

Kesher

THE NEWSLETTER



THE VILLAGE TEMPLE
 Congregation B'nai Israel of New York



What's your favorite kind of hamantaschen? Take the survey inside.

Come as you are. Discover who you are.

March-April 2022 / 5782

Welcome to Kesher

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

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 18 THROUGH FRIDAY, MAY 20

Panim el Panim: Face to Face The Village Temple 2-Day Festival and Annual Benefit



Let's come together again – face to face! Celebrate The Village Temple community during our *Panim el Panim* Festival on Wednesday, May 18 through Friday, May 20.

The *Torah* says that God spoke to Moses face to face in an intimate, revelatory exchange. That's how God delivered the Ten Commandments to Moses – face to face, *panim el panim*. We mark that moment, and the receiving of the Ten Commandments, with the upcoming holiday of *Shavuot*.

This two-day celebration will begin with our annual benefit on Wednesday evening, and continue with a special family *Shabbat* service on Friday.

What a perfect time to begin a new chapter at The Village Temple and in the world. Face to face, *panim el panim*.

You will be receiving an invitation soon. Please join us.

—Rabbi Diana Fersko

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.



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FROM RABBI FERSKO



This season we enter the Hebrew month of *Adar*. *Adar* is a month where we are commanded to be joyful. It is known as a month of jubilation, camaraderie, and happiness. This year, due to the wonders of the Jewish calendar, we get two months of *Adar*. And boy, do we deserve it. After Omicron, isolation, mental health challenges, physical health challenges, and regular every day challenges, we are ready for some time to relax and to laugh. We invite you to come listen to the music of *Jazz Shabbat*, to hear our choir at the *Purim Spiel*, to share a *shabbat* dinner with us and to take advantage of all of the ways our community can help you rejoice. At long last, it's time to have some fun! Wishing you an early *Chag Sameach*.

Rabbi Diana Fersko
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The Bar Mitzvah Boy Seems a Bit Tall: Finally Arriving at the Bima at Age 28



A few weeks ago, 15 years, 3 months, and 2 weeks after my 13th birthday, I became a *bar mitzvah*. I was the child of an interfaith marriage, and was raised Jewish; my

dad asked me and both of my siblings as our tween years approached if we wanted to have a bar mitzvah, and all three of us said no. For me, the choice was easy: I didn't want to give up time from my other extracurricular pursuits to go to Hebrew school, and I already was feeling increasingly distant from my Jewish identity.

For the next 10 years, I didn't regret that choice. Religion and Jewish traditions faded from my life until I moved to New York after college and met Sam, the man who would become my fiancé. Spending Jewish holidays with his family in Montreal reminded me how much more there is to Judaism than the long services that had bored me as a kid. I felt the deep connection to tradition and to family at those seders and *Rosh Hashanah* meals, and began to glimpse what I had been missing in letting my Jewish identity slip away.

As our wedding started to get closer, I realized that I wanted our future children

to be raised Jewish, and to be a part of the traditions in both my and Sam's family that stretch back many generations. And so, I decided that it was time for me to walk the walk; when Sam and I joined The Village Temple last year, I told Rabbi Fersko I wanted to have a *bar mitzvah*. As the rabbi and I worked on *Torah* study together, we spoke about what it means to say "amen." Especially as I became more distant from my Jewish identity during my adolescence,



Isaac with Sam

"amen" became just the word I was supposed to say at the end of a prayer out of routine. But saying "amen" is really a much deeper and personal thing – it is emphatically saying yes, saying "I agree," saying "I identify with that." My personal re-entry into Jewish life has meant not only paying more attention every time I say "amen," but also figuratively saying a big "amen" to Judaism as a whole. And that is, to me, the beauty of the Jewish tradition, and really any community – it requires everyone involved to choose to say "amen" every day, to participate in their community and traditions in accordance with certain rules, but with an awareness that each individual person enriches their community with their own personal experiences and knowledge

Continued on page 6

FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS



As we sit writing this Co-President column on a snowy day in February, we are hoping that by the time this newsletter hits your mailboxes, we are well on our way to a sunny and warm Spring! And with Spring, brings renewal. With the Omicron variant hopefully behind us, and no new variants (that we know of yet) on the horizon, we hope we are getting back to normal (or as normal as life can be during these ever-changing times). Our wish is that you are staying healthy and well and can get out and enjoy being with friends and family.

to check out our [Events page](#) on the Temple website for what's coming up and review our weekly eblasts for all of the latest happenings.

