



THE GRAPEVINE

A Publication of the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah

July/August 2009

Tammuz/Av/Elul 5769



Group Shira! Havniks including Bev Warshai, Aura Ahuvia, Paul Resnick, Jonah Ahuvia and Jonathan Saltzman singing at a past event.

Photo credit: Julia Piper

Havurah Hires Rabbinical Student Intern

Audrey Newell, Board Chair

Have you ever moved into a new place and forgotten which way your mezzuzah is supposed to point? Needed information on how to put up a sukkah? Had to figure out how to bury someone? And wondered who to call?

Well ... now we have someone you can call!

We are delighted to welcome Aura Ahuvia as our first rabbinical student intern.

This will be a quarter-time temporary position with a one-year contract.

Following the special congregational meeting in February, and after listening to all the comments that followed, we have decided that we need professional leadership. Our volunteers simply cannot do it all. We have responded to members' desires for more services, and we have added the Saturday morning learning service as well as the Second Friday guest

speaker/lecture/discussions/snacks/prayers event. We no longer have enough volunteers to lead services even if we just held them once a month. Children are asking questions about God, and people are continuing to tell the board they feel the need for rabbinic guidance. Many of our members belong not only to the Havurah, but to a synagogue as well, because they want to have a rabbi to go to.

After the congregational meeting in February, we realized we needed to hold several meetings with our members to better understand the needs and desires of our community. Leaders from the Reconstructionist movement are helping us design these meetings, and they will facilitate some of them. This process is going to take a lot of time. It took the Cleveland Reconstructionist Community a few years. But we need help now. Aura's position was created as a temporary measure to give us the assistance we need now, while we go through the process of formulating, as a community, our vision of the community we are and want to become.

We are blessed with great people who are helping us create a wonderful community. While we discuss and debate our visions of the community we are building, we will have Aura to help provide spiritual leadership.

Having a rabbi does not mean that we will lose the character of the Havurah. No one wants a Havurah with 1,000 "member units", assembly-line bar mitzvahs, robocalls from the building fund, and services run by professional performers. Traditional synagogues have many wonderful features, but that is not who we are, and it is not what we are becoming.

We still want to have a Havurah where people know each other, people work together, and services have participation, spontaneity, and a variety of views expressed. We will still have debates about everything from who should stand during Kaddish to whether or not to participate in the annual Celebrate Israel event. And we will never settle those debates because we will never

hire the kind of rabbi who would settle them for us and write up a formal policy. We will still need all of your help as volunteers. We will still need those of you who make name tags, design logos, run study groups, lead services, provide emotional support, schlep books and equipment for events at other sites, organize meals and visits for people who are sick, and do the 5 million other things you are all doing.

Aura's responsibilities will include leading a majority of the High Holiday services next year. Deb Kraus will also lead portions of the High Holiday services, based on a proposal she made to the Board and the Board accepted. Deb will be paid to do this. The Board is very grateful that both Deb and Aura will again be conducting High Holiday services next year and is thankful for their leadership and commitment to the Havurah. Aura will continue with her current teaching and leadership roles, including teaching the first monthly Shabbat Saturday learning service, organizing the second Friday Shabbat service, and leading a majority of the fourth Friday Shabbat services. Aura will also be helping members learn to participate in and lead different parts of the services. Deb has volunteered to continue to lead some of the fourth Friday Shabbat services as a volunteer and we are definitely glad about that! I like the way Deb leads services.

Next fall, religious school students will be greeted by their teachers and by Aura, who will be teaching, leading songs, and serving as a rabbinical presence. Aura will arrive 30 minutes before school starts to greet students and families, and remain for 30 minutes after school ends. She will use this time after school to work with the teachers and confer with students and families. She will work closely with the teachers and the Beit Sefer Parents Committee to provide leadership and strengthen the ties between religious school and the congregation's activities. Aura will serve as a resource, primarily by telephone, on matters of Jewish knowledge, customs, observances, rituals, and lifecycle. This includes giving basic answers to such questions as where to find a mohel or where to find information on how to build a sukkah. We are asking her to do a whole lot in the 10 hours a week we are hiring her for, and so we cannot ask her to provide extensive education or counseling. I hope that the rest of you, who also serve as

resources, will continue to do so because you are good at it and we still need you to do that. We do need to keep in mind that Aura is a rabbinical student. She is very talented and enthusiastic, has led services for many years, and has held a variety of jobs over the years within the Jewish Community. But she is a student. Most of us can remember what it was like to be a medical student, social work intern, or brand new employee at a job where we were just learning the ropes. All of us can remember the confusion, anxiety, and just plain screw-ups that we had as we grew and learned. While we look to Aura for leadership, we need to be understanding and empathic as well. This is a new position for her, she has a few years of rabbinical school ahead of her, and she will grow over time just like the rest of us did and will continue to do. She needs our feedback and our support.

