



## Landmark Celebrations

### PSJC Newsletter



Spring 2025/5785

#### From Rabbi Carie



Pregnancy, applying to college, sending in a resume for a new job, preparing for Bnai Mitzvah, planning a wedding... We recognize these as periods of great uncertainty and as such, often times of high anxiety.

This was the state of the Biblical Israelite each spring, who, in the midst of the barley harvest, the first crop of the season, lived in constant fear of what the next day might bring. Our ancestors were farmers who's future was tied to the unpredictable nature of the weather. They relied on the proper amount of rain to fall at the needed moment for their crops to grow. They were dependent on nature for their well-being, and at no time was that vulnerability more intense than in the weeks leading up to the start of the wheat harvest, *Shavuot*. No one was sure exactly what they would have to bring as the first fruits. Would their crops be abundant or would they struggle to survive? They did not know. It would only take one extreme freeze or one insect infestation to turn a perfect season into a total loss. So people lived with deep uncertainty; unsure if there would be enough.

This feeling of uncertainty and the fear and vulnerability carried with it, can easily become overwhelming. We can feel trapped, unable to move forward when the future looks so unclear. This we know.

When the whole feels overwhelming, it is helpful to break things up into smaller, more manageable pieces. When the Israelites are wandering through the wilderness from Sinai to the Land of Israel, that extensive journey is described in stages, from one location to another, as if to remember that when we break things into manageable bites, we can often handle something that appears overwhelming at first glance. In Biblical days, we were told to assuage this fear by literally counting each day and bringing an *omer* of barley each of these 49 days between Passover and *Shavuot*. This act offers a measure of control in an uncontrollable situation.

Our world today is filled with uncertainty brought on by the policies of the government, by climate change, war, hate, intolerance, antisemitism and more. We as a community, as a society, and as a people are suffering from anxiety and fear. It threatens our well-being in very real way.

It is my prayer that we will be able to use the wisdom of our ancestors and to face our world one day at a time, to be fully present and to count each day. In so doing, by pausing to reflect on the power and the gifts that are ours, even amidst the vast uncertainty of the world, perhaps we will find new ways to make that day (and every day) count, one moment at a time.



**The PSJC Newsletter was printed  
for spring 2025/5785  
by Park Slope Jewish Center (PSJC)**

#### Co-Board Presidents

Stephen Gandel and  
Elizabeth Wollman

#### Rabbi Associate Rabbi

Carie Carter  
Hayley Goldstein

#### Cantor

Judy Ribnick

#### Director of Education and Engagement

Aileen Heiman

#### Administrator

Stephanie Cooke

#### Newsletter Editor/Designer

Elizabeth Schnur

**Photos courtesy of:** Adina Lerner, Aileen Heiman, Itta Weiss, Marc Rentzer, Erik Leiber and Elizabeth Schnur



## From Co-Presidents Stephen Gandel and Elizabeth Wollman



**"There is no *mitzvah* to be joyous, but joy can bring on the greatest *mitzvot*." – Rabbi Aharon of Karlin**

Judging from the national mood, joy has been in pretty short supply lately. The threat of current plagues rivals Biblical ones, anxieties and anger are spiking with the price of eggs, and just about everything seems irreparably broken. But then, the fact that joy is so hard to come by is what makes it so worth chasing and holding onto. While it's certainly challenging to be living through times as challenging as these, we feel incredibly lucky to be so involved in PSJC's vibrant, warm, supportive Jewish community. For all its feast-times and famines, its highs and lows, its *meshugganahs* and *mishegas*, PSJC sparks joy – and prompts us, just as Rabbi Aharon suggests it might, to want to generate more.

Okay, so maybe board meetings are not always the most joyful of tasks — and we'll be overjoyed not to fret over the budget any longer as we take various steps to build up our coffers. But even so, it is always a real joy to serve this place. Our congregation feels like a true oasis lately—a place to pray together, connect with each other, commiserate, mourn, rejoice and give back. Take our monthly Central American Legal Assistance (CALA) clinics, where volunteers help new arrivals with paperwork that makes their status in the US just a little less precarious. Or *Yesod*, through which young Jewish adults network, socialize, worship, and work toward a better world. Or our beloved staff, which works so hard to care for our community, building and safety. Or our dynamic, innovative Hebrew school, where, thanks to the dedication and ingenuity of Aileen Heiman, children and teens learn to be strong, proud, well-informed Jews. Or our Board, which strives to ensure that PSJC will move past financial crisis to lasting fiscal health. The fact that PSJC is almost always buzzing with activity makes us more hopeful than we have been anywhere else lately.

We take pride in the ways PSJC has been stepping up to meet the current political climate, to care for and support others and ourselves. We delight in devising ways to be more representative of varying Jewish perspectives while holding fast to our faith and culture. We delight in Rabbi Carie's patience with, and ongoing support of, a profoundly diverse community, which she regularly encourages to come together and to stand up for what we believe in – including the right to disagree. We also delight in Rabbi Hayley's alternative *Shachrit* Services and all the children's programming Aileen devises to enlighten, educate and entertain our littlest members. At a time when drop-in attendance at synagogue services is declining, our *heimische* services are lively, varied, and spiritually nourishing—if there is anything to be more joyous about, we're not sure what it is.

Even as the world rages outside PSJC's doors, joy inside has been infectious. We kicked off the new year with a magical, musical *Shabbat* in January to celebrate the installation of Rabbi Hayley Goldstein as our associate rabbi, and have since been treated to other fabulous events, like the *Lev Tahor* PSJC Trivia Night, the hilarious and moving Purim *spiel*, the Purim carnival, and the phenomenal Havdalah, History and Highballs, Oh My! evening, commemorating our building's 100th anniversary and 25 years of leadership by Rabbi Carie. This is all, of course, in addition to the many *b'nai mitzvah* other *simchas*, and themed *shabbatot* that are regularly on offer in our sanctuary.

The 100 Years Committee, headed by the hardworking and good-humored Esther Schwalb, has already come up with so many fun, creative, exciting ways to celebrate all the *nachas* and landmarks happening at PSJC in 2025, but we can't wait for the **June 8 Gala!** The idea of a fancy early summer gathering in our beautiful new yard, where we will nosh on *hors d'oeuvres*, dance to groovy tunes and toast our beloved rabbi and dear building will surely be wonderful. We very much look forward to seeing and celebrating with you all in early June 8th gala, to giving generously, and to ensuring that PSJC remains the special place it has been for the next hundred years.

Thanks PSJC, for being such a dynamic community and for all your support and *mitzvot*! To the next century!





## From Hayley Goldstein Associate Rabbi

“To be fully alive, fully human, and completely awake is to be continually thrown out of the nest. To live fully is to be always in no-man’s-land, to experience each moment as completely new and fresh. To live is to be willing to die over and over again.”

This is what Pema Chodron, an American-born Buddhist nun, writes in her famous book *When Things Fall Apart*, and it could not feel more relevant to this moment. Since the Presidential Inauguration, it has felt like things are continually falling apart in our world — websites being erased, rights being revoked, executive orders being thrown around, chaos increasing in the air — and the carpet seems to have been ripped out from under us. What I’ve been learning from reading Pema Chodron is that things are always fundamentally groundless, uncertain, and unknown. When things are falling apart, as they seem to be now, in some ways we are more in touch with the reality of the human experience than ever, more in touch with reality than when things are seemingly peaceful and calm. In some ways, right now we are face to face with what it means to be alive, whether we like it or (most likely) not.

In this time of falling apart community, prayer, song and joy are even more valuable and precious. Since January, we have held onto each other in so many ways. In addition to our monthly *Yesod Shabbat* Dinners (now hosted in members’ homes), and monthly social events, we had our first ever *Yesod Shabbat* service, where folks in their 20s and 30s led different parts of the service, *leyned Torah*, opened the Ark, and more. It was a moment of excitement and made us all wonder what a more regular *Yesod* presence in the sanctuary could look like.

Another huge highlight for me was my installation in January, which felt like an enormous gift from the community (particular thanks to Florence Hutner and Angela Weisl for all their hard work in putting it together). Through music, song, food, and laughter, we celebrated *Shabbat* and this community. Even though I have been at PSJC for a year and a half, it felt like an official welcome — the kind of welcome that PSJC is best at: warm, loving, and fun.

Since then, it’s been such an honor to be helping out with *Lev Tahor*, scheming together about how to infuse the monthly *Kabbalat Shabbat* with some of the energy we felt at my installation. Since January, we’ve moved *Lev Tahor* upstairs and added some instruments, which have been so fun to play with. I am honored and excited to be part of the planning team.

Looking ahead, even as we never know what the future holds and what will be needed of us, we continue to plan. Continuing to grow *Yesod*, through a mix of social and religious events, is a main goal. Adding more Adult Ed to the synagogue is another goal, as well as continuing to support Rabbi Carie and the synagogue as a whole.

As Pema teaches, “Letting there be room for not knowing is the most important thing of all. When there’s a big disappointment, we don’t know if that’s the end of the story. It may just be the beginning of a great adventure. Life is like that. We don’t know anything. We call something bad; we call it good. But really we just don’t know.”

In other words, “Humans plan and God laughs.” We may not know what is to come, but we can lean into each other, our prayers, our texts, and our sacred calendar, to guide us into the ever unfolding unknown.

## Chag Sameach!



**Yesod Hanukkah and Purim parties**



**From Aileen Heiman  
Director of Education and Engagement  
Education and Family Programming**



I recently asked a number of our Hebrew School students what was their favorite part of celebrating Passover, and the answers ranged from beloved recipes to *seder* table traditions to just spending time with family. It demonstrated why the *se-*

*der* is the most observed Jewish tradition, bringing more Jews to the table than any other. The *haggadah* teaches that “in every generation, a person is obligated to see themselves as if they went out from Egypt,” tasking each of us with finding ourselves in the story. When a ritual is designed to be accessible to all ages and stages, involves all of the senses, and encourages creativity, it opens pathways to our traditions and texts. As we enter the next century of PSJC’s story, we should celebrate the ways that this community has opened new doors to Jewish tradition and community for our members.



**Scenes from Hebrew School:  
Study!**

In PSJC Hebrew School classrooms, our social-emotional-spiritual approach to Jewish learning is prioritizing community building, changing our grade names this year from “*kitah*” (class) to “*kehillah*” (community). We want our students to ask the big questions, such as why God allows evil to exist, or what a non-binary person getting married is called in place of a *chattan* or *kallah*? Late winter and early spring are filled with *beloved* traditions that center joyful Jewish moments for our students, including hugging a tree in Prospect Park on *Tu Bishvat* or *Yom Hot Cocoa* on a snowy afternoon.



**More scenes from Hebrew School:  
Play!**

Warmer temperatures brought the return of the PSJC GaGa Pit, an exciting addition to Hebrew School sessions, a gift from the board of trustees as part of the yard revitalization. Highlights of this spring include the fourth grade Rock Wedding and the annual PSJC *Tzedakah* Fair, both of which connect our students to ancient traditions in new and engaging ways. We were excited this year to receive a grant from UJA-Federation of NY to expand the fair to include hands-on service projects to provide much needed support to local organizations such as CHiPS and Camp Friendship.

As we look ahead towards the end of the year and planning for next year, our faculty team is reflecting on what worked well this year and what changes we might want to consider for next year. Currently we are thinking on how our Hebrew and *Tefillah* curriculum may shift to meet the realities of post-covid Hebrew learning, in terms of time and modalities. The continued success of our Hebrew through Movement program offers answers about ways that off-the-page learning can be used to tap into student energy. We are also exploring ways to expand the *Shabbaton* program, creating more opportunities next year for students and families to participate in *Shabbat* programming as part of the Hebrew School calendar.

Opening doors to the Jewish story at PSJC expands far beyond the Hebrew School, including opportunities for our teens to engage, learn, and socialize through BBYO, *HaZamir*, and *Gesher*. These programs provide a unique space for teenagers to build lifelong friendships, deepen their connection to Jewish culture, and participate in leadership development, including three PSJC teens serving on the leadership board of *Yalla BBYO*.





By offering a range of programs and committees for all of our members, PSJC is fostering a sense of belonging, where individuals can explore their faith and heritage at their own pace and in ways that resonate with them. We continue to grow as more than a place of worship, but also as a hub for learning and connection, drawing people together through shared experiences. We have welcomed new members throughout the year and welcomed back members as part of our landmark celebration. I look forward to connecting with you throughout the spring, and feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns or just to meet over a cup of coffee. As we look ahead towards membership renewal season, Hebrew School recruitment, and our Gala celebration and fundraiser, I will continue to look back to the lessons of the Passover seder and the words of "in every generation we are obligated to tell the story." What is the story you want to tell and how can PSJC help you in that process?

### From Cantor Judy Ribnick

This article is excerpted and adapted from Cantor Ribnick's 2025 Shabbat Shirah *D'rash*. To listen to the full talk go to: <https://www.psjc.org/psjc-videos>.



"Across 1920s Brooklyn, first- and second-generation Jewish-Americans built large synagogues, putting down new roots in their new country. They were creating houses of worship, and at the corner of 14th Street and 8th Avenue, they were also launching an institution that would come to embody many of the significant changes in American Jewish life. From its Yiddish-speaking, Orthodox origins, PSJC evolved into today's egalitarian Conservative congregation, where men and women and all people share equally in the rights and responsibilities of religious and community life." (from the PSJC website "History" page, written by Aric Press)

Today we're going on a musical time-travel journey to explore some of the sacred music that members of Congregation *Tiferet* Israel - now known as the PSJC - very likely heard and sang, as well as introduce two renowned Brooklyn cantor-composers who helped create and shape American Jewish sacred music.

When it comes to the music of the synagogue, there are certain rules that have been followed for hundreds of years. For example, the "*freygish*" scale is the foundation upon which the "*Ahavah Rabbah*" mode is based, and is used for *Shacharit* and *Musaf*

on *Shabbat* and at other times. The *freygish* and other scales we use were developed in medieval Northern and Western Europe at least 900 years ago and became the sound-world of Ashkenazi Jews. Many people who have never set foot in a synagogue have heard music in the *Ahavah Rabbah* mode because it is the basis for *Havah Nagilah*, written in 1918, which began life as a *Hasidic niggun*. It's very likely that our forebears in Congregation *Tiferet* Israel also knew these *freygish* melodies: "*Yism'chu b'ma-le-chu-techa*," "*V'taher libeinu*" and "*Sim, sim, sim shalom*." This sound, this mode, is very familiar to our ears, just as it was to congregants 100 years ago.

But it's more than modes that go into our synagogal music. Consider the music of the High Holy Day evening services. They are part of a group of melodies called "*Mi-Sinai*" ("from Sinai"), which date back to the 11th or 12th century. These melodic themes are considered to be among our people's most sacred possessions, travelling with us from country to country through the centuries.

Synagogue music is also comprised of the compositions of talented cantors and gifted composers who have beautified our prayers. The Hasidic *Kaddish* that we sing at the end of High Holiday services, written by Pinchos Minkowsky and made famous by Yossele Rosenblatt, is an example of such a melody.

Yosef "Yossele" Rosenblatt was an Ashkenazi cantor and composer. He was born in Ukraine in 1882 and emigrated to the US in 1912. He was regarded by some as the greatest cantor in cantorial music's "Golden Age," (1900 - 1930). In 1928, "Yossele" signed a 10-year contract with a Borough Park shul just a few miles from PSJC. People packed the synagogue every time he led services. It's possible that members of Congregation *Tiferet* Israel snuck out of services to hear this virtuoso!



**Yossele Rosenblatt**

[Continued on next page]



## Cantor Ribnick – continued

Rosenblatt made hundreds of recordings. His greatest hit was the recording of "*Shir Hama'alot*," Psalm 126, to a tune composed by Pinchos Minkowsky. This psalm is chanted on festive occasions and *Shabbat* just before *Birkat HaMazon* (Grace after Meals). This melody from the early 20th century became so popular that soon it was considered to be the "traditional" tune for the psalm. When the new State of Israel was looking for a National Anthem, Rosenblatt's rendition of "*Shir Hama'alot*" was a serious contender. We still chant it today.

There's another early 20th-century composer, Israel Goldfarb, whose music is memorable. Born in Galicia, Poland, in 1879, Goldfarb immigrated to New York in 1893, and was ordained in 1902 as a rabbi from the Jewish Theological Seminary. In 1905, Israel Goldfarb was appointed cantor/Sunday school director at Kane Street Synagogue, and a year later also as their rabbi. He kept the position of rabbi/cantor until his death in 1956. Goldfarb's main focus was on youth, and in order to bring the young generation closer to Judaism, he created melodies for congregational singing. The most famous example is his rendering of "*Shalom Aleichem*," composed in 1918, which we still sing today. The melody became a favorite, and traveled beyond Brooklyn, throughout the U.S. and the world, where it became a "traditional" melody for welcoming the Sabbath angels. Our predecessors of Congregation *Tifereth Israel* probably were among the first to hear this version of *Shalom Aleichem* and other melodies Israel Goldfarb created such as *Mah Tov*, *Va-yechulu*, and the *Kiddush* for *Erev Shabbat*. It's exciting and moving to me that Goldfarb's melodies, like *Shalom Aleichem* and the *Kiddush*, and the many melodies Yossele Rosenblatt popularized including *Shir ha-Ma-alot* and the *Hasidic Kaddish*, have been sung in this very sanctuary and shul for 100 years.

We at the PSJC have inherited centuries-old sacred music traditions, as well as beautiful music that came out of Brooklyn 100 years ago. We have also sustained and transmitted these holy sounds from generation to generation. May we have the *z'chus*, the merit, to continue praying and singing these melodies and, like Israel Goldfarb, bring the next generation closer to Judaism with new ones in PSJC's next century.

## From Stephanie Cooke PSJC Administrator

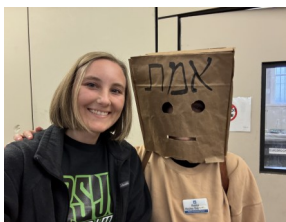


As we move into spring, I want to recognize the incredible work of our PSJC staff. From keeping events running smoothly to managing daily operations, their dedication keeps our community thriving. A heartfelt thank you to each of them for their commitment and hard work.

Purim was a wonderful celebration filled with joy, laughter, and community spirit — thank you to everyone who helped make it so memorable! As we look ahead, we're excited for our upcoming **Gala and Fundraising Event on June 8th**. Mark your calendars for a fantastic evening in support of PSJC!

Our outdoor space is also getting some attention. The tent is up and ready for another season of gatherings, and we'll be tackling some additional landscaping in the coming weeks. Join us — grab your gardening gloves, connect with fellow PSJCers, and help beautify our grounds. It's a great way to enjoy the fresh air while contributing hands-on.

With a season full of programs and celebrations ahead, I encourage everyone to stay engaged. Whether through volunteering, attending an event, or just stopping by, your presence makes PSJC the special place it is. Looking forward to seeing you all soon!



Stephanie and  
the Golem (AKA  
Rabbi Hayley) on  
Purim



PSJC Staff Members  
Prepare for Purim!





## PAI Update

PAI has offered a host of experiences for both body and spirit during the past season.

Sessions in “Yoga for Strength and Balance” taught by Angela Weisl are a new addition to our schedule. This new offering has been drawing members who are glad to have the opportunity to dust off their yoga mats and get in better shape.

We’ve also been out and about for a local tour of “Art on the Avenue,” a project which uses empty local stores (in this case the site of the pharmacy on 7th Avenue at 5th Street) to display work by local artists. A Walk & Talk tour of Crown Heights, led by Sue Herskovitz, is planned for April.

Health has always been a topic of interest for our members. This season we have been able to offer talks connected with professional staff from local hospitals. We learned about the “Prevention and Treatment of Strokes,” about the symptoms and treatment of diabetes, and even learned about colorectal cancer.

Of course, our Shared Wisdom program has maintained its broad range. Faye Honig offered insights into the jury process in “From Focus Group to Jury Selection,” Jeanne Stellman provided a riveting discussion of “Vietnam and PTSD,” Sarah Chin gave a detailed and timely picture of “Immigration to the United States,” and Daniel Soyer explored personal family history as a source of information about life in “the old country,” and its transformation in the US. Michael Rieman offered sessions on poetry and visual arts, connecting poetry across several centuries.



**PAI Book Group**

The Book Club has maintained its reputation for a range of choices and lively meetings. This year, the Club has read Claudia Pineiro’s novel, *A Little Luck*, (with the participation of the author, thanks to Susana Honig’s translation skills), James McBride’s *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store*, Elena Fer-

rante’s *My Brilliant Friend*, Benjamin Labatut’s *The Maniac*, and Philip Roth’s *American Pastoral*.

The Food for CHIPS program has continued to thrive, and to provide food and other essentials to those in need. A donation of several baby blankets, made by our own PAI/PSJC knitters, has recently been delivered to the residence for young mothers at the site.



## Blankets for CHIPS New Mothers Residence

On the lighter side, we continue to learn and enjoy our *Mah Jong* sessions, which have been offered on the first Saturday of each month at PSJC.

PAI would like to acknowledge and thank one of our founders, Jan Orzeck, who has moved north to Westchester. We wish Jan *hatzlachah* (best of luck) in her new digs and we will miss her!

PAI continues to be a resource for all its members. You can contact us if you have questions or suggestions for the program by writing to [positiveaquiring@psjc.org](mailto:positiveaquiring@psjc.org).



**Don't miss this other important anniversary — Many PSJC members are part of Shir Chadash!**



## Speaking of Israel Update

PSJC is a shul with deep connections with Israel. We are also a pluralistic community. With these values in mind, we presented a variety of Israel-themed programs, while incorporating Israel-focused rituals in *Shabbat* and other services.

Much of our activity around Israel has continued to focus on 10/7 and its aftermath. We marked the terror attacks during *Shemini Azeret* and *Simchat Torah* services. We also participated in numerous events to support the hostages and their families, including Zoom programs with Israeli leaders. On October 7 we were part of a communal memorial, where we joined other synagogues in Brownstone Brooklyn to mark the tragedy. In addition to these events, we have continued our custom of reciting *Acheinu*, a prayer for hostages, every Shabbat, and we continue to leave an empty chair on the bimah in honor of the hostages who cannot be with us.

There was plenty of programming that looked to Israel's post-10/7 future. We offered access to the *Tikvah Tachles* series. The presenters discussed options for how Israel can create new opportunities in the Middle East in the aftermath of the wars against Hamas and Hezbollah. Other programming included:

- ♦ We hosted Rotem Oreg, founder of the Israeli-democratic alliance, who discussed strategies for Israel boosters to talk about the country to American liberal audiences.
- ♦ Avi Dabush, executive director of Rabbis for Human rights, and a survivor of the 10/7 attacks, spoke about his work inside Israel.
- ♦ We co-sponsored an event at the Kane Street Synagogue, to hear from Roots – *Judur – Shorashim*, an Israeli-Palestinian organization fostering understanding, nonviolence, and transformation between Jews and Palestinians living in the West Bank.

In addition, our *Lev Tahor* series picked up on the theme of coexistence. Our *shlichah*, Lior Lekner, discussed her home in the Jordan Valley, *Kibbutz Narran*. This community is committed to reaching out to their Palestinian neighbors to foster mutual understanding. Lior described the meetings Kibbutz members have had with their Palestinian counterparts. At another *Lev Tahor*, Yael Yechieli, founder of "Partnership for Gender Equality 5050," spoke about her organization's push to have women comprise fifty

percent of every Israeli political institution. She and her partners have been pressuring left-leaning political parties to include women candidates in the top spots on their election slates.

There will be plenty more Israel-focused programming over the next few months:

- ♦ On April 27 we will hear from R Elhanan Miller, a Jerusalem rabbi who will discuss Jewish-Arab identity and Israel's future.
- ♦ On May 18 we will be marching with other Brooklyn synagogues and Jewish organizations in the "Israel on Fifth" parade. Please join us!
- ♦ On May 22 Gil Getz, a peace activist, photojournalist, and actor will be live at PSJC. This very special event is in memory of Rabbi Jeff Marker.

This list of future events is only a sampling of what is to come. Check the weekly e-blast for updates and details. Please also remember to vote in the World Zionist Congress elections. Voting is ongoing through May 2. Voting information is available in the weekly PSJC e-blast.

-Ben Krull



Jewish tradition is rooted in a concern for justice and freedom from oppression – a theme that is front and center at Passover, but that defines the very core of who we are as a people. PSJC's Rodfei Tzedek (Pursuers of Justice) Group is deeply committed to do whatever we can for *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the World). This work is needed now more than ever.

Upcoming opportunity to help: From May 4 - 8, PSJC will be responsible for staffing the Respite Shelter for the unhoused at Congregation *Beth Elohim*. This includes providing dinner, dessert, or staying overnight (see below for volunteer details).

PSJC and *Rodfei Tzedek* have been working for justice on any number of fronts:

Our **Refugee Work Group**, led by Laura Wolfe and Rachel Danzig, has been quite active. With Refugee *Shabbat*, letter-writing campaigns, the CALA Clinic (profiled in an earlier Newsletter) and so much more, we seek justice for individuals fleeing violence and seeking refuge in our country.





Our **Criminal Justice Work Group**, led by June Zeitlin and Leslie Salzman, continues to work with the Jewish Coalition for Criminal Justice Reform advocating for a variety of issues (closing Rikers, bail reform, etc.). They have also arranged for groups to visit Rikers Island to participate in worship services with women who are incarcerated.

We organized PSJC **Martin Luther King Day of Service** – a popular annual event that brings shul members of all ages together for a day of activities including preparing food and snacks for food banks, a children's book drive, writing advocacy letters to representatives about immigration and prison reform. (See MLK photos on the next page). This year we achieved the following:

- 472 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for Chips Soup Kitchen
- 358 soup kits for Chips and Camp Friendship Food Pantry
- 40 Frozen Meals for *shul* members in need
- 184 bags of gorp and 190 snack kits for the NYC Family Justice Center
- 3 completed baby blankets, and 7 more in progress for Methodist Hospital Newborn Baby Unit
- 31 banker's boxes of books for Brooklyn Book Bodega
- Advocacy letters to Senators and Representatives
- Drawings for Color A Smile, which delivers them to nursing homes, hospitals, etc.
- Collection of MetroCards, winter gloves and mittens for CommonPoint Queens, which serves immigrants and refugees

We have also led periodic **food drives** for the Camp Friendship Food Pantry, and we will be participating in PSJC's **Tzedakah Fair**, providing more opportunities for engaging in advocacy around both refugee/immigration issues and criminal justice reform, and raising money to support HIAS/CommonPoint Queens

Finally, there are so many more ways that *Rodfei Tzedek* could be helping to repair the world. We are structured around work groups focusing on specific areas. If there is some issue you are passionate about and would like to build a new work group, we welcome you! Please contact the us at [rodfei.tzedek@psjc.org](mailto:rodfei.tzedek@psjc.org) or speak with the Rabbis.

#### Details for Volunteering at Respite Shelter at Congregation Beth Elohim , Sunday, May 4 - Thursday, May 8

To sign up: go to: <https://tinyurl.com/PSJCCBEshelter>

#### What do volunteers do :

1. **PROVIDE AND SERVE DINNER:** Volunteers may sign up to provide dinner (prepared off premises) for 8 - 10 people, including volunteers -- a nutritious, protein-based meal -- bring it to CBE and serve it buffet-style to our guests. If signing up for dinner, please arrive at 7:15 pm and plan to depart around 8 pm. Two people or two families/groups may sign up (working together on the menu and food) and children may assist parents. Please DO NOT sign up for dessert if you sign up for dinner. Let someone else bring dessert.
2. **PROVIDE DESSERT:** Please deliver the dessert by 7:00 pm and give it to the Evening Coordinator or the Dinner volunteers. There is no need to stay.
3. **STAY OVERNIGHT:** Volunteers (both men & women) may sign up to sleep overnight at CBE in the Rotunda at 274 Garfield Place. There will be cots and clean linens on site. Please plan to arrive by 7:30 pm and plan to depart by 6:30 am the next morning, after the guests leave. At least two adults must be present and teens (age 12 and over) may stay overnight with parents. We have up to 4 cots available for volunteers.. (Teens may get community or *b'nai mitzvah* service for volunteering; ask for a letter.)

If you need to cancel one of these responsibilities, please provide at least 48 hours notice to Lisa Altshuler at 347-613-9302. Thank you.

#### Cemetery Committee Update

PSJC holds rights to gravesites at Beth David Cemetery (Elmont, Long Island) and New Mount Carmel Cemetery (Glendale, Queens). Graves in these cemeteries, like others in and around New York City, are scarce and valuable — but members of PSJC in good standing may purchase them from PSJC at favorable prices (as of 7/1/24, \$1,800 per standard grave in Beth David Cemetery; \$2,700 in Mt. Carmel). The Executive Committee has approved price rises to \$2,700 and \$3,600, respectively, on 7/1/25.

The Cemetery Committee is authorized to complete the paperwork on behalf of PSJC relating to these cemeteries. You can get more details about purchasing graves, registering deeds with the cemeteries, restrictions regarding burials, etc. by contacting the office, the Rabbi or [Cemetery@psjc.org](mailto:Cemetery@psjc.org).

- Matthew Eilenberg, Cemetery Committee Chair



MLK Day

### A Garden Blooms on Eighth Avenue

In a scene straight out of an Isaac Bashevis Singer tale, our yard was a tangle of mud and misfortune. A *davener* emerged from services rubbing a splinter from her palm, an impish child launched a ball into a puddle, and a *tallit* came away speckled with muddy bits. Our community's cast of characters sought refuge in the yard to *schmooze* and rejoice and ended up, instead, contemplating the complex human condition.

Where many saw only crumbling rubber mats and clay, the sage Rabbi Carie saw an opportunity — and green! Sprinkling her vision into a conversation here, a sermon there, she slowly built up a dedicated yard committee to make her vision a reality! Through dozens of generous donations, the committee worked with a local landscape design/build firm to carefully redesign the yard to manage the stormwaters and to balance beauty, utility, and biodiversity. The Committee (David Tepper, Lise Engber, Sharon Tepper, Nicole Shaw, Yair Reiner, and Carrie Sadovnik) worked hand in hand with landscaping experts Lise Engber and Rachel Goldstein, to ensure that the design offered resilience, flexibility, and ecological benefits.

In less than 6 months after funds were raised, construction commenced, and with dozens of volunteers, the fence was painted and plants planted. The space has been transformed from a waterlogged splinter farm to a beautiful bluestone plateau abutted by a rain garden, encircled by native wildflowers, shrubs, and ferns, ready for the chil-

dren, the revelers, and the contemplators to come — a garden that supports both our diverse community and environment.

The yard has already seen its share of *simchat*, as well as a BBQ and ribbon cutting, poetry and song in the Sukkah, and many vigorous games of gaga with the *Hebrew School*. Humming along, the yard is now officially offered as a rentable event space on the PSJC website. The *davener* now emerges from services, smooth hand in hand with family, imagining their children's *b'nai mitzvah* among flowering shrubs - laurels and azalea, while the young trees — laurel and sumac — stand by as quiet witness.

In this Landmark year, more transformative steps are planned. The young plantings need drip lines to be installed. The *daveners* need seats for outdoor services and *shmoozing*. The revelers need light for exchanging vows and lifting the chairs. The donors deserve plaques and engravings. Will you join us in writing this next chapter in the yard's history? Volunteer with us by sending an email to [yard@psjc.org](mailto:yard@psjc.org)?

Isaac Bashevis Singer once wrote, "What nature delivers to us is never stale. Because what nature creates has eternity in it." So, too, the PSJC yard, this new green space, will bloom year after year, offering the community a place of beauty and renewal for generations to come.

- Carrie Sadovnik



Garden Barbecue Celebration (including GaGa Pit!)





## Avodah Update:

### Thoughts during this momentous year of celebrations

The celebrations in honor of the dual 100th anniversary of PSJC's building and 25th anniversary of Rabbi Carie's installation have already commenced and will surely carry on fabulously throughout the rest of this spring. Truly it is an occasion to take a look backward at all that we have accomplished in our shared history here at PSJC.

However, we cannot tether ourselves only to the deeds, methods, and practices of the past; we must continue to adapt to meet the needs of the community. In his book, *Flexigidity: The Secret of Jewish Adaptability & Challenge and Opportunity Facing Israel*, Gidi Grinstein posits that the secret to Jewish survival through the millennia is the carefully cultivated tension between old and new, between maintaining tradition and intentional innovation.

With this in mind, I want to announce one measure of thoughtful innovation that will be brought to the PSJC community by the *Avodah* Committee during this Omer period — that is the 49 days stretching from the second evening of *Pesach* through the night before *Erev Shavuot*. Each evening during this period, *Avodah* will send out the appropriate blessings and formulations for that evening along with a short teaching, meditation, or anecdote collected from the members of *Avodah*, our Rabbis, or others in the PSJC community. We hope that you will find it to be a meaningful addition to your current practices, or a helpful introduction to a fascinating period of the Jewish calendar (or both!). Look out for introductory emails from Rabbi Carie shortly before *Pesach*. Thank you all for exploring the balance between flexibility and rigidity here at PSJC with us in the Omer period. Wishing everyone a joyous, kosher *Pesach* holiday!

- Eli Wolfhagen, Avodah Committee Chair

## Hevra Kadisha Update

Generally, the work of a *Hevra Kadisha*, or Jewish burial society, happens outside public view, as unnamed members of the community come together in modesty and humility to perform the sacred *mitzvah* of caring for someone who has died, in accordance with the beautiful rituals prescribed by Judaism. Indeed, burial and the preparations leading to the burial are called *chesed shel emet* (truest kindness) because there is no expectation of reward when caring for someone who has passed away.

However, once a year, members of the *Hevra Kadisha* and the community at large gather together to recognize individuals who are involved with this sacred work and to acknowledge the important role of the *Hevra Kadisha* in the community. This is often connected to the 7th of *Adar*, which according to tradition is the day that Moses died and was buried.

This year's PSJC *Hevra Kadisha* dinner, held on March 9, 2025, was particularly significant because it marked the 20th anniversary of the founding of our *Hevra Kadisha*. PSJC is one of the first Conservative congregations to have its own *Hevra Kadisha*, and it has become a valued and important aspect of the synagogue community.

The evening began with a beautiful *Lev Tahor* service. During the program, Rabbi Regina Sandler-Philips, whose vision and work were fundamental in developing the *Hevra Kadisha* at PSJC, shared the story of its origins, and reflected on the difference that it has made in our community over time. We paused to honor members of the *Hevra Kadisha* who passed away, and there was an opportunity for current members to share the impact their involvement in the *Hevra* has had in their lives. Others spoke of the comfort and support they felt when the *Hevra* cared for one of their loved ones who had died.

Our hope is that looking back at the founding of our *Hevra Kadisha*, and taking note of its important work at PSJC, will inspire us to lend our hands to strengthen it, so that it can continue to be a source of support and connection within the community. For more information about joining or supporting the work that we do, please reach out to us at [hevra.kadisha@PSJC.org](mailto:hevra.kadisha@PSJC.org).

- Eden Wofsey and Florence Hutner  
Hevra Kadisha Co-Chairs





## FOMO is your Friend!

Many people suffer from Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and we typically think of this as a problem. However, FOMO, like guilt (a particular Jewish challenge!), can be a good thing too, and act as a motivator: the proverbial kick in the pants.

I think of this every year when the summer is ending and the High Holy Days are fast approaching. We start to get caught up in the busyness of the new school year, cooking for *Rosh Hashanah* meals, and all of the quotidian hubbub of our post-summer lives. How then do we slow down and start the process of reflection that will allow us to fully experience the Days of Awe?

One answer, dating back to at least the ninth century CE is “*Selichot*.” Originally penitential prayers recited in the days leading up to the High Holy Days, most communities have a *Selichot* service on the Saturday before Rosh Hashanah in the evening, when Jewish mystical tradition tells us that we are closest to the Divine presence.

The *Selichot* Service at PSJC is to my mind the most beautiful and moving experience in the Jewish calendar. We come together with rabbis and cantors from all over the Brooklyn liberal Jewish landscape, and the outcome is awesome in its truest sense. The cantors, in particular, make it amazing as they sing together with instruments and harmony, to produce an experience that is reflective, penitential and ultimately joyous.



Selichot at PSJC in 2024

And this is where FOMO comes in: MOST OF THE PSJC COMMUNITY IS MISSING OUT! While there is always good attendance at Selichot services from the many participating *shuls*, very few of the attendees are from PSJC. I have never understood why so many of us do not attend. So this year, don't miss out again! Don't miss this inspiring evening! Put the night of **September 13th** on your calendar and come to immerse yourself in an experience that can lead you into the High Holy Days with deep contemplation and abiding joy.

-Elizabeth Schnur



*Selichot* prayer leaf (c. 8th–9th century) discovered in the famous Mogao Caves of Dunhuang, Gansu, China in 1908 by Paul Pelliot (Source: Wikipedia)

## Kitchen Club

We recently launched an exciting new culinary effort at PSJC: the Kitchen Club. The PSJC Kitchen Club (PSKC) is bringing together members of our community who love to cook and bake and *kibbitz*. The idea is to pool our kitchen talents once a month in the service of preparing a *kiddush* for the upcoming *shabbat*. The hope is to continue providing meals while seeking out other opportunities to expand what we can do beyond *kaddushim*. For instance, *Kiddush Club* will be providing prepared food items to be sold at the PSJC Rummage Sale on May 4. Be sure to buy something delicious at the Sale! Also, enjoy future Kitchen Club *kiddushim* on April 26, May 10, and June 21.

If you would like to sponsor an upcoming PSKC *Kiddush*, we will make a dish of your choosing (if possible) and create a calligraphed sign to be displayed at the lunch honoring your generosity. To join PSKC please submit your info (address below) for our mailing list. Kitchen Club meets to prepare the food at 6:30 pm on the Thursday evening before the designated *shabbat* while also sharing a potluck dinner. And don't worry, this is a club, not a committee. The commitments are loose and the opportunities are plentiful! Contact: [gselig@mac.com](mailto:gselig@mac.com)

- Gregory Selig, Kitchen Club Organizer





## A Living Memory

Another PSJC event that many people don't know enough about is the annual Prospect Park cleanup. A group of PSJC adults and a few children come together to pick up garbage and collect leaves for mulch. The park supplies instruction, rakes, and "bear claws," to scoop up the leaves. It's real work but also fun, and this past year we collected over 40 bags of leaves!

The clean-up began more than 20 years ago, when the then-Hebrew School principal asked Fran Hawthorne to organize a nature-based event for the students in recognition of *Tu B'Shvat*, a holiday that is known as the "New Years for the trees," and one that has become associated with ecology. A Prospect Park cleanup seemed like a way of doing a small bit of good for the world, while also being outdoors. However, while the almond trees may be blooming in Israel at that time of year, February in NYC is not so hospitable, so the clean-up moved to warmer times and morphed into a general PSJC-wide *Tikkun Olam* project. Fran continued to organize the cleanup for more than ten years — long after her son graduated from Hebrew School — and when she needed to step aside, she asked if any of the loyal participants would be willing to take it over. Our beloved member, Steven Radwell, z"l stepped up and took on the organization. After Steve's untimely death, PSJC and Steve's widow, Louise Heit-Radwell, decided to dedicate the project to Steve's memory, and she now coordinates the cleanup along with Carrie Sadovnik.



**An early PSJC Park Cleanup**  
Steven Radwell z"l is kneeling in the back row  
These kids are in college or beyond now!



**Louise and Steven's brother Seth**  
**At the 2024 Prospect Park Cleanup**

Steven was born and raised in Brooklyn. He loved the park and remembered going there with his parents, so it seemed like a natural fit for him to lead the effort. He often coordinated the clean-up with the Hebrew School to try and get more families involved, and the cleanup continues to be a great activity for children and adults alike. There is a sweetgum tree that Louise had planted in Steve's memory on the side of the Picnic House, and there are photos of Steven's life attached to the gate protecting the tree, including a photo of him over 30 years ago in Prospect Park's Long Meadow, smiling and holding two plastic bags, which must have been blowing around the field — serving as a steward of the park long before PSJC's involvement began.

The tentative date for the 2025 cleanup is **Sunday, September 28th**. Plan to be a part of this fun and meaningful activity!

-E. Schnur (based on Louise Heit-Radwell's and Fran Hawthorne's memories)



**Some of PSJC's 2024 Park cleaners**





Our landmark year got off to a luminous start with a stoop-top candle-lighting ceremony/party for the last night of Hanukkah on January 1st. One month later, we had an exciting/slightly competitive evening of PSJC trivia that engaged people of all ages. We all realized how much more there is to learn about our *shul's* rich history.

In early March, accompanied by another beautiful *Lev Tahor* Friday night service and dinner, we acknowledged the essential -- and frequently unsung work -- of the our *Hevra Kadisha* committee which began 20 years ago. Another remarkable anniversary to be celebrated.

At the end of March, we installed Associate Rabbi, Hayley Goldstein. With music, learning, and good food, we gathered on *Shabbat* to formally welcome Rabbi Hayley and rejoice in the spirited learning she brings to PSJC.

The theme of last month's "Esty" award-winning *Purim shpiel* was our own little Kansan, Rabbi Carter and the historic shul that's been her home for 25 years--- inspired by *The Wizard of Oz* and *Wicked*. The *shpiel* perfectly captured our *heimish* vibe. We care about each other and our shul and want to keep it going another 100 years! (See back page for photos).

On March 22nd, we kicked off our PSJC History Project with *Havdalah*, followed by timelines, arti-

facts, a detailed map of shul-related life in 1925, Yiddish meeting minutes, an Old Timer (OG) panel, *simcha kippah* line, drinks, snacks and lots of *shmoozing*. Boy, do we love to *shmooze*! There was so much to learn from the displays that we intend to install them again soon. If you missed it, or want to see it again, you can watch the OG Panel Discussion on the PSJC website: <https://www.psjc.org/psjc-videos>. And, if you'd like to be a part of future PSJC history, please share your story: <https://tinyurl.com/Share-Your-PSJC-Story>. These records will be collected and presented to the community later this year.



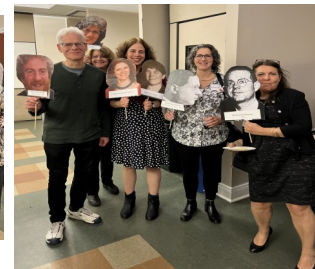
**Current and Former PSJC Clergy lead Havdalah: Rabbi Sami Barth, Cantor Judy Ribnick, Rabbi Rosalind Glazer and Rabbi Carie Carter**

In addition to the June 8th Gala (see next page), there will be many other celebrations to mark our shul's extraordinary milestones in 2025. Highlights include: Movie in the Yard, The Great PSJC Cook-Off, and more. Keep your eyes peeled and don't be shy about helping out! Contact Esther Schwalb at: [celebrate@psjc.org](mailto:celebrate@psjc.org).

- Esther Schwalb, 100/25 Celebration Chair



**"OG" Panel: David Fleischmann, David and Tori Rosen, Al Steinfeld, Ardele Lister, and Brenda Schachter (Panel Facilitator)**



**PSJC Members try on identities from PSJC History: Elizabeth Schnur, Roberta Moskowitz, Ellen Simon, and Freddie Brooks  
Ben Krull, Grace Kerr, Brenda Schachter, Karen Jarmon, and Abby Ingber**





We hope you'll join us for a festive gala on **Sunday, June 8th at 5pm**. The party will feature a delightful outdoor cocktail hour (with passed *hors d'oeuvres*), a scrumptious catered dinner, live musical performances, videos, personal tributes, dancing under the stars, and much more!


We will honor Rabbi Carie Carter on her 25 remarkable years of service, our landmark synagogue on its 100th birthday, and Alvin Steinfeld, one of the early PSJCers who helped create the *shul* that we know and love today. The festivities will take place inside our celestial building — and also in our lovely renovated yard. You won't want to miss the "*Simcha* of the Century"!

We hope that you'll also generously participate in the fundraising component of this centennial campaign. A beautiful gala e-journal (featuring your tributes, testimonials, and photos) will be viewable on iPads set up around the social hall as well as on our website.

Many PSJCers are contributing their talents and time to create a superlative experience for us. It's truly a community effort. If you'd like to lend your skills to the effort, please contact Esther Schwalb at [celebrate@psjc.org](mailto:celebrate@psjc.org).

- Esther Schwalb





**Landmark Gala & Centennial Campaign Fundraiser**

**Honoring:**  
**RABBI CARIE CARTER**  
 on her 25 Years at PSJC!

**OUR HISTORIC SHUL'S**  
 100th Anniversary

**ALVIN STEINFELD**  
 1980s Re-Founder of PSJC

Sunday, June 8 at 5:00PM  
 Park Slope Jewish Center  
 1320 8th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

**Kindly RSVP by May 28th**  
 Festive Attire

**Purchase Gala Tickets + Invest in PSJC's Future**

Be part of our Century Campaign and invest in the future of our beloved community.

**\$100,000: Visionary**  
 Naming honor for Yard Meditation Area (+ design input)  
 20 Gala tickets  
 Gold full-page tribute in Gala journal

**\$50,000: Founder**  
 Naming honor for Garden Seating Area  
 10 Gala tickets  
 Cerulean full-page tribute in Gala journal

**\$25,000: Builder**  
 Naming honor for balcony or kiddush room stained glass  
 10 Gala tickets  
 Rose full-page tribute in Gala journal

**\$15,000: Innovator**  
 Naming honor for stairwell stained glass window  
 10 Gala tickets  
 Indigo full-page tribute in Gala journal

**\$10,000: Artisan**  
 Gold Leaf on Tree of Life  
 4 Gala tickets  
 Half-page tribute in the Gala journal

**\$5,000: Patron**  
 Bronze Leaf on Tree of Life  
 2 Gala tickets  
 Quarter-page tribute in Gala journal

**Gala Journal Tributes Only**

**\$3,600:** Full-page tribute in Gala journal  
**\$1,800:** Half-page tribute in Gala journal  
**\$720:** Quarter-page tribute in Gala journal  
**\$540:** Signed personalized greeting  
**\$360:** Name in list

---

**Gala Tickets**  
**\$250 per person**  
 Early Bird: April 1 - 9 | \$220  
 Late Bird: May 27 - June 1 | \$300

---

**Kids' GamesGala**  
**\$295 per person**  
 Early Bird: April 1 - 9 | \$265

PSJC is partnering with **Brooklyn GameLab** to offer a **GamesGala** for PSJC children! Event includes pizza, games, and a movie, with activities run by the staff at GameLab!

Sunday, June 8 | 5- 9pm  
 Brooklyn GameLab, 310 7th Avenue (8th Street)

A **GamesGala** ticket includes one adult Gala ticket and one subsidized child registration to the event at GameLab. Child registrations without an adult are \$85.

Contact the office: 718.768. 1453 or email: [office@psjc.org](mailto:office@psjc.org).



## ***Purim* at PSJC**

**We ate, we drank, we partied! And this year's Purim Spiel celebrated the Purim Story (a la Beyonce) and our anniversaries: The building's 100 years and Rabbi Carie's 25!**

