to find pieces that aren't damaged, but I found I was able to turn them into Shabbat candle holders as well.

2. Where do you find your media? Do you source all of your materials locally or find pieces in your travels as well?

S: It's all from Delaware beaches. Everything is local. Initially, I started by going to one particular beach, but any beach we go to where she looks for sea glass will do, and I look for driftwood pieces that will be small enough to work with. The key for me is finding the right piece of wood. I walk by a lot, otherwise they might become a fire hazard.

Cello adorned with
sea glass

Deborah
Katchko-Gray

Dr. F. Scott Gray



Photos provided by: Deborah Katchko-Gray and Dr. F. Scott Gray

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3. What inspires you to make your prayerful creations?

D: We're both newly retired—I like to call it rewirement—and I feel like it's something we can do together. He's a retired orthopedic surgeon; I'm a retired cantor. He's used to doing technical stuff with his hands; I'm used to being artistic and creative. We are both used to being integral parts of our communities. Now that we're retired, it's been nice to find a way to express ourselves in a quiet, healthy way. It gets us outside, in nature, walking on the beach. We go to antique stores and thrift shops and then we get to spend time together creating at home here in Lewes. It's been a nice way to bring in these aspects of our lives and helping us get used to being retired—we're so used to being busy and this has been a nice way to spend our time.

4. How do religion and/or nature influence your art?

D: My kids always say that my vocation and avocation are like the same thing. Because I've lived such a strong Jewishly identified life, I kind of see it as seamless. I'm always thinking about music, Jewish music, Jewish art. I make tallises and challah covers, too. But with the sea glass it's something different, something beautiful. I think for me there is a concept of beautifying Judaism.

S: I try to keep my driftwood pieces to Jewish themes. Our holidays often involve candles, whether that is a typical Shabbat or Hanukkah—the festival of lights—so I've drawn a lot of inspiration from that. Maybe someday I'll branch out; I don't have to make Shabbat candles, it can be other things, but I like that they're multi-use, practical decorations. I take joy in creating things that I know people are going to use in their homes, especially for their Jewish traditions.

5. Have you ever incorporated Hebrew text, Jewish symbols, or Talmudic stories into your sea glass work? If so, how do those elements find their way into your pieces?

D: I like to work in Jewish stars and musical notes. I have a cello where I used the f-hole to write Shalom, so I do try to sneak symbols in where I can. In my tallises, of course, I always put in a torah, Jewish stars, I've included kiddush cups. I try to find ways to include Jewish symbolism.

Cellos and guitars meticulously decorated by sea glass mosaic by Deborah



Photo Credit: Emma Driban

6. Can you tell us about any particular pieces of your art that hold deep spiritual meaning for you?

D: One of my first cellos. I'm very drawn to purple and the piece has purple flowers with this beautiful sea glass. I just find it very inspiring and soothing, the way the lines move. Especially with his candle holders, too, I think it's a beautiful way to bring in Shabbat with something meaningful and kind of funky and creative.

7. Has working with sea glass, driftwood, and other found media changed or deepened your understanding of certain Jewish values or concepts?

D: *Hiddur mitzvah* is the commandment to create something beautiful with ritual objects, to make things particularly gorgeous if you are going to use them for a Jewish purpose. The idea of putting a little more joy and color and art into something that's going to be used for a Jewish purpose honors that commandment.

S: It's different than creating a painting and letting it hang on the wall. Our stuff is more than decorative, it's meant to be used.

D: As a cantor, I always felt like a kind of cheerleader for Judaism. I think this is a nice, quiet way, for both of us, to put out Jewish things into the world that will bring people closer and encourage them to light candles in their home and bring them closer to nature. The driftwood, the sea glass, the candle lighting—I think that's a way of putting out a good message to keep Judaism in your heart and your home.

S: I always envision Jewish families standing around the things I create to do their at-home religious, or even secular, ceremonies. I look for pieces that are unusual, because no menorah is the same. I'm inspired by thinking about who might buy the piece, not just for display but for use. I think of the importance of family and celebrating the holidays and Shabbat together.



Various selections of Scott's Shabbat candle holders and a driftwood menorah

Photos provided by the artists

8. Any words of encouragement for those standing at the edge of their own creative journeys?

D: Just do it!