There's nothing like family – and similarly, there's nothing like community; we have a special community and hope to see more of you soon!

We have a jam-packed schedule this Spring – celebrating loads of *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvahs*, *Purim*, Passover – because living and celebrating being Jewish does not stop for pandemics! Please join us in person at services, holiday celebrations, and much more. Be sure

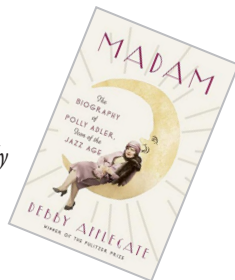
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save the date

MARCH

THURSDAY, MARCH 10:

3:30-4:30 PM: Book Club:
Madam: The Biography of Polly Adler, Icon of the Jazz Age



FRIDAY, MARCH 11:

6:30-7:30 PM: Jazz *Shabbat* followed by an *Oneg*

FRIDAY, MARCH 25:

6:30 PM: Following services, In-Person *Shabbat* dinner @ The VT

APRIL

FRIDAY, APRIL 8:

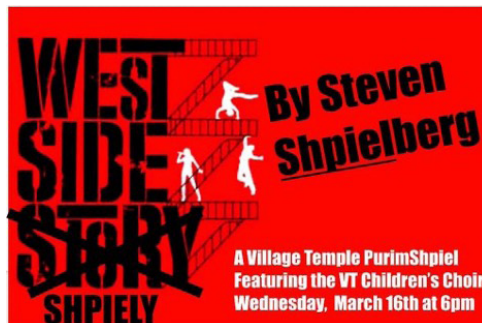
6:30 PM: Pre-Passover-Children's Choir at *Shabbat* Services

FRIDAY APRIL 22:

9:00 AM: *Yizkor* Service on Zoom

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16:

6:00 PM: *Purim* Services followed by the children's choir *Purim Shpiel – West Side Shpiely*



THANK YOU TO OUR MOST RECENT VT DONORS

Fred & Susan Basch

Sheldon Basch

Renee Feinberg

Gabrielle & Steven Haskell

Liz Horwitz & David Glovin

Mickey Rindler & Janet Falk

Sharon Goldman

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL NEWS



Shalom,

The Village Temple Religious School was bursting with activity in January and February. Not only did we cover a great deal of content including *Tu BiShevat*, many Biblical stories and essential *mitzvot*, we reassessed our schedules, and implemented successful changes that translated into even better experiences for everyone. It is amazing to watch our students having such a great time while exploring powerful Jewish ideas and making new friends.

And we can't be more thrilled to usher in March and April and everything they have in store for us. Everyone is so happy and excited to begin our review of *Purim* during the first two weeks of March. It feels like joy is in the air in Religious School as *Purim* approaches and this is not a surprise. The *Talmud* describes not just the day of *Purim* as a happy day but the entire month of *Adar*.

“When the month of Adar enters, we increase in our joy.”
(*Talmud Ta'anit* 29a)

To make our *Purim* celebrations in Religious School as memorable and fun as possible while keeping all safety protocols, we will be creating mini-celebrations in all grade levels; hopefully we will be able to run our beloved community-wide *Purim* Carnival next year. In the meantime, be sure to wear a costume to our in-person *Megillah* Reading and Children's Choir *Purim Spiel* in the sanctuary on March 16.

“In Religious School we will make sure every one of our students will be ready to lead their families with Four Questions and to be a Passover expert around their family table.”

In April, the longer days, warmer temperatures, tree buds, and abundance of daffodils and crocuses in city parks everywhere will be signs also marking the fast-approaching holiday of Passover, and we cannot be more excited to begin our review of stories, songs, and traditions related to this beautiful holiday. In Religious

School we will make sure every one of our students will be ready to lead their families with Four Questions and to be a Passover expert around their family table.

I certainly hope the next two months and the remainder of our Religious School year will be filled with joy, but we have a lot of work ahead of us. The *Talmud* quote above instructs us to “increase our joy” but it does not offer us any specific instructions on how exactly to go about increasing our joy during this time. In Religious School we will continue helping our learners develop and strengthen their Jewish identity and pride while engaging in joyful practices and while learning how to sustain and expand joy to family, community, and beyond.

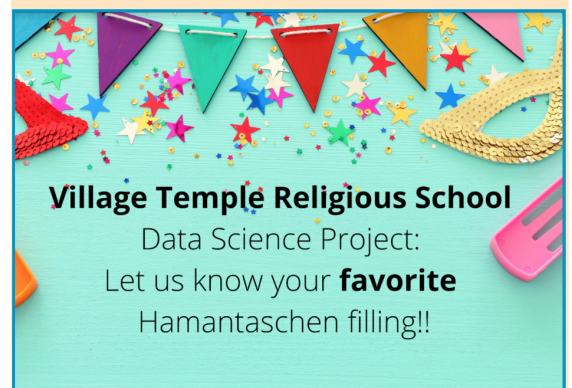
L'shalom,
Alex

atansky@villagetemple.org

Planting karpas for Passover



Please click on
the graphic below to take
our Hamantaschen Flavor Poll!



SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

The Social Action Committee (SAC) has refined its efforts to focus on four main areas of concern: Antisemitism, Racial justice, Earth justice, and Immigration and Human Rights.

“The Afghan Adjustment Act would grant the Afghans evacuated here permanent legal status. Without it, their ability to stay permanently will be significantly harder.”

Over our monthly Zoom calls, SAC has met and planned actions to support Afghan refugees. For example, this winter, the Synagogue Coalition for the Refugee and Immigration Crisis, of which The Village Temple is a member, organized a children’s coat drive for families temporarily housed in Fort Dix, NJ. The

Social Action Committee quickly mobilized and within 10 days, our Village Temple community collected and donated 10 children’s coats. Additionally, 10 adult coats were collected and donated to the Met Council, “the country’s largest Jewish charity serving the needy.” Thank you to all participants!

Additionally, on February 8, several SAC members called their US Congresspersons and Senators, urging them to take action on the [Afghan Adjustment Act](#). “The Afghan Adjustment Act would grant the Afghans evacuated here permanent legal status. Without it, their

ability to stay permanently will be significantly harder. Afghans will have to fight through an unnecessary, incredibly complicated, and expensive legal process to be able to stay. If Congress doesn’t act, this not only makes life much more difficult for the Afghans, but for all who are working so hard to support them.”

To learn more about the Afghan refugee crisis and how you can help, [click here](#).



SAC gladly welcomes new members. Contact [Rachel Glube](#) for more information.

Dayenu Circle—A Jewish Call to Climate Action



DAYENU
A Jewish Call to Climate Action

The VT Dayenu Circle meets monthly to discuss Climate Action and ways to get involved as a Jewish community.

We are planning a spring bird watching event, and all VT members are welcome! Join us for a delightful social and scenic outing. Date and details to come soon.

In the meantime, two VT Dayenu Circle members are about to embark on “[Don’t Kvetch, Organize!](#)” a community organizing training session, six weeks of weekly online learning together with Dayenu Circle members throughout North America, and hosted by The Jewish Organizing Institute and Network for Justice (JOIN for Justice).

We thank The VT for signing the NY Renews Faith Engagement letter to Governor Hochul supporting the NY Renews proposal to allocate \$15 billion for climate, jobs, and justice in this year’s New York State budget, and to fund a just and equitable transition to a renewable energy economy.

Reach out to us at vtdayenucircle@gmail.com for more information.



