

Kesher

THE NEWSLETTER



The Children's Choir of The Village Temple celebrate *Chanukah* during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Come as you are. Discover who you are.

February/March 2021 / 5781

Welcome
to Kesher

Connection is the force
that binds members and
clergy to Judaism and
to The Village Temple.

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Join us for our Purim Events

Our *Purim* Service and Celebration:
Thursday, February 25 • 6:30 pm

We'll be reading the *Megillah* and partying online.

Our Outdoor *Purim Shpiel*:
Saturday, February 27 • 2:00 pm

This year, The VT Children's Choir will perform "*Wicked Shpiel*" outdoors in front of The VT (rain/snow date is the day after—Sunday, February 28, same time, same place).

The Newsletter of The Village Temple

*Congregation B'nai Israel
of New York*

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We invite all who wish to join us to enter our doors: Jews by birth, Jews by choice, interfaith families. Inside you will find a community of people who are on a quest to reshape Shabbat and holiday worship, reinvigorate Jewish learning, and renew our commitment to tikkun olam through social action and justice.



A LETTER FROM **RABBI FERSKO**



Next year in Jerusalem. That's what we say every year during the Seder. "Next year in Jerusalem" is an idea and an ideal. It's aspirational. It's a goal towards which we are always climbing, even though we may never truly get to that majestic place of spiritual redemption. But even so, sometimes, we get just a tiny bit closer. Even a baby step feels like a breakthrough. And that's how I feel right now as I write this on the week of our presidential inauguration.

We may not all feel the same way—and that's ok—but I for one am choosing to take this moment to enjoy the positive moments in our lives. We watched as the first woman vice president in our history was sworn in. And, a woman of color is the highest-ranking woman in the history of our country. I watched the first black senator from Georgia as he was sworn in. And I watched the first Jewish senator from Georgia taking the oath as well. As he said those words, he put his hand on a Tanakh, a Hebrew Bible, our Bible. In his pockets he carried the immigration documentation his grandparents used to come into this country through Ellis Island. A century later, their grandchild is a Senator. I heard words of civility, kindness, clarity, and intelligence.

What I sensed was that the country is beginning a long and very likely difficult road to healing. It was a good day for progress, for diversity, for decency.

These times are difficult, challenging times. I hear from many in our community who are in need of physical, emotional, and spiritual healing. There is no one unaffected by the cruelty of this COVID-19 pandemic and the pain of our political world. Children need healing as do adults. Despite it all, spring is coming. The celebration of *Purim*, which commands us to be joyful, will be shortly here. Passover, where we celebrate renewal and freedom, will be shortly here. It is important to look towards the future with hope. As the Psalm says: "Weeping may stay the night, but joy comes in the morning." I wish you all the blessings of faith, hope, and joy now, more than ever. May you reach your own personal *next year in Jerusalem*. I can't wait to be together one day soon.

*L'shalom,
Diana
rabbifersko@villagetemple.org*

Jewish Disabilities Awareness, Acceptance, and Inclusion Program

Thursday, February 11, 7:00 pm via Zoom

At The Village Temple, we strive to make our community an inclusive and welcoming place for everyone. We respect those who are differently abled, and value each and every person in their own unique way. In celebrating our differences, we encourage our members to participate in learning how they can become more aware of the special needs of others.

On Thursday, February 11 at 7:00 pm as part of Jewish Disabilities Awareness, Acceptance, and Inclusion month, please join us on Zoom as members of our VT community share stories about their own experiences with physical and mental disabilities, and confronting the stigmas of being labeled as "disabled."

Speakers include Stephanie Kanarek, Evan Oppenheimer, Anita Hollander, and more to be announced. Watch for the Zoom link in an upcoming eblast.

A LETTER FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS



In the spirit of *Purim*, which will be here before we know it, we've prepared some ideas for how to enjoy some *Purim* inspired cocktails! How strange to think that the *Purim Shpiel* was our last in-person Temple event before the pandemic shutdown; but we are thankful for everyone sticking together (virtually!) and continuing to stay connected. We hope you enjoy these delicious drinks and look forward to seeing you in person soon!