And ... if you are standing in your doorway holding your mezuzah, a screwdriver, and a little tiny screw, and trying to remember which way it should point, even though you have lived in houses and apartments with mezuzahs all your life ... Martha Kransdorf just put one up and she knows how to do it. Call her! This is the Havurah. People know things. Reconstructionist history? Call Danny Steinmetz. Have a question and don't know whom to call? Call Aura!



Havurah Teamwork in action! Cooking together at a past Channukah event.

Photo credit: Stephanie Rowden

Summer Reads

Allison Stupka

Ah Summer. Some of us hopefully will get time to kick back and relax and what better way to relax than to enjoy a good read?

When a query went out to Havurah members and friends asking for books they enjoyed which had a Jewish theme, here is what we got.

Rena Seltzer recommends:

Ask for a Convertible by Danit Brown

Osnat's Dad is American, her mother is Israeli. Her Dad couldn't stand living in Israel, and after 13 years there, the family moves to Ann Arbor, Michigan. Her mother can't stand living in the U.S. The book is about family loyalty, identity, coming of age. It is rather brooding, but I found it to be very engaging, and hard to put down.

I found it in the New Books section at the A2 library.

Although it is considered short stories, the characters all weave together, so I thought it read more like a novel.

Karen Epstein has these three non fiction books on her list to read this summer:

The Man in the White Shark Skin Suit by Lucette Lagnado

An exceptional memoir. Lagnado captivantly writes about her family's life in cosmopolitan Cairo and painful relocation to America. The book centers around her father, dashing man-about-town Leon Lagnado. The Suez war in 1956 and the Nasser regime's cultural holocaust began forcing Jews from their native Egypt. Delayed by injury and illness, the family arrived in New York in 1963 with \$212, the maximum they were allowed to take out of Egypt; and Leon, once a prosperous, independent businessman and investor, was reduced to selling ties on the street. In Lagnado's accomplished hands, this personal account illuminates its places and times,

providing indelible individual portraits and illustrates the difficulty of assimilation.

My Father's Paradise by Ariel Sabar

Ariel Sabar's true tale of a father and a son, and the two worlds that kept them apart and finally brought them together: ancient Iraq and modern America.

For his first 31 years Sabar considered his father, Yona, an embarrassing anachronism. The birth of Sabar's own son in 2002 was a turning point, prompting Sabar to try to understand his father on his own terms. Readers can only be grateful to him for unearthing the history of a family, a people and a very different image of Iraq. Sabar vividly depicts daily life in the remote village of Zahko, where Muslims, Jews and Christians banded together to ensure prosperity and survival, and in Israel (after the Jews' 1951 expulsion from Iraq), where Kurdish Jews were stereotyped as backward and simple. Sabar offers something rare and precious; a tale of hope and continuity that can be passed on for generations

The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East by Sandy Tolan

Tolan personalizes the Arab-Israeli conflict by tracing the intertwined lives of a Palestinian refugee named Bashir Al-Khairi and a Jewish settler named Dalia Eshkenazi Landau. The pair is connected through a stone home in Ramla, now part of Israel. Built in the 1930s by Bashir's father, the Al-Khairi family was forced to flee during the violent formation of Israel in 1948. The Eshkenazis, Holocaust survivors from Bulgaria, became the new owners. After 1967's Six Day War, Bashir showed up and Dalia invited him in and began an intense dialogue that's lasted four decades. Tolan's evenhanded narration imparts the passion of both sides without slipping into impassioned delivery. While at times his random emphasis of words makes for a slightly wavy cadence, his pronunciation of Arab and Jewish names and phrases is pleasingly authentic. The Lemon Tree is a clear-eyed and steady ride into deeply felt and ever-volatile territory.

Esther Lara recommends:

Miriam's Kitchen by Elizabeth Erlich

Miriam's Kitchen, a food memoir, is a beautiful book about a Jewish woman who learns how to cook and so much more from her Jewish mother-in-law. I read this book years ago and remember it with fondness. It is beautifully written but simple too and I recommend it thoroughly!

Barbara Boyk recommends two historical novels, an older one:

As a Driven Leaf by Milton Steinberg

"...this minor classic of American Jewish literature, a historical novel about ancient sage-turned-apostate Elisha ben Abuyah in the late first century C.E. At the heart of the tale are questions about faith and the loss of faith and the repression and rebellion of the Jews of Palestine."

And a newer one:

Rashi's Daughters by Maggie Anton

An engrossing series of three novels, one to be published this summer, imagining with great historical accuracy, the lives of Rashi's three daughters. Learn Talmud and history naturally as you become part of a rich world of human interactions through this engaging work.

In each of these works I felt as though "I was there," the writing believably conveyed the stories of lives lived with depth and commitment, engaged in discovering what really matters to each character portrayed.

Happy Reading and thanks to everyone who contributed!



The Newell Saltzman family staffed a first aid tent at the Celebrate Israel event last May.

Photo credit: Greg Saltzman

Moment Magazine

Did you know that two Havurah members are related, by family and by employment, to a modern Jewish magazine? That is "Moment Magazine." Marcy Epstein's sister is the editor and senior publisher and Sarai Brachman Shoup is the new associate publisher.

Moment is "committed to portraying intellectual, political, cultural, and religious debates within the community, and to educating readers about Judaism's rich history and contemporary movements, ranging from left to right, fundamentalist to secular."

(www.momentmag.com)

Sample articles are: "The future of Jewish Iran," "Can Israel's electoral system be fixed?" and "Religion and the Supreme Court."

They have a good web site (see address above) which offers online articles and a sampling of what is in the printed version. A subscription to Moment is reasonably priced, 6 editions per year for \$14.97, and a free copy can be picked up at the JCC.

NOTES FROM THE BOARD

Alicia Kent, Board Secretary

Finalize one-year Rabbinic student intern

contract: The Board finalized details for the contract with Aura Ahuvia to serve as a Rabbinic student intern for this year and signed the contract. The Board is very excited about working with Aura in the upcoming year!

Parlor meetings: The Board continued its discussions of the logistics, format, and objectives of these meetings, which are aimed at gathering information about the future direction of the Havurah. The Board hopes to learn whether the congregation wants to hire someone to be responsible for religious leadership, and if so, whether this person should be a Rabbi. More information will be announced in coming months.

Event Coordinator job description: The Board finalized the job description for the Event Coordinator position. The Board is thrilled that Jennifer Cohen has already begun in this role! She will be responsible for planning High Holidays, events on some major and minor holidays (to be decided later), coordination of the monthly fourth Friday Shabbat, acting as a liaison to the wider Jewish community, managing Havurah possessions (including items in the storage closet), publicity of events on reconannouce and updating the website calendar. The Board and the Events Planning Committee will be revising this description throughout the year as issues arise.

Budget for FY 2010 (to begin July 1, 2009): The Board approved a budget for the next fiscal year. The Board discussed how much membership dues should cost, given the new hires and direction of the Havurah as well as the current economic downturn, and decided not to increase the amount this year. Assuming a modest revenue of \$33,000, the Hav will have a deficit of \$3,930 for fiscal year 2010. Keith Kurz stated that it is reasonable to work with a small deficit, given our new hires for this year. He also requested that at future meetings the Board discuss how to increase revenues and the number of members.

The Board also discussed the need for a membership committee to follow-up with potential new members and address member donations, including the issue of getting people to

pay their membership dues when they have pledged to do so but do not follow through. Mark Schneyer reminded the Board of Steve Merritt's helpful point that a budget reflects the organization's values: what are we willing to pay for, how much are we willing to pay for things such as the school, events/holidays, services, etc.

Payroll coordinator: The Board approved a decision to cover the payroll taxes for Havurah employees (including the Beit Sefer teachers and the rabbinical student intern) and will hire a part-time payroll coordinator to ensure that these taxes are properly paid. Keith Kurz determined that this option will be less costly than hiring a payroll company.

High Holy Day planning: The Unitarian Universalist has been reserved but other options are still be considered because the UU will not provide storage during High Holidays for the Torah and ark, prayer books, table for Torah reading, and other items. Also the Board discussed childcare: A different approach to child care will need to be discussed with congregation; it is not a drop off, and parents need to check on and supervise children periodically during services.

Kudos: Abby Weinberg for leading the Fourth Friday Shabbat services in May, ably assisted by daughter Hadassah; the organizers of the Shavuot overnight: Marcy Epstein, Jennifer Cohen, Deb Kraus for leading services, and all who led sessions.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, July 7 at 7 pm at Sally Fink's home.



HDS Uses Progressive Funds for Scholarships

Carol Lessure

Hebrew Day School was grateful to receive the \$1,682 gift from the Progressive Jewish Giving Fund early this year. The funds arrived just as the school was in the throes of fully understanding the impact of the growing economic crisis on the larger community, its agencies, including the school. "The community that exists at Hebrew Day School is one of the reasons families choose to send their children to HDS," says Dina Shtull, Head of School. "We value that community and want to do everything we can to keep it whole and address the economic uncertainty our families may be facing as a result of the recession. We therefore have promised our families that if they experience a significant change in financial status after enrolling at HDS and there is a new demonstrated financial need, the school will work with the family to meet that need."

The school relies on donations from community members and an annual federation allocation to fund its growing scholarship needs and other costs not covered by tuition.

"Offering scholarship funds to our families is crucial," said Dina Shtull. "We serve a diverse mix of families that represent the entire spectrum of Jewish religious and cultural affiliations. It is important to us and to the community that families who want to benefit from our unique secular and Judaic/Hebrew language program can afford to do so."

Hebrew Day School students include a number of Havurah youth. "We chose to send our sons to HDS because it offered both a solid academic education and the tools for our family to thoughtful and involved in our Judaism," notes Reconstructionist Havurah member and former HDS parent, Audrey Newell. "With HDS Hebrew language immersion, my sons can be active participants in their B'nai Mitvot and the Havurah."

Emily and Avi Eisbruch sent both their children there. Says Emily "The Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor offered our kids Dafna and Gil an outstanding general education and it offered our whole family a rich and nurturing Jewish experience. We especially appreciated the Hebrew language immersion program. We are grateful to the teachers, staff, and supporting community."

One HDS family, former recipients of scholarship funds who recently moved back to Israel, sent a small gift to the school with a note that they wished they could afford more for the wonderful school that the whole family misses. The school continues to reach out to community members for funding so that it can continue to provide an exceptional education in a way that instills in its students a meaningful and joyous connection to their Jewish heritage and a desire for lifelong learning and involvement in the wider community.

To make a contribution to the Progressive Jewish Giving Fund use the form on the last page of the newsletter.

Women's Responses to War

Presented by The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) on Thursday, July 2 at 7:30 pm.

Regina Birchem a former international president of WILPF will report on her recent travel to Israel and Gaza as part of a women's coalition organized by Code Pink.

The event will be held at 310 South Ashley Street, which is the brick building on Ashley street just south of the Fleetwood Diner. Parking is available across the street and there is free parking on First Street between Liberty and William.

For more information contact
Odile Hugonot Haber 734 761-7967 or
Susan Wright 734 665-4615

July 2009

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11 Dayenu Group 2-4 pm Location: TBA
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24 Kabbalat Shabbat Services 6:15 pm	25 Bat Mitzvah of Lillie Schneyer 10 am
26	27	28	29 <i>Tisha B'Av</i> begins at 8:57 pm	30 <i>Tisha B'Av</i>	31	

August 2009

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
30						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8 Dayenu Group 2-4 pm Location: TBA
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28 Kabbalat Shabbat Services 6:15 pm	29

ALL EVENTS TAKE PLACE AT THE JCC UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

Saturday, June 27 @ 10 am Bar Mitzvah of Eli Cohen



PO BOX 7451
ANN ARBOR, MI 48107
(734) 445 1910 (24 hour voicemail)

AARECON.ORG INFO@AARECON.ORG

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair

Audrey Newell

(734) 971-7596

newell@umich.edu

Shari Fox

(734) 369-6092

sharifox06@comcast.net

Secretary

Alicia Kent

(734) 369-2143

aakent@umflint.edu

Sally Goldberg

(810) 231-0001

claypaws3@yahoo.com

Marcy Epstein

(734) 665-5540

dr_marcy@hotmail.com

Keith Kurz

(734) 930-0923

kkurz@comcast.net

Sally Fink

(734) 994-3444

sally@josephsonfink.com

Mark Schneyer

(734) 332-3487

mark4810@myway.com

Progressive Jewish Giving Fund Donation Form

Here is my donation of \$ _____ to the
Progressive Jewish Giving Fund of the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah.

Name: _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Please:

- write your check out to the **Jewish Community Foundation,**
- in the “memo” line, write: **“Progressive Jewish Giving Fund”**
- include this coupon with your check
- Send your check to the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah, PO Box 7451, Ann Arbor, MI 48107.
We will log it in and send it on to the Jewish Community Foundation.

Your contribution is tax-deductible and you will receive a receipt from the Jewish Community Foundation.

Thank you very much for your contribution!