Meet our B’nei Mitzvah:

March 12: **Isabel Friedman** – *Parashat Vayikra*

April 2: **Yael & Noa Mehler** – *Parashat Tazria*

April 9: **Leah Hodorov** – *Parashat Metzora*

April 23: **Eli & Lulu Burman** – *Special reading for Passover*

Sharing Our Passover Food Traditions

For this issue, our Religious School leader—Alex Tansky—and congregant Gabrielle Machinist, who runs The Village Temple Soup Kitchen and is the owner of [Go Catering](#) in Tribeca, have kindly offered to share some of their Passover food traditions. Go Catering provides catering, staffing, and rentals for professional meetings, dinner parties, and family gatherings. They also offer a weekly “Dinner for Four.” If you try these Passover recipes, please let Alex and Gaby know. You can reach Alex at atansky@villagetemple.org and Gabrielle at gab@gocateringnyc.com.

HORSERADISH AND BEET SAUCE (ala Alex Tansky)

This easy Horseradish and Beet Sauce, *hreïn* in Russian, is a classic Eastern European condiment that goes great with different meats, seafood, or just as a side. It can be used to supplement or replace sliced root horseradish as *maror* on Passover. A spicy and sweet horseradish sauce made with tender beets, horseradish, sugar, imitation vinegar to make it *kosher* for Passover, and salt combined into a delicious sauce to serve with your gefilte fish.



Ingredients:

- 3 medium beets cooked
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup cleaned and chopped horseradish root
- 2 tablespoons imitation vinegar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon sugar

Preparation:

In the food processor, finely chop horseradish and add imitation vinegar. Add the beets and olive oil and continue chopping. Process until the mixture is finely chopped but not pureed. Transfer to a bowl and mix in salt and sugar. Cover and refrigerate for up to two weeks.

MATZOH FARFEL KUGEL (ala Gabrielle Machinist [Go Catering])

I have always felt my Nana sitting on my shoulder when I cook traditional recipes – directions like “a handful”, or “when it starts to feel heavy and comes together but not runny or too wet” make sense to me, especially when I remember the many holiday dinners and can hear the laughter and conversation at our family table. It’s a great memory.



This recipe is a little tweaked because I have made it my own, like Nana would have. I love leeks and the local farmers market makes it easy to enjoy them. I encourage you to add your mark to this dish. It’s delicious!

Ingredients:

- 4 large eggs
- 6 cups matzoh (this is about 8 whole matzohs), broken into medium size pieces
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 2 Spanish onions, diced
- 3-4 leeks, thoroughly rinsed and ½-inch sliced
- 2 cups sliced mushrooms – can be Cremini, Shitake or mixed!
- 4 cups chicken or vegetable stock
- 1 teaspoon marjoram
- 1 teaspoon thyme

Preparation:

350° oven

1. Mix eggs and crushed matzoh in a bowl. Spread on a baking sheet lined with foil (doesn’t hurt to spray the foil to make it easier to remove!) and bake in 350° oven for about 10 minutes to dry. It gets shiny.
2. While matzoh is in oven, melt butter in medium pan and sauté leeks till soft, add onions halfway through. Once leeks and onions are soft, increase to high heat and add sliced mushrooms and continue cooking till just soft.
3. Reduce heat to medium and add matzoh to pan and one cup of broth at a time until absorbed. Add herbs and salt and pepper (to taste) as you incorporate broth to the matzoh and veggie mixture.
4. I usually make this one day in advance, or earlier in all my preparations. I put it into a casserole dish and set aside – cover and refrigerate – and then heat in 350° oven for about 20 minutes, and love to remove the cover (lid or the foil) for the last 10 minutes to get a little crunchy on top. You can also serve it after step 3!

Serves 4-6 people.

The Bar Mitzvah Boy Seems a Bit Tall *continued from page 2*

and interpretations. I am so grateful to Rabbi Fersko, Emma, and the whole VT community for allowing for this very non-traditional *bar mitzvah* to happen, and for giving me an avenue back into Judaism, which has been so deeply meaningful for me.

Kesher thanks Isaac for sharing with the Kesher readership his personal journey on the road to his adult bar mitzvah and re-entry into Judaism.

—Isaac Alter