EstherCosmo

Ingredients:

- 2 ounces vodka
- 1 ounce Cointreau or triple sec
- ½ ounce lime juice, freshly squeezed
- 1 dash pomegranate syrup
- Garnish: lime wedge



Directions:

1. Combine lime juice and syrup and stir
2. Add the vodka, Cointreau, and lime syrup mixture to a cocktail shaker with ice and shake until well-chilled
3. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass
4. Garnish with a lime wedge

MordecaiMule

Ingredients:

- 2 ounces vodka
- 1/2 ounce lime juice, freshly squeezed
- 6 ounces of ginger beer (Goslings preferred)
- Garnish: lime wedge

Directions

1. Squeeze lime juice into a Collins glass (tall) and then drop in the squeezed lime shell
2. Add ice cubes, then pour in the vodka and fill with cold ginger beer
3. Serve with a stirring rod

CHEERS!

Fred and Jill

Fred Basch

fredbasch@nyc.rr.com

Jill Wilkinson

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Introducing A New Program Series Hosted by AJHS:

AT LUNCH With...

Author and journalist Julie Salamon sits down with influential cultural leaders in the Jewish American Community.



Visit AJHS.org to learn more!



What you may not know about Julie:

Julie Salamon is an American author, critic and storyteller. She worked at *The Wall Street Journal* for sixteen years first as a commodities and banking reporter before spending eleven years as the paper's film critic. Later she became a staff journalist at *The New York Times* where she was a TV critic and arts reporter. Later she gained fellowships at the MacDowell Colony and became a Kaiser Media Fellow. She has written both fiction and non-fiction books for adults and children—and produced articles for magazines that include *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, *Bazaar*, and *The New Republic*. Her books have received wide critical and popular attention, she has just completed “*Unlikely Friends*,” a memoir for Audible Original, scheduled for release in 2021.

Thursday, February 18 • 12:30 PM ET

Online via Zoom

Tickets: \$5

[Sign up!](#)

This spring, Julie Salamon, author and VT member, will begin a monthly series of mid-day discussions at the American Jewish Historical Society, talking to inspiring leaders and innovators about their work and how they've been influenced by Jewish culture. This “At Lunch With” series kicks off on February 18 via Zoom with Ann Temkin, the Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (and VT member). On April 18, Julie will interview Rebecca Naomi Jones, star of Broadway and Off-Broadway, along with her mother, photographer Susan Rosenberg Jones (another VT member). If you see a recurring theme, you are correct. Julie's first guests happen to belong to the same fabulous downtown synagogue! The series will take place at 12:30 pm and run 30–45 minutes. Perfect to watch while you have lunch!

Please join Julie for this interesting series. When you sign up, a Zoom link will be sent to you.

TEENS AT THE VILLAGE TEMPLE



Village Temple Teens Embrace the Jewish Tradition of *Tikkun Olam* (“Repair the World”)

This year in youth group, we have spent our teen Zoom sessions discussing so many of the current events and social justice issues which we see in our world. The VT teens are incredible- they are knowledgeable and get involved in issues about which they are truly passionate. Here are just a few examples of them sharing in their part of *tikkun olam*—making the world a better place.

Griffin

“It’s important to be involved in *tikkun olam* and help with the issues I’m invested in because if I don’t do it, who will? It’s not like someone is going to make an effort to help solely because I don’t, so any effort I make to help the world only has a net positive effect. An area about which I’m passionate is correctly gendering and respecting your trans friends; not only is it suicide prevention, but if you’re a good friend, you respect others’ identities.”

Ella

“It’s important to be involved in *tikkun olam* because our world is not perfect. And although it will never be “perfect”, we can always work towards that goal, whether that be fighting for equal rights or for environmental protection policies. It is important that we are always striving to create a better tomorrow, and to create a world that our own children will be proud to live in.”

Sadie S

“It’s important to be involved in *tikkun olam* because not only will it make you happy, but it will also better the lives of everyone around you. For me, educational equity is so important because as Nelson Mandela once said, ‘education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world’ and everyone deserves an equal chance to change the world.”



Emily

“I stand up for equal rights because I know how it feels to grow up in a world where people are hurt just because of the color of their skin or the person they love, and I live with fear that one of my loved ones could be next. I want to make change so that the next generation doesn’t need to grow up feeling that the world is a scary place.”

Jordyn

“It’s important to be involved in *tikkun olam* because it brings hope into a world that so badly needs it. Whether I am marching for climate justice, speaking out against systemic racism, or fundraising to improve rural healthcare access, I know that taking part in *tikkun olam* will make a meaningful impact on the world around me.”

Liotte Greenbaum, RJE
Director of Community Engagement
lgreenbaum@villagetemple.org



Meet our Bar Mitzvah:

Bar Mitzvah of **Miles Berman**, February 6, Parshat Yitro • Mazal Tov to his parents Melissa Breacher and Matt Berman

Shalom! EDUCATION NEWS



Shalom,

In just a few short weeks we will be celebrating *Purim*, the most festive holiday of the Jewish calendar. *Purim* marks an ancient celebration—when Queen Esther, the beautiful Jewish wife the Persian king Ahasuerus (Xerxes I) observed, understood,

and took action with her cousin Mordecai to persuade the king to retract an order for the annihilation of the Jews in his empire. Despite the fact that she had no political power or experience, she found the courage to risk her life to save the Jewish people from Haman—an evil advisor of the king’s—who plotted to destroy the Jews of Shushan.

The Village Temple’s past, current, and future offerings, ranging from weekly services and onegs to Religious School, Adult Education, Children’s Choir, Book and Coffee Clubs, Soup Kitchen, Youth Group, virtual and in-person holiday celebrations and many more aim to inspire, educate, and provide our members of all ages with a sense of belonging to an active, passionate, and caring community. Let’s not forget that when we join in these programs, we do not do it for our sake alone. By joining in we fulfill our responsibility to provide a sense of *K’lal Yisrael*, community to the other fellow members and friends who participate in these programs.

My Introductory Hebrew Crash Course in November was a huge success and I am looking forward to continuing our journey in March. We will shift our focus to conversational Hebrew but we will

“The notion of *Klal Yisrael*, of caring for one another and belonging to a *kehillah* (community), surfaces clearly in the *Purim* story. Today, when most synagogue functions and celebrations are not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions, the notions of belonging and mutual responsibility once again rise to the top and center of our Jewish identity “pyramid.”

“Do not separate yourself from the community.”

The notion of *Klal Yisrael*, of caring for one another and belonging to a *kehillah* (community), surfaces clearly in the *Purim* story. Today, when most synagogue functions and celebrations are not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions, the notions of belonging and mutual responsibility once again rise to the top and center of our Jewish identity “pyramid.”

have enough time to practice and improve our reading skills. Stay tuned for more information on our upcoming remote and in-person *Purim* and Passover celebrations.

I am looking forward to learning, worshiping, and celebrating with everyone and to seeing you on a screen and in person, when possible.

L’shalom,
Alex Tansky
Director of Education
atansky@villagetemple.org

save the date

FEBRUARY

WEDNESDAYS, FEBRUARY 3, 10, 17, 24:

6:00-7:00 PM: Adult Education with Rabbi Fersko: *My Four Favorite stories from Talmud*. Stories are short in length but staggering in depth and meaning. No previous knowledge needed.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11:

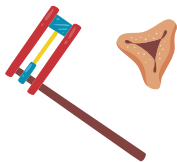
7:00 PM: Jewish Disabilities Awareness, Acceptance, and Inclusion program. Members of our VT community will share stories about their own experiences with physical and mental disabilities, and how they confront the stigma of being labeled “disabled.” Speakers include Stephanie Kanerak, Evan Oppenheimer, Anita Hollander, and others.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25:

6:30 PM: Purim Service and Celebration. Join us for *Purim* Service, *Megillah* reading, and online partying.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27:

2:00 PM: The VT Children’s Choir will perform the *Purim Shpiel* “WickedSpiel” outdoors in front of The VT (Rain or snow date, February 28 same time/place).



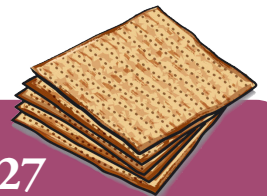
MARCH

WEDNESDAYS, MARCH 3, 10, 17, 24:

6:00-6:45 PM: Hebrew Reading and Modern Conversational Crash Course continues with Alex Tansky. Please email Alex (atansky@villagetemple.org) to sign up.

FRIDAY, MARCH 5 AND SATURDAY, MARCH 6:

6:30 PM: Refugee Shabbat Friday night services; community-wide *Havdallah* service on March 6.



REMINDER: First night of Passover is March 27
Passover-related celebrations will be announced in our eblast
closer to the date

GIVING AT THE VILLAGE TEMPLE

Spotlight on Esther and Joe Siegel

Esther and Joe Siegel have been members of the Village Temple since 1998 and generous supporters of our synagogue, including a substantial bequest to be given after they die. This year, recognizing the financial pressure created by the COVID-19 pandemic, Joe and Esther decided to give part of that money now. *Kesher* spoke to them about why they chose The Village Temple as their spiritual home, and what motivates their philanthropic giving to the synagogue



Q: How did you come to join the Village Temple?

A: In 1998, our grandson Noah was 5 and granddaughter Hannah was 3. Needless to say, but will say it anyway, they were and still are adored by us. We thought it would be a good idea to join a Reform Synagogue and connect our grandchildren to Judaism by being enrolled in a religious school. After attending a Friday evening service, we wanted to become members of the congregation. What we experienced was exactly what we wanted in a synagogue. It was down to earth. There was a warm, welcoming feeling, what you might call “a perfect fit” for us. We became members and registered our dear Noah in the religious school and later Hannah was enrolled.

Q: In 2012 you moved from the Village to an apartment on the Upper West Side? Why didn't you change synagogues to be closer to where you lived?

A: We thought it would make sense to find a synagogue in our new location so we went to several congregations for Sabbath services. And—guess what—we did not find one that felt comfortable for us—not one that could replace our Village Temple. So, we renewed our membership and are happy we made that decision.

Q: Why did you decide to become philanthropic donors to the synagogue?

A: We recognize how important philanthropic support is for institutions that matter so much to us. The Village Temple falls into that category so we included it in our charitable trust for future giving. Both of us grew up at the receiving end of philanthropy and recognize the importance of gratitude and reciprocity. So as soon as we could afford to be philanthropic, we moved in that direction. It does feel good to know that you can help to sustain and maintain the institutions so needed in our lives. We certainly feel rewarded being able to help when needed. The Village Temple is truly deserving of this support.

Q: Why did you decide to reevaluate the timing of your bequest?

A: We are born and bred New Yorkers and are dedicated to its viability, its culture and its multiple strengths. We recognized how important it is to support those institutions that make up the character of the City. The Village Temple represents for us a keystone of importance for Judaism. Consequently, we decided to distribute part of the charitable trust NOW to provide the needed support during this difficult time.

RECENT VILLAGE TEMPLE DONATIONS

Yom Kippur Appeal

Carole Sadler

Sandy & Steve Shore

Stephen Wollman

Andy Amer

Jerry & Wendy Labowitz

Year End Appeal

Susan & Fred Basch

Stephen & Julie Cooper

Emily Hacker & Ann Keating

Gabrielle & Steven Haskell

Ann Temkin & Wayne Hendrickson

Roberta & Brad Karp

Sarah & William King

Joele Frank & Larry Klurfeld

Betsy Krebs & Sheldon Stein

Katherine Lipton & Alex Lipman

Adam Offenhartz

Sheila & Harvey Renert

Mordechai Rosenfeld & Paula Omansky

Sari Scheer & Sam Kopel

Judy Schiff

Nelly Szlachter

Ron & Jennifer Weiss

Harriet Zimmer

Soup Kitchen

Judith Levy

Jake Kent

In Memoriam

Mimi Abrams

Fred & Eileen Eichler

Arthur Rovine & Nelly Szlachter

Harriet Zimmer

In honor of Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Nicole Scheinholz & Carl Milianta (Parker)

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Lilian & Jacob Cohen
(in honor of Ella's Bat Mitzvah)

Bill Abrams & Julie Salamon

How We Celebrated *Chanukah* at The Village Temple

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, we gathered as a community outdoors to celebrate *Chanukah*, and were blessed to hear our Children's Choir and their beautiful voices, led by Anita Hollander.