S: Don't be shy!

D: One thing I've learned in life is that if you stand in the corner and wait to be asked, most likely nothing will happen. We have to be our own advocates if we want to see something happen. Don't wait for permission.

S: I didn't think I had any artistic skill, so people shouldn't be afraid to be inspired by something or have a spark. Often it comes serendipitously. And don't be afraid to mess things up and break what you're making because you get better at it as you move on.

Check out their gorgeous wares at the West Side Creative Market in Rehoboth Beach on June 23, 5–9 PM. 19826 Central St, Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971.

For question or commissions call 203-0482-1726 or email CantorDebbie@gmail.com or FSGray@gmail.com. ■

Bringing the Outdoors into Your Kitchen

BY EMMA DRIBAN, Editor

Cooking with seasonal ingredients is one of the easiest ways to make your meals taste better and feel fresher. When fruits and veggies are in season, they are typically picked at the peak of ripeness, so they are full of flavor and nutrients. Plus, they are often cheaper and more eco-friendly because they don't have to be shipped from far away or grown in artificial conditions.

Each season brings its own kind of magic to the kitchen. Spring, for example, brings vibrant greens—like asparagus, spinach, and peas—which are perfect for light salads and pasta dishes. Summer offers a bounty of juicy tomatoes, zucchini, berries, and stone fruits—ideal for grilling, tossing into grain bowls, or baking into rustic desserts. In the fall, root vegetables—like carrots, beets, and squash—take center stage, lending themselves to hearty soups, roasted side dishes, and warm spices. Winter highlights citrus, dark leafy greens, and storage crops—like potatoes and onions—which are great for comfort foods and nutrient-rich meals.

Using seasonal ingredients can also push you to get a little more creative. Instead of sticking to the same old recipes, you

can mix things up based on what's available. It's a fun way to try new flavors and keep things interesting in the kitchen.

It's not just about taste either—seasonal cooking is good for the planet. It supports local farms, cuts down on the energy used to ship food across the world, and helps you stay in tune with what's growing naturally around you.

Incorporating seasonal ingredients into your cooking is more than just a culinary choice—it's a lifestyle shift that celebrates freshness, sustainability, and the joys of eating with the seasons. It's an easy way to elevate everyday meals and bring more intention to your kitchen.

With summer on the horizon, using refreshing, seasonal ingredients is a great way to stay cool, fill your belly, and show some appreciation for what nature has to offer.

Give these seasonal-inspired tartines a try to get in the summer spirit.

The Bread

For each of these recipes, no bread is a better fit than sourdough. It's hearty and chewy and can stand up against a nice pile of fruit or veg.

Cut your bread thick, ¾- to 1-inch-thick slices are best.

When you get to toasting, there are two options. A standard run in the toaster will do the trick, but if you're looking to elevate your tartine, I recommend giving your bread a toss in a pan.

Add about one tablespoon of olive oil into a non-stick or cast iron pan over medium high heat. Once the pan has been heated, drop in your bread, give it a light press into the pan, and let it sit for one to two minutes, depending on how toasty you like your bread. Give it a flip and don't be afraid to add another splash of olive oil if your pan has gotten too dry. Toast the bread for another one to two minutes and pull it once it has reached a satisfactory level of toastiness.



Watermelon and Feta (from *I Could Nosh* by Jake Cohen) - serves 4 people

Ingredients:

- 12 oz watermelon, cut into ¼-inch cubes (about 2 cups)
- 8 oz feta, cut into ¼-inch cubes
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 Tbsp freshly squeezed lime juice
- 2 Tbsp fresh mint, minced
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced
- Kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper
- Toasted sourdough bread

- Instructions:**
1. In a large bowl, toss together watermelon, feta, olive oil, lime juice, mint, and scallions with a heavy pinch each of salt and pepper.
 2. Prepare 4 slices of sourdough.
 3. Using a slotted spoon, spoon the mixture over your bread and serve!



- Peach and Burrata - serves 4 people**
- Ingredients:**
- 4 peaches, sliced into ¼- to ½-inch slices
 - 2 Tbsp olive oil
 - 16 oz burrata
 - Fresh basil leaves, julienned
 - Hot honey for drizzling
 - Flaky sea salt
- Instructions:**
1. Preheat a grill or pan over medium-high heat. Lightly brush your peach pieces on both sides with olive oil.
 2. Grill or sauté your peaches for 2–3 minutes per side, or until slightly softened with some grill marks.
 3. Prepare 8 slices of sourdough
 4. Top each piece of toast with about 2 oz of burrata. Arrange a few pieces of grilled peach, sprinkling your basil shreds over top.
 5. Drizzle with your desired amount of hot honey (or plain if preferred) and a sprinkle of flaky sea salt.

- Pan con Tomate - serves 4 people**
- Ingredients:**
- 1 large clove of garlic, trimmed and peeled
 - Sea Salt
 - Black Pepper
 - 2–3 beefsteak tomatoes
 - Calabrian chili paste (optional)
 - Olive oil

- Instructions:**
1. Prepare 8 pieces sourdough according to the instructions above.
 2. Slice the bottoms off of 2 tomatoes and grate into a bowl with the large holes on a box grater. If the mixture is very watery, grate the third tomato. Add in chili paste (if using) and sea salt.
 3. Rub the toasts on both sides with the garlic clove and sprinkle with salt and pepper.
 4. Spoon the tomato pulp onto the toasts. Finish with a drizzle of olive oil.

“You are going where?!”

BY **JOSH SCHOENBERG**, National Young Leadership Cabinet Israel and Overseas Vice Chair

I have had the honor to be a member of the National Young Leadership Cabinet (NYLC) of the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) for the past five years. In those five years, I have heard and seen first-hand from beneficiaries of JFNA’s work and in turn, the Jewish Federation of Delaware (JFD). Every year, our cabinet meets twice, once in the United States and once abroad, to see and understand the work of JFNA and its partner agencies (Jewish Agency for Israel [JFNA], the Joint Distribution Committee [JDC], and World ORT).

As I am writing this, I am returning from my latest international study mission in Baku, Azerbaijan. As the Israel and Overseas Vice-Chair for JFNA’s NYLC, I was tasked with leading this mission. When I first learned we would be travel to Baku, the reaction I received from everyone I spoke with was “you are going where?!” Located within a Muslim-Majority country, the Jewish Community of Azerbaijan is not one that gets much attention. What we saw and learned gives me a deep appreciation for some of the less-known Jewish communities.

I learned many interesting and wonderful facts about the Jewish community in Azerbaijan.

First, the town of Quba, about two and a half hours northwest of the capital of Baku, has been the historical home of the Mountain Jews for hundreds of years. It is known as the “Jerusalem of the Caucasus.”

We spent the day there and met community members who maintain the only completely Jewish town in the world outside of Israel. Although many of the families have moved to Russia, Western Europe, and the United States. Most of the families still maintain residences there and treat it like their vacation home. The community’s financial and emotional dedication to the historical nature of

the town is compelling and admirable. They built a beautiful museum to tell the Mountain Jews’ story, maintain two synagogues, support a wedding hall, and mikvahs for both the men and women to use. The most heartwarming fact I learned about Quba is the town is divided by a river, where the Jews live on one side and the Muslim community lives on the other in harmony.

Second – keeping with the Jewish-Muslim relations topic – the two communities live, work, and play together every day. Everyone we spoke to, Jewish and not were quick to make the distinction that Azerbaijan is not a Muslim country, but a Muslim-majority country. At first, I did not understand the distinction, but after spending nearly 10 days there just because over 90% of the country is of the Islamic faith, it does not mean that the country mandates Islam as the national religion. We found that other religions (i.e. Jewish, Lutheran, Catholic, etc.) are free to engage in their religion and the government will not only not interfere but will ensure that the free practice of those religions are able to be maintained. Since the Muslim community is quite large (and the Jewish community is small,) there is a significant amount of intermarriage between the faiths. However, what I experienced from the community members on the ground is that more often, in the case of inter-marriage, the children are brought up practicing Judaism rather than Islam. The children identify as both, but acknowledge Judaism plays a bigger role in their lives.

Through support of the JFNA, JAFI and JDC play a daily role in the lives of the Jews living in Baku. JAFI maintains a summer camp in the community, bringing Jewish values and knowledge of Israel to the Baku Jewish children. JDC has programs for the senior citizens of the

community to ensure their Jewish dignity is maintained throughout their life. There are other Jewish programs such as the Ohr Avner School, maintained and operated by Chabad with support from the Jewish community around the world. Three synagogues exist in Baku, the largest an Ashkenazi synagogue, and a Georgian synagogue and Mountain Jew synagogue.



Josh Schoenberg with Ambassador George Deek
Photo provided by Josh Schoenberg

Finally, there is incredibly strong ties between Israel and Azerbaijan. We were fortunate to meet in person with Israeli Ambassador George Deek—the only Arab-Christian Ambassador in Israel’s foreign service. Prior to our mission, we met via Zoom with the Azerbaijani Ambassador to Israel, Mukhtar Mammadov. Azerbaijan was the first Muslim-majority country to support direct diplomatic ties with Israel and establish an embassy in 2022. Five years ago, there were two direct flights between Tel Aviv and Baku a week. Now, in 2025, there are two direct flights between these two cities each day! I met with one of the members of the Israel-Azerbaijani Chamber of Commerce where

these individual relationships are thriving. From a country-to-country relationship, Israel receives 40% of its oil and natural gas from Azerbaijan and in exchange, unofficially 60%–70% of Azerbaijani’s weapons come from Israel, including direct military personnel exchange programs.

Admittedly, when I first heard that the mission was going to Azerbaijan, I did not know what to expect from the country or the Jewish community. However, as I fly back home, “pleasantly surprised”, I cannot fully express how much I enjoyed learning about Azerbaijan, its history, and how strong a Jewish community can be within a Muslim-majority country. My goal was the figure out what “secret sauce” exists in Azerbaijan, where both communities can live together, when it seems that cannot be done to any significant degree anywhere else. What I found was that there is mutual respect as two Abrahamic religions, living under Community rule where everyone has the freedom to practice their faith in an independent way. The mutually beneficial relationships between Azerbaijan and Israel helps strengthen the religious ties between the communities as well.

In the end, the “secret sauce” does not come down to one magic thing. What I learned is that there are many things—local, governmental, and international – that all play a role in the Jewish community maintaining its long tradition in Azerbaijan while living in a Muslim-majority country. The mission was eye-opening on so many levels, and I look forward to discussing my trip with anyone who has questions or is interested in seeing that part of the world.

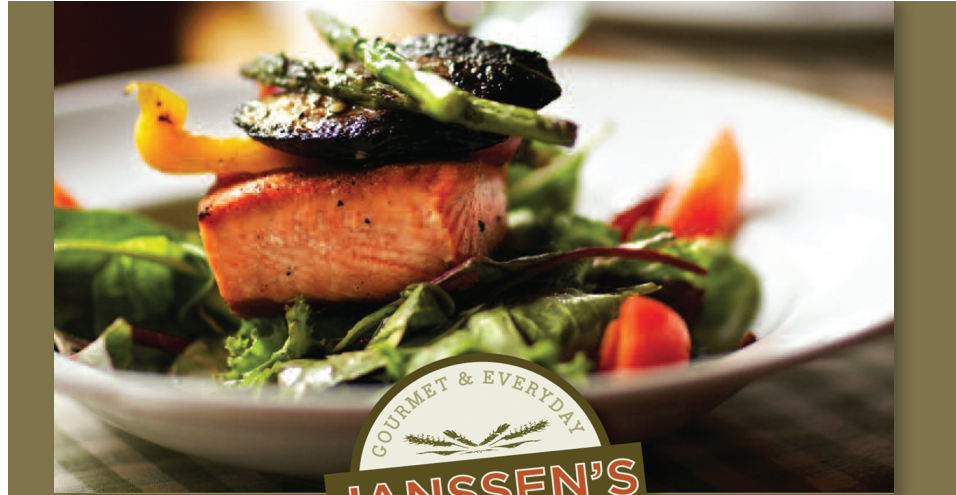
Azerbaijan is indeed a case-study in which we can all live side-by-side in peace and not fight over ideas that have plagued history for hundreds of years—there is hope.



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From 'Should You Visit Morocco?' to 'You SHOULD Visit Morocco!'

BY **PETER H. GRUMBACHER**, *Rabbi Emeritus*, Congregation Beth Emeth



In their plan to take over the world and eliminate its Jewish population, the Germans entered Morocco and insisted that Mohammad V hand over a list of its Jews. The king looked at them and said, "Jews? We have no Jews here. We have only Moroccans." And that has been their attitude evidenced by their constitution which states "... the Kingdom of Morocco intends to preserve, in its plentitude and its diversity, its one and indivisible national identity ... nourished and enriched by its African, Andalusian, Hebraic, and Mediterranean influences. The preeminence accorded to the Muslim religion in the national reference is consistent with the attachment of the Moroccan people to the values of openness, of moderation, of tolerance, and of dialogue for mutual understanding between all the cultures and the civilizations of the world."

At the end of March, Suzy and I joined with 20 others—strangers then but no more—and learned a great deal about its historic Jewish community, visiting synagogues (a few of which are still functioning), as well as cemeteries. In many nations that once had Jewish communities—with many cemeteries that told a tragic story—the exodus of Jews in the 1950s was not due to exile by any stretch of the imagination. Rather the State of Israel became a magnet as it did for many in the shadow of the Shoah. One very exciting moment on our tour was when we were invited to attend a *brit milah*, the circumcision of a new Jewish citizen of the kingdom!

Aside from the religious aspects of our experience, something that truly caught our attention was the cleanliness of highways, streets, even alleys of the cities we visited. It's no exaggeration to say that at times if you looked for a tossed-away

piece of paper, refuse of any kind, even a fallen leaf from a tree, you would be hard-pressed to find it.

The mosques, minarets, and cultural centers reflect the old and new; and the *medinahs*, the walled cities that still are teeming with vendors similar to the Old City of Jerusalem, contain some incredibly delicious restaurants that are opulent on the inside though you'd never know it from the alleys in which they are found. One other thing about those *medinahs*: we were never bothered by little kids peddling postcards and *tzachchkes*, nor beggars who would nudge you to distraction.

Look, you and I know that under other circumstances I'd be pushing you to visit Israel, especially now when her economy could use our help and her citizens could use our emotional support—and indeed I do encourage you to take that trip and roll up your sleeves as I did a year ago—but realistically so many are fearful of the situation. Having said that, a tour of Morocco would be an alternative. The nations of the world are seething in antisemitism, the State of Israel has become—once again—the pariah, the punching bag of the world. On the other hand, it seems that Morocco stands out as a country that has its head on its shoulders screwed on tight and right.

Let me suggest checking out the tour of Morocco planned for November 2025 which Rabbi Robinson, my successor at Congregation Beth Emeth, will be leading. I know little about it other than it's there for your consideration. Call the office 302-764-2393 and ask for information or speak to him directly. And, no, this suggestion is not made under duress. It's made because I believe you'll thank me for the opportunity to learn her history and see for yourself everything about which you just read.

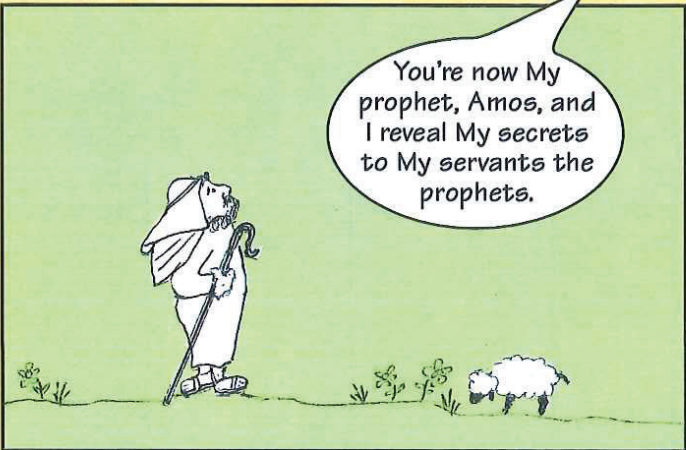



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talks to you, you pay attention! Amos warned Israel to hate evil and love the good, but they refused to listen, even though they experienced famine and drought. Nevertheless, Amos promised a great future for Israel because G-d loved them, ...and will forever!

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SERVICES FOR ALL

Pastries

BY YONI GLATT
 koshercrosswords@gmail.com

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: MANAGEABLE
SOLUTION: PAGE 39

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71						72				73				

ACROSS

- Jewish pastry
- Choose
- Cheese choice
- Minor prophet
- Nice way of saying "yes"?
- Jaguars and Mustangs, for example
- Org. fighting for Israel in the US
- Jewish pastry
- Tricky
- Use a mikvah, perhaps
- You, once
- "___ the Walrus" (The Beatles)
- Costa follower
- Jewish pastry
- Jewish pastry
- Ending with cover or over
- Some four-year degrees, for short
- "Toy" singer
- "Saving Private Ryan" craft, for short
- Jewish pastry

- Bean or sauce type
- Like R. L. Stine stories, e.g.
- Mt. Hermon controller
- "Aren't you a little short for a Stormtrooper?" speaker
- Jewish pastry
- Jewish pastry
- Opinion page, briefly
- Britannica or World Book: Abbr.
- Musk, for one
- Most mockingly amusing
- ___-Julie: Montreal suburb
- Jewish pastry
- Penguin predators
- 2000s Houston-based scandal subject
- Dab
- Wealth
- Intensifies, with "up"
- They might spend next year in 46-Across
- Jewish pastry

DOWN

- Some finish it in 7+ years
- Disrupt, as an evil plot
- Sports-channel award
- Union for a college prof.
- Nocturnal canine
- They accompany "aahs"
- Biblical midwife
- Hourglass or stopwatch, e.g.
- Kindergarten alternative?
- Deleted scene
- Home of Zion, in America
- Aspirin amount
- Shea was near it
- Prime Minister Sharon, to some
- Single-celled creature
- Not ands or buts
- Mass. neighbor
- Rami who won an Oscar in 2019
- "Daily Planet" reporter Jimmy
- Michelob option
- Middle X, in a game
- Rich, in Ramla
- Under sail
- Devoid of emotion
- Occur in Torah?
- Cherokee maker
- Virginia college, briefly
- Spurs (on)
- "It slipped my mind"
- Business designation, for short
- Cut, as timber
- Inter, as a Pharaoh
- Faucet flaws
- "___ ma'aseh bereishis"
- 1965 novel set on the planet Arrakis
- Haza who sang in "The Prince of Egypt"
- Sefira month
- Uber option
- Line crosser, of sorts
- Merkava, e.g.
- It, in Rome
- "Jeopardy!" monitor display: Abbr.
- "V for Vendetta" actor Stephen



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CROSSWORD SOLUTION

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Puzzle on page 37

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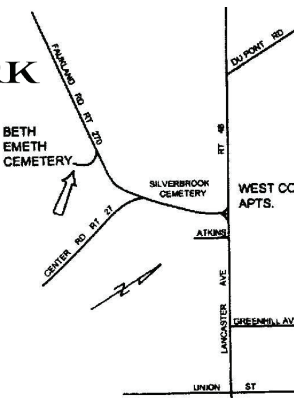
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Comments on “Israel Stands Alone” by Eric Hofferco

BY **FATIH BROWN**

The recent ceasefire negotiations brought to mind an article which I had saved, written by a Christian journalist, Eric Hoffer. Hoffer was a self-educated social critic and philosopher who wrote a weekly column for the San Francisco Examiner, which was later syndicated nationwide.

His column, entitled “Israel Stands Alone,” impressed me greatly when I first read it in the Wilmington News Journal some years ago. After you read the following excerpts, I think you will understand why I saved it.

“The Jews are a peculiar people. Things permitted to other nations are forbidden to the Jews.

Other nations drive out thousands, even millions of people, and there is no refugee problem. But in the case of Israel, the displaced Arabs have become eternal refugees. Other nations, when victorious

on the battlefield, dictate peace terms. But when Israel is victorious, it must sue for peace.

Everyone expects the Jews to be the only real “Christians” in this world! No commitment to the Jews by any government, including our own, is worth the paper it is written on.

The Jews are alone in this world. If Israel survives, it will be solely because of Jewish efforts and Jewish resources. Yet, at this moment, Israel is our only reliable and unconditional ally. We can rely more on Israel than Israel can rely on us.

I have a premonition that will not leave me: As it goes with Israel, so will it go with all of us. Should Israel perish, the Holocaust will once more be upon us. Israel must live.”

Believe it or not, this article appeared in newspapers on May 29, 1968!

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