

# Wood River Jewish Community

## THE SHOFAR

### Summer 2022

# 100 Years of the Bat Mitzvah



To read the full article  
see page 12

# Co-Presidents' Message

Susan Green and Josh Kleinman



What an exciting and historic two years this has been for our WRJC and us. It has been a privilege to serve our community as co - Presidents and work with so many talented members of our community to achieve the opening our new building.

The enthusiasm and support from our members is reflected in our increased membership which now exceeds 200 membership units. This growth will be reflected in increased programs and services for our members with our focus centered around our new building in Elkhorn .

Moving forward with our new building has been a priority for the board. Additionally, the day to day activities and services have expanded to reflect our growth. Our recent Passover Seder was attended by over 100 members and looking towards the summer and fall we can expect our regular programs and Shabbat services to resume and expand.

We now have a digital community calendar on our website which you can use as a reference for all our community activities. Some of the highlights include our spiritual leader, Rabbi Robbi launching a new Adult Education series on Mussar and leading our Friday night Shabbat services. Many of them will be held at the Botanical Garden. Our Jewish Film Festival begins on July 06, our picnic is scheduled for July 10 and our Annual General meeting for July 13.

Our board of directors has been together as a cohesive unit for the past two years and we thank all of you for your dedication, inspiration and hundreds of hours of work for our WRJC. As you can imagine, many community & committee members have brought us to this point of development, overseeing our new home and we appreciate all your dedicated work. Marty Lyon, Jeff Rose, and Judy Teller Kaye have led an incredible team from the start of this enormous undertaking and Ron Greenspan is now overseeing the building aspect of our project.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to all of you . Todah Rabah.

As we all know these accomplishments could not be achieved without our Executive Director, Claudie Goldstein whose tireless dedication and commitment to the WRJC is remarkable. Merci beaucoup Claudie.

This is our last message to you as Co-Presidents. It has been an honor and privilege to serve the community in this way. We have appreciated meeting and greeting each of you. We are especially proud of the way we have come together in the most difficult of circumstances to move our community forward in a positive way. We thank each and every one of our members for their participation in this effort.

We wish our new Board of Directors and Executive leaders our best wishes as they continue to move our community forward in the exciting times ahead.

B'shalom,

Josh Kleinman - Co - President  
Sue Green - Co - President



## “I Didn't Know a WOMAN Could Be a Rabbi...”

If I had a shekel for every time I have heard this exclamation from a surprised person when I identified myself as a rabbi...

This year, two major milestones in American Jewish history are being celebrated: the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Bat Mitzvah (see more in this edition of the Shofar) and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first seminary ordination of a female rabbi.

Not ordaining women for thousands of years had its roots in a misinterpretation of Torah. In Leviticus Chapter 6, Verse 11, it states that only the males of Aaron's descendants may eat of the sacrifices brought to the Temple because of their status as “God's holy ones.” Since the beginning of Jewish law, this simple statement has been the reason women have been prohibited from taking leadership roles in the Jewish community. Why? Many explanations suggest that it was thought that men could understand the laws more clearly. Although when you consider how much of Judaism was guided, taught, and passed down by women and mothers, this argument is fundamentally flawed - if not outright misogynistic.

Despite this, women have been spiritual leaders in our faith going back thousands of years. The first known female rabbi in history is Asenath Barzani, born in 1590, a Kurdish woman from South Kurdistan. She was the daughter of Rabbi Samuel Barzani, who trained his daughter and taught her the mystic secrets of Judaism. Legend says she was known for producing miracles – once when her synagogue caught fire with hundreds of sacred books and texts in it, it is said that she started reciting unheard invocations and the fires were extinguished. The synagogue was then renamed after her and it's ruins in Amêdî are still visited by Israelis. Barzani was also famous for the poetry she wrote, all in Hebrew, which has a special place in Jewish literature which did not have many female poets.

Since the 1600's, there have been many woman who have taken on the calling of spiritual leader in countries all over the world – but the title of “Rabbi” has eluded them.

Other explanations for not allowing women to become rabbis lean on women's supposed lack of purity or focus, and we now know those arguments fail for their own reasons. In 1935 in Germany, Regina Jonas was ordained privately and became the world's first ordained female rabbi. For her rabbinic thesis, entitled “May a woman hold rabbinic office?” Jonas said that women are

especially fit to be rabbis, since “female qualities” such as compassion, social skills, psychological intuition, and accessibility to the young are essential prerequisites for the rabbinate. Therefore, she argues, female rabbis are “a cultural necessity.” She was murdered in Auschwitz in 1944.

So, without any rational explanation for the practice of excluding women, Hebrew Union College of the Reform movement ordained the first female rabbi in the U.S., Sally Priesand (1972). Sandy Sasso was the first in the Reconstructionist movement (1974); Amy Eilberg became the first woman to be ordained in the Conservative movement (1985). And, in 2009, after being given smicha by two Orthodox male rabbis, Sara Hurwitz was ordained, making her the first woman to receive Orthodox ordination. She immediately founded Yeshivat Maharat to offer ordination to more Orthodox women. “Maharat” is an acronym for “Morah Hil'cha'tit Rucha'nut Toranit” which is literally translated as: “Torah-based, spiritual teacher according to Jewish law.”

As I came from a traditional family, my brothers both became Bar Mitzvah at 13, but my sister and I did not, as it was not our “obligation.” When I was 36 years old and was studying to become a cantor, I took part in an adult B'not Mitzvah at the Reform synagogue in Austin that I was serving as cantorial soloist. Standing on the bimah that Shabbat morning, it was not lost on me that I was part of just the second generation of women rabbis and cantors in the United States. Today, over 50% of rabbinical students in liberal seminaries in the U.S. are female.

All humans are created in the image of the Divine, and characteristics like gender and race don't decide one's leadership potential. And we should remember that having women leaders is about much more than proving a certain level of competence to men. It's about showing other women what's possible.

At my son's, Sam, Bar Mitzvah, a close colleague Rabbi Neil Blumofe, led the services at my congregation so I could be Mom that day. A wide-eyed Sunday school student of mine came up to him and said: “I didn't know BOYS could be rabbis!” Yes, we have come a long way.

For an excellent resource on the significance of women in the rabbinate though out the millennia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline\\_of\\_women\\_rabbis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_women_rabbis)

# SAVE THE DATES!

Wednesday, July 6  
Thursday, July 7  
Monday, July 11

**2022 Sun Valley**  
**Jewish Film Festival**  
presented by the Wood River Jewish Community  
Community School Theater at 6:00PM

**The Sun Valley Jewish Film Festival is in full swing!**

**T**his year is a special celebration of our 10th year founding anniversary. We have some very exciting and new things planned for our showings. Not only do we have three very special films, but after two years of virtual filming because of Covid, we are finally back to in-person showings at The Community School theatre.

Linda Cooper/Chair

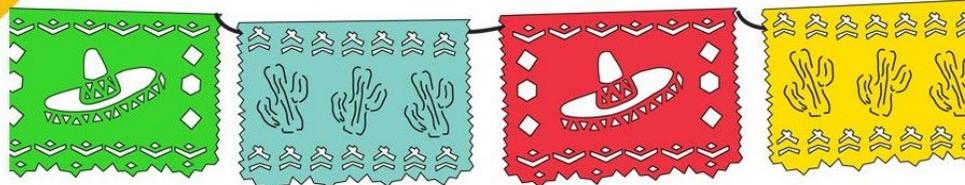
Committee : Penny Coe; Buzz Coe; Joe Fastow; Ellen Fastow; Fran Michael; Oscar Michael; Vonny Molkner; Ken Molkner; Lois Rosen; Karen Saks; Bob Safron

## BECOME A FILM FESTIVAL SPONSOR

**Patron: \$5,000**  
**Producer: \$2,000**  
**Publisher: \$1,000**  
**Director: \$500**  
**Actor: \$250**  
**Screenwriter: \$100**  
**Supporter: \$50**

Donations can be made to  
Sun Valley Jewish Film Festival /WRJC  
Online: [www.wrjc.org](http://www.wrjc.org)  
P.O.Box 837. Ketchum, ID 83340  
208-726-1183. [wrjc@wrjc.org](mailto:wrjc@wrjc.org)

The Film Festival is only made possible with the generous help from our community of supporters. Your contribution, large or small, is the key to the Festival's success.



IT'S TIME FOR A  
**FIESTA!**

**WOOD RIVER JEWISH COMMUNITY  
ANNUAL SUMMER PICNIC**

**SUNDAY, JULY 10**  
**Botanical Garden @ 6:00PM**

**Tacos, Margaritas and More  
Children's Activities**

Member Adult: \$ 40/ person  
Non Member Adult: \$ 45/ person  
Children under 12: No charge

**Co-Chairs: Leslie Kaplan . Enid Rawlings . Candice Stark.**

**Please register online at [www.wrjc.org/wrjc-picnic-register](http://www.wrjc.org/wrjc-picnic-register)**

Looking for 25 volunteers to bring a dessert.  
Please email Leslie at: [Lesliedk@comcast.net](mailto:Lesliedk@comcast.net)



# Adult Education

## A Jewish History of the Wood River Valley

Wednesday, August 3 @ 6:00 PM | The Community Library

The adult education committee has been unable to offer in-person programming for the past two years because of Covid. So we are excited to go live again this summer with a talk that should be of special interest to the entire WRJC.

Our own Ari Goldstein, son of Phil and Cathy, will present A Jewish History of the Wood River Valley on Wednesday, August 3. Ari has researched and written about the subject extensively. The program is being co-sponsored by the WRJC and the library. It is recommended that WRJC members go to the library website to reserve seats for the event, as seating is limited and is sure to be of interest to the general community. The WRJC was founded in 1983, but the history of Jews in the Wood River Valley dates back to 1881. In the valley's earliest days, Jewish residents served as miners, merchants, and elected officials, contributing proudly to the growing region. Be sure to attend to learn more about the history of the Jewish community in the valley for more than 140 years.



Ari earned a bachelor's degree in Government and Jewish Civilization from Georgetown University. He worked for three years at New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage, first as a project manager and then as the senior producer of the museum's public programs. Ari has served as a Glass Leadership Fellow at the Anti-Defamation League and a Conference Committee Member for the Council of American Jewish Museums.

Adult ed is currently planning future events, so stay tuned for announcements.

Lenny Cohen and Harriet Parker-Bass, co-chairs

## Adult Education



**Mussar** is a treasury of teachings and practices that help individuals understand their true natures as holy souls, then to break through the barriers that surround and obstruct the flow of inner holiness or light. The goal of *Mussar* is to release the light of holiness that lives within each soul. The tradition of *Mussar* directs us to pay attention to our inner traits, *middot*, and their impact on our lives. When we face an obstacle, our inner traits tend toward the extreme. The path of *Mussar* is about bringing these *middot* back into balance.

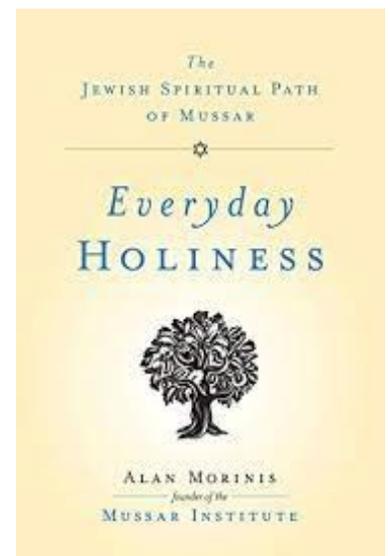
Join Rabbi Robbi to explore selections from the Mussar tradition, in text and in practice. Rabbi Robbi will present three sessions as an intro to the practice of *Mussar*. After an overview and introduction, she will study with us the soul properties of *Anavah*, Humility and *Shevil Ha'zahav*, Moderation.

All are welcome, absolutely no previous knowledge or experience required.

- **July 21: Class one: Introduction to Mussar at Elliott and Joanne Mercer's house**
- **July 28: Class two: Humility/Anavah at Marshall and Judy Meyer's house**
- **August 4: Class three: Patience/Savlanut**

**Text:** Please purchase *Everyday Holiness: The Jewish spiritual path of Mussar*, by Alan Morinis. This is a cumulative class, so we hope you will attend all 3 sessions.

Please register: [Rabbirobbi@wrjc.org](mailto:Rabbirobbi@wrjc.org)



# The Wood River Jewish Community invites you to A Community Appreciation Reception

Please Join Us

**Wednesday, June 29<sup>th</sup>**  
**95 Badeyana Drive– Sun Valley, ID**

4:00pm to 6:00pm  
5:00 pm building Update by Jeff Rose and Ron Greenspan

Enjoy

Wine, Cheese, Mingling and a walk-through of our building-in-progress, the third permanent structure to house a synagogue in Idaho.

You are the supporters, partners, and friends of the WRJC, and we honor you.

Event Co-Chairs

Cathy Goldstein, Judy Meyer, Juli Roos

Kindly, RSVP to Claudie at [Claudie@wrjc.org](mailto:Claudie@wrjc.org)

## Building Committee Report *by Ron Greenspan ( May 20, 2022)*

**D**eftly deploying my professional skepticism, when initially presented with our Contractor's estimated completion date of early September, I felt we had a 10% chance of achieving that goal. However, with construction proceeding on or ahead of schedule, and some creative overcoming of supply chain issues otherwise plaguing the construction industry, I now believe it is a 90% probability that we will be able to celebrate the High Holidays in the WRJC's new home! The dream is truly becoming a reality.

Given the pace of construction, every report is almost outdated by the time it is finished. All demolition is complete; the new (and improved) post office space is completed, and we successfully moved all postal operations to it; all of the interior walls have been framed; all plumbing and electrical have been roughed in; the fire sprinkler system has been installed; the ceiling has been painted; and the East Wall has been opened so we can immediately install the steel reinforcement and greatly

expanded windows when they arrive later this month. By the time of the donor open house in late June, all of the sheetrock should be up and the offices, classrooms, kitchen, oneg-area and sanctuary will be very apparent.

It was clear from the time we first saw the space that the building had great "bones", especially the 32-foot high ceiling supported by the open wood trusses. As we finished the demolition and opened up the interior, the space became even more impressive. Further, thanks to some extraordinarily generous additional donations, we've been able to incorporate additional windows for even more natural light and custom-designed, decorative glass panels for the ark wall. When finished, the building will be highly functional for the rapidly growing WRJC and, I believe, the sanctuary will be a beautiful, spiritually- inspiring space about which we can all be proud

# From the WRJC Archives/ Our 1st shofar 1987

This summer marks 35 years since the WRJC began sending out a quarterly newsletter in Summer 1987.

Pictured here is the opening letter of the inaugural newsletter, written by Helen Goldberg, one of our community's founders and earliest Board presidents. Helen and her husband Ben, both born in eastern Europe, settled in Ketchum in 1955. When Helen, Carlyn Ring, Naomi Fine, and Steven Luber sat down in 1983 to formally establish the WRJC, they did so in Helen's living room. Four years later, the WRJC began sending out *The Shofar*, and 39 years later, we prepare to open a synagogue.

## Wood River Jewish Community

Micah Fierstein  
Naomi Fine  
Helen Goldberg  
Stephen Luber  
Sue Mendelsohn  
Carlyn Ring

July 21, 1987

Dear Friend,

This inaugurates the Wood River Jewish Community's quarterly newsletter, which will inform you of our activities.

For those of you who were unable to be with us this winter for our Hanukkah party at the Harker Center, and our Community Passover Seder at Trail Creek Cabin, we look forward to your participation next year.

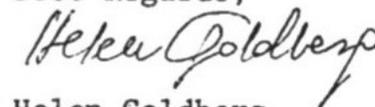
As we have done for the last year, we will continue to hold Shabbat Services on the second Friday of the month, at 7:30 P.M., in the Church of the Bigwood.

Our upcoming events are as follows: The Fourth Annual Potluck Picnic will be held on Saturday, August 1, at 6:00 P.M., at the Boundary Campground; High Holy Day Services will be officiated by a Rabbi from Los Angeles; Rosh Hashana services will be held on Wednesday, September 24, at 8:00 P.M., Thursday, September 25, at 10:00 A.M. and Friday, September 26, at 10:00 A.M.; Yom Kippur Services will begin with Kol Nidre on Friday, October 2, at 7:30 P.M. followed by morning services on Saturday, October 3, at 10:00 A.M. with the Memorial Service and Neilla at 4:30 P.M.

Our Board has approved a budget of \$6,000.00 for 1987-88. We depend on your generous financial support to maintain Jewish Traditions in the Valley.

We look forward to your participation.

Best Regards,



Helen Goldberg



# SUMMER LADIES LUNCH

**Friday, August 5, 2022  
12 Noon at the Valley Club.**

We will all meet together once again  
and celebrate friendship and sisterhood.

**Guest speaker  
Laura Rose Lewis , “I Have a Dream Foundation”**

Event chair, Ellen Fastow

**\$40 members. \$45 Non members**



**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Members attending:** \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Non Members attending:** \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Check to be mailed to WRJC POB 837. Ketchum, ID 83340  
Call 208-726-1183 or Email: [wrjc@wrjc.org](mailto:wrjc@wrjc.org)**

# Shabbat Services and Welcome our visiting Guests

## Stephanie Streja: Shabbat, July 29

We are looking forward to the return of **Stephanie Streja**, back in the valley from Los Angeles for a few weeks this summer. Over the last two decades Stephanie has worn many hats for the WRJC including acting as our Choir Director, Director of Children's Education and Cantorial Soloist leading countless services, life-cycle events, holiday celebrations and guiding youngsters in our community to their Bar or Bat Mitzvahs. In California she has been Director of the Adat Elohim Chorale in Thousand Oaks for the last ten years and is often engaged as a soloist or music director/

consultant in addition to her active private teaching and tutoring schedule. She returns annually to the valley to continue her work as Head of the Vocal Department for the Sun Valley Music Festival's Summer Music Institute.

We are looking forward to her collaborating with Rabbi Robbi in beautiful song for Shabbat on July 29th.



## Rabbi Martin Levy: Shabbat, August 26

Rabbi Levy was raised in Teaneck, New Jersey and graduated from Amherst College. He attended Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, and was ordained with honors in 1980. His Master's thesis focused on the political writings of Martin Buber. Rabbi Levy began his career at Temple Israel in St. Louis, and continued serving congregations in Galveston, Kingwood, and Clear Lake, Texas.

In 2002 he was invited by the WRJC to become the first full time rabbi to serve the Wood River Jewish community. In Sun Valley he forged a strong relationship with Rev. Brian Baker at St. Thomas Episcopal Church, and created a vibrant series of adult classes for our local inter-faith community. During his tenure with WRJC the congregation grew from sixty families to more than two hundred member units. Throughout his work with the WRJC Rabbi Levy established a successful endowment fund which contributed to the long-term future of the congregation. In 2010, Rabbi Levy was invited to become the spiritual leader of Congregation Beit Tikva in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Rabbi Martin and his wife Kaycee are involved in all aspects of Beit Tikva's congregational life. He leads the Shabbat evening services with his esteemed Cantor, Ephraim Herrera. During the pandemic the Rabbi conducted Shabbat services on live-stream and zoom, and developed a devoted Shabbat morning study group on zoom. To date, he continues the Torah study with students from all over the country. In addition to tutoring B'nai Mitzvah

students, both teens and adults, Rabbi Levy has led a five year summer program on Kabbalistic texts. This class which welcomes participants from all over Santa Fe, includes lectures from a noted Kabbalah scholar from the greater community.



As a life-long figure skater, Rabbi Martin began training for competition in free skating and ice dancing at the age of eleven. He competed for many years and was the director of skating instruction at Amherst College, for more than one hundred fifty students. The Rabbi returned to skating in his early forties and competed at numerous adult national competitions. Rabbi Levy won the gold medal in ice dance competition in 2001 and 2015. During his tenure at the WRJC, members of our congregation joined him for "skating with the Rabbi" on Shabbat mornings. He has continued his love of skating in Santa Fe, helping to direct the teaching program at the Chavez Arena for many seasons.

Throughout his rabbinic career, Rabbi Martin has focused on creative writing, including poetry, midrash, and short stories. His work has appeared in The New York Times, the Houston Chronicle, The American Rabbi, and numerous anthologies. He also taught at Amarillo College, the University of Houston, and Kingwood College. His love of learning and writing continues to this day.

# Brothers For Life

On August 12, our community will be honored with a visit from a delegation of Israeli soldiers from the Israeli-based charity Brothers for Life. Brothers for Life is a non-profit organization, created and run by disabled Israeli officers, which gives critical and immediate help to disabled Israeli combat soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the safety of the Jewish people.

WRJC members Dan and Stacey Levitan are Founding Partners of Brothers for Life. Shabbat service will be held at the Sawtooth Botanical Garden.

Our visiting soldiers will share more about their experiences and this wonderful organization. While here in the Wood River Valley, the soldiers will be staying with WRJC families.



## My Visit to the Border of Hell and Hope

Last summer The Wood River Jewish Community was honored to have Rabbi Noah Farkas join us in Sun Valley to lead Shabbat Services. At the time Rabbi Farkas was leaving his post at Valley Beth Shalom to become the CEO & President of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles. Today he leads one of the largest charitable Jewish organizations in America.

Recently Rabbi Farkas traveled to Poland & the Ukrainian Border to identify those most in need for the emergency funds that he is the Jewish Federation of

Greater Los Angeles to raise. Here is his story: MY VISIT to THE BORDER of HELL and HOPE by Rabbi Noah Farkas, CEO and President of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles

[https://jewishjournal.com/cover\\_story/346270/my-visit-to-the-border-of-hell-and-hope/](https://jewishjournal.com/cover_story/346270/my-visit-to-the-border-of-hell-and-hope/)



Standing in the back of the overcrowded conference room, I had a moment of disorientation. All around me stood Federation executives and lay leaders from the largest American cities.  
jewishjournal.com

**BECOME A  
MEMBER**

**JOIN TODAY!**

Contact Claudie Goldstein  
208-726-1183  
claudie@wrjc.org

**WELCOME  
to our newest  
MEMBERS!**

Daniel Abrahamson and his son Moses  
Ross and Laurie Garber  
Andrew Guckes  
Jay and Lindsey Emmer and their son Jack  
Matthew Karatz and Lindsey Edelman and their  
3 children, Levi, Sam and Izzy

## The Slow Rise of the Bat Mitzvah

The first ceremony a century ago marked a turning point—in retrospect. But the new ritual didn't catch on for years.

BYJENNA WEISSMAN JOSELIT



A girl at a bat mitzvah at Adath Jeshuran, Minnetonka, Minnesota, in 1954

Reckoning with change—when and how it occurs, why it occurs, and what its aftershocks or consequences might be—is the historian's lot. Sometimes, with the benefit of both hindsight and extensive documentation, everything becomes clear, at least in retrospect; most of the time, it's more like reading tea leaves.

The outbreak of war, the eruption of natural disasters, or the onset of debilitating illness can be neatly aligned along a fault line of “before” and “after.” Not so ritual change—the process by which new religious practices come into being and existing ones are overhauled or retired. Its trajectory is uneven and bumpy, marked by fits and starts and a dim awareness that something big is in the offing.

Lately, prompted by last month's widespread and joyful celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the bat mitzvah—you couldn't open an American Jewish newspaper or website without coming across references to the very first one in 1922—I've been thinking a lot about the ways in which the contemporary American Jewish community at the grassroots relates to the altered landscape of the past.

Much has changed between 1922—when the first American “bas mizvah” was held at the Society for the Advancement of Judaism on Manhattan's Upper West Side—and today, when that coming-of-age ritual is just about everywhere. But the speeches, fundraising appeals, Instagram posts, and women-power-Shabbat services that marked its centennial deployed history as a stepping stone to the present rather than as a notable moment in its own right.

The festivities also make it seem as if, from 1922 onward,

the pace of ritual change was inexorable, unstoppable, and assured. When it came to enlarging the parameters of what was once called “women's sphere,” it was full steam ahead. The foundational story the community told itself, and circulated, was a triumphal one.

Historical reality gives rise to a different story. Back in the day and for several decades thereafter, the bat mitzvah ceremony was not a regular occurrence, not even at the congregation where it was first launched. More sobering still is that its debut doesn't appear to have been understood at the time as a turning point, a herald of something brand new. It is we, not the original cast of characters, who have transformed the first bat mitzvah into a moment of consequence, or, in the parlance of last month's celebration, a “landmark.”

Introduced with no fanfare and with no advance preparation by the bat mitzvah girl herself—12-and-a-half-year-old Judith Kaplan, the eldest daughter of Lena and Mordecai who, according to family lore, was informed only the night before that her bat mitzvah would take place the very next morning—the event made barely a dent in, and hardly registered outside, the immediate precincts of the family and those of the SAJ, then a brand new congregational entity, barely 3 months old. As Judith would later famously remark, “no thunder sounded, and no lightning struck.”

The ceremony itself was a modest, circumscribed affair, whose timing as well as text set it apart from the traditional bar mitzvah. For one thing, it was only after the conclusion of the reading of the Torah and Haftorah that Judith was called up. For another, while she recited the customary blessings that accompany an aliyah to the Torah, the passages, which she read in Hebrew as well as in English, did not come from the Torah portion of the week. Handpicked instead by her father, they were drawn from Leviticus. And for a third, the bat mitzvah girl did the honors from a printed text, not from a Torah scroll, which lay just a few feet away, wrapped up tight and ready for its return to the ark.

The spirit of the occasion was equally restrained, more in keeping with the low-key bar mitzvah of Eastern Europe than with the “big shebang,” the increasingly outsize, extravagantly scaled affair characteristic of modern American Jews.

It took the form of a kiddush, a collation at the synagogue following services, and a celebratory dinner at home later that evening.

Given Mordecai Kaplan's well-known position in the interwar American Jewish community, where his novel ideas about what constituted Jewish expression, practice, and fidelity in the modern era made him a household name, you would think that introducing a newfangled ritual would have occasioned a raised eyebrow, or, at the very least, generated a sentence or two in the press of the time. Nada. No one seems to have batted an eye. Or paid attention.

Then again, Kaplan himself didn't make much of the bat mitzvah, either. Following a rather lengthy entry in his diary of March 28, 1922, in which he first muses on the relevance of kashrut in modern-day America and then fumes at the lackluster show of interest in a meeting he had called to discuss Jewish education, the communal leader tersely, and almost casually, records that "last Sabbath a week ago (March 18), I inaugurated the ceremony of the *bas mizvah*"—the last two words written in Hebrew—"at the SAJ Meeting House (41 West 86th Street)—about which more details later. My daughter Judith was the first one to have her *bas mizvah* celebrated there."

Not only did Judith's father "bury the lede," so to speak, but he documented the event 10 days after its debut, making it seem more ho-hum than memorable. He then skipped a space—and a beat—on the page of his journal to record that on the very same day of Judith's bat mitzvah, later that afternoon, he lectured on "The Pragmatic Interpretation of the Bible" to a group of teachers at Stephen Wise's Free Synagogue, intimating that the Shabbat of Judith's bat mitzvah was business as usual chez Kaplan.

As it happened, he buried more than the lede. The promise of additional details never materialized. There's nothing in Kaplan's diaries, fore or aft March 28, 1922, or in his contemporaneous published writings and sermons, to indicate that the bat mitzvah was front and center in his thinking about the revitalization of Jewish life. Though he did speak often and publicly about the importance of Jewish education for women as well as men, there's also nothing to suggest that under the right circumstances—a shul of his own where he, not the *balabatim*, called the shots—a bat mitzvah would be one of the first things he'd set in motion to advance the cause.

But that's precisely what Kaplan did. No sooner had the members of the SAJ settled into their makeshift seats than their newly elected "leader for life" introduced the first in what would become a cascade of ritual changes. Some of his concomitant innovations at the West 86th Street institution, such as the abolition of the Kol Nidre prayer, generated an immediate storm of protest, staying his hand; others, like tinkering with liturgical references to the restoration of sacrifices, were done on the sly, "surreptitiously," and attracted little notice. Still others, like instituting mixed seating in the sanctuary, were temporarily put on hold; Kaplan was prepared to wait it out until all of the men and women of the congregation were good and ready to sit side by side.

Bat mitzvah, in contrast, called forth no such strategizing and temporizing, no brickbats and no hurrahs, either. That Kaplan and his lay leadership saw eye to eye on and welcomed the innovation with a marked absence of drama is supported by a reference a year later in a handsome booklet with deckled edges that commemorated the first anniversary of the SAJ in 1923. In it, under the rubric of "Our Activities," which included religious services, Hebrew school, and lectures, the text read as follows: "Bas Mizvah Ceremony: Realizing the important service the Jewish woman is capable of rendering in a revival of Jewish life, we have introduced the ceremony of formally initiating the young Jewess into the Jewish fold."

The promotional gambit continued: "The young girl thus becomes a Bas Mizvah on the Sabbath following her twelfth birthday through an impressive ceremony similar to that by which the Jewish lad becomes a Bar Mizvah." Together with her male counterpart, she was also expected to sign a pledge to continue her Jewish education for several years.

Despite the institutional seal of approval, the bat mitzvah was slow to take off, its practice occasional and intermittent. By 1933, interest in the ritual, never too pronounced to begin with, seemed to have slackened dramatically, prompting its progenitor to relate that it had "fallen into desuetude of late." Whatever the cause—perhaps there were too few 12-year-old Jewesses on hand at SAJ to render it a going concern, or the pledge was too onerous a responsibility for teenage girls to take on, or maybe the realization that its import was far more symbolic than real militated against its adoption—Kaplan resignedly expressed the hope that the bat mitzvah ceremony might be "kept up regularly."

It wasn't. The bat mitzvah may have arrived on the scene like a bolt out of the blue, but it remained a subdued presence well into the postwar era, when it came into its own. The ritual's gradual evolution over time challenges historians like me to search hungrily for clues, telltale foreshadowings, of both its antecedents and its staying power. Until new primary sources come to light, we remain in the dark. Which, in a way, makes the eventual success of the bat mitzvah even more remarkable. And all the more worth celebrating a century later.

### Dana Henry Berntson - See front cover

My bat mitzvah was June 3rd, 1989. It was one of the happiest and proudest days of my life. I stood before my small town congregation, chanting Torah and leading the service along side my beloved Cantor Kudon and Rabbi Nimon. The whole experience was so profound and memorable. And now, it is my honor to prepare the kids of our small town community for their big day.



**Rachel Bass** was the first BAT Mitzvah in the Wood River Valley in **April of 1991**, just 8 months after moving to the valley. A young Israeli woman, who was living in Ketchum at the time, helped prepare Rachel, as did her rabbi from the Bay Area. The ever upbeat and enthusiastic Sue Mendelsohn, one of the founders of the WRJC, helped Rachel and her family put everything in order.....it took a village and paved the way for Rachel's sister Freya who became Bat Mitzvah in Ketchum in **September of 1995**.



**Freya Bass**



**Emily Eshman  
2003**

**Erica Eshman  
2005**

**Lindy Cogan 2004**

My father didn't feel that it was right for a girl to have a Bat Mitzvah ceremony, so I didn't have one. I never would have imagined

having one much later in life, if it weren't for **Margery Friedlander, Rebekah Helzel, Joyce Marcus, and Molly Levy**. We were in Hebrew class together with Rabbi Martin Levy. One of us had the idea to have our B'not Mitzvah together. How many people can say that they had fun studying for their B'nai Mitzvah? We can!



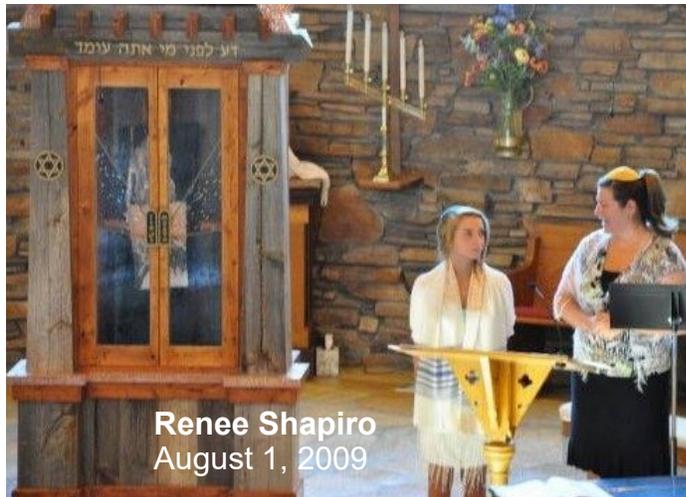
**Nicole and Juli Roos 2007**

Growing up in the Wood River Valley, my brother and I were 2 of the 4 Jewish kids throughout our schooling. Being "Jewish" wasn't the easiest thing, although we did have a part time rabbi who came once a month to lead services, teach Sunday school and lead holidays. My parents took us back to San Francisco for most holidays so we could be with our extended families. Before my brother started studying for his Bar Mitzvah, my cousins Bar and Bat Mitzvahs in California were the only ones I attended. It wasn't easy but my parents tried very hard to continue the traditions of our religion.

I began studying for my Bat Mitzvah with Rabbi Goloboy and my mom. My mom had never had a Bat Mitzvah so we decided to do it together and didn't tell anyone but the rabbi. We surprised everyone at the ceremony when my mom got up to read from the Torah after me. It was a great experience. It was also good because none of my local friends had ever been to a Bat Mitzvah so they all learned a lot. Quite honestly, I don't remember a whole lot of my early Jewish education, but I do feel rooted in Judaism.



**Arielle Rawlings  
August 9, 2008**



**Renee Shapiro  
August 1, 2009**



**Hallie Goldstein  
August 2009**



**Alyssa Diamond**  
July 18, 2009



**Jolie Blair**  
August 22, 2009



**Emma Dorinson**  
June 21, 2010



**Emily Siegel**  
August 6, 2011



**Sarah Diamond**  
June 30, 2012



**Sydney Hannah Kaplan**  
March 23, 2013



**Mollie Kucher**  
August 15, 2015



**Brenda Hackel**  
August 19, 2016



**Susan Green**  
August 27, 2016



**Claudie Goldstein**  
August 27, 2016

**Stephanie Streja and Edén Rose** – Stephanie taught Edén her Bat Mitzvah the summer of 2016 for her Bat Mitzvah. This fall, Edén will be starting her Sophomore year at Tulane University in New Orleans.



**Rowan Desler**  
October 10, 2020



My bat-mitzvah date was 10/10/20 because my mom thought it was clever, and it landed on Simchat Torah. Which is when you read the last paragraph of the Torah and then roll it all the way back up to the beginning (or in Hebrew B'reisheit) and read the first paragraph of the Torah.

So on my bat-mitzvah I had to read two Torah portions.

The ending of the Hebrew Bible where Moses dies, and the beginning where God creates the day and night, the animals and plants, people and then he rested, or Shabbat. The day of 10/10/20 was a big day, it was the day I became an adult in Judaism, I was given a big responsibility.

Studying to become a bat mitzvah had a great effect on me and now I love my religion. I am definitely the most religious person in my house mostly because Judaism gave me a place that made me feel welcome. The people that are a part of our community are so welcoming - which is basically what being Jewish means and what I was taught in all the prayers and songs that I had to learn for my big day.

Unfortunately, I have experienced my share of anti-semitism. It is sad that there is negativity that comes with being Jewish and I just want people to understand that religion doesn't define you, and hating someone because of religion is very ridiculous. My religion has given me a place to be me, and that is what is important. I am so grateful that I live in a time and place where as a woman, I was able to be bat mitzvahed and share the experience with my family and my community.



**Sofia Rose Delgado**  
June 5, 2021.



**Riley Siegel**  
February 13, 2021



**Lila Pinizzoto**  
September 30, 2021



**Gemma Cooper**  
September 24, 2021



**Alexis Bordan /Kleinman**  
September 2, 2021



**Ella Will**  
July 22, 2021

## Children's Education Update

**T**hank you to all the students and parents for a successful Sunday School year.

After over a year of ZOOM classes, we were so fortunate to hold all of our classes in person.

The younger group had 4-8 students in each class and we did a lot of crafts and learned about the holidays and caring for each other.

The older group had anywhere from 6-12 students attend class. We studied Jewish ethics with some holiday learning and of course, crafting. We had some great, big kid discussions and I just loved watching the kids interact and get to know each other. I am really excited that next year's BBMP (bar/bat mitzvah prep) class will have spent at least two years together studying, learning, and

connecting so that when their big day arrives, they will have a huge support system.

Next year we will be broken into three groups to accommodate our growing community! A special thanks to Lila Pinizotto for being my awesome, do-it-all teacher's aid.

Have a great summer, and we will see you in the fall!

With Light,  
Morah Dana



# The Future is Ours - Judaism in The Wood River Valley

by Jeff Rose, Vice President and Co-Chairman of the Building Committee, Wood River Jewish Community

Sometimes we hear a story more than once and realize that it is not a story but truth. When I first met Naomi Fine Sloan, I felt heaven had sent me a new friend, a grandmother from another lifetime, and someone with a big heart. And that is just one of the reasons that we are so honored that her daughters joined together and donated and named our sanctuary the Naomi Fine Sloan Sanctuary. But the story isn't that. The story of Naomi Fine Sloan is the story of the Wood River Jewish Community. And it is the same story that Carlyn Ring shared with me when we spent some time together.

When the WRJC came together, as it has been told to me, it was a group of women - Naomi, Carlyn, Sue Mendelsohn, and a few others who took the Ketchum/Sun Valley phone book and, page by page, looked for "Jewish names." And today, with more than 200 families as members of the Wood River Jewish Community, today **the largest congregation in Idaho**, the vision of these few amazing women laid the foundation for where we are today.

But it is much more than where we are today. It is where do we want to go in the future? The construction of our new permanent home and synagogue is more than 50% finished, and what was once a dream for our community is becoming a reality. As our Building Committee member and our Owner's Representative for the project Ron Greenspan has shared, we are scheduled to be in our building for this year's upcoming High Holidays. Clearly it is the support of this community and the immense generosity of a few and of many that this dream is becoming a reality. And all of this is the result of the hard work of many people, including my Building Campaign co-chairs Marty Lyon and Judith Teller-Kaye. As many of us know, Judy and her husband David are the major donors for the WRJC Sanctuary, and we have named the Oneg Shabbat/Meeting Space in their honor.

The future of the WRJC is ours to write together. We will now have a home where holidays, social gatherings, learning, and life cycle events can occur. This fall, the Kurtz family is already planning their son Caleb's Bar Mitzvah to be the first-ever in our new home. This summer, our community has exciting events - ranging from our annual picnic to what promises to be a great discussion about Jews in the Wood River Valley, led by Ari Goldstein - Phil and Cathy Goldstein's son. Rabbi Robbi will worship with us and teach an excellent class on Jewish ethics and morals, "Musar." Additionally, when Rabbi is not with us, there will be visiting Rabbis throughout the summer. There will also be excellent opportunities to get together in the community ranging from The Jewish Bike Brigade to the many pickleball and golf games with friends from the community.



Each of us can, in any way possible, build community. We are from very different and diverse backgrounds, with a wide range of ages and interests. There is no question that everyone here is busy, either those who live year-round and have work and families and "everyday life" or those who travel here seasonally and, when in the Wood River Valley, time is precious as there are so many seasonal events and their time spent here is limited.

But all of the above speaks to one thing. Together, we're writing a new chapter in the history of the WRJC. What was years ago Sun Valley's phone book is today our WRJC directory of the 200 families who are here to share a shared love of community that Judaism in the Wood River Valley can create.



On Wednesday, JULY 13 at 10:00am  
at the office

The Board convenes its Annual Meeting & Election. This is an opportunity to update the community on the status of the organization and to reflect on the past year of events and accomplishments.

Present the 2021-2022 Operation Budget .  
Elect Board Members . Report of Committee Chairs.

**W**e have grown! 15 dedicated women knitted 9 hats, 13 scarves and 4 throws/lap robes for clients of the Senior Connection. We are an eclectic group; some from WRJC, some from the Wood River Orchestra and some are my neighbors. Happily we shared our talents and helped each other considering we have a wide range of skills and expertise.

I for one was delighted to take up knitting again after 50 years. There were several times we gathered to knit at my home and also at Carlyn Ring's. Several knitters sent us their finished items.

A side note: If you don't knit but like to crochet you are most welcome! This year we will be knitting for clients of The Advocates who offer free, confidential support and resources for victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking. Our goal is to provide hats, scarves and lap robes to those in their 22 unit transitional housing. You can help us achieve our goal by joining our Knitzvah Mitzvah Circle and reaching out to your friends that knit. Some of us like to knit alone, some like being with others

while knitting. Whatever works for you is fine with us. Special thanks to Knitzvah Mitzvah knitters: Karen Saks, Fran Michaels, Claudie Goldstein, Carlyn Ring, Leslie Kaplan, Mila Lyon, Nanci Rosenfeld, Ellen Campion, Naomi Sloane, Sammy Mailman, Karen Bliss, Tami Deagle, Lynn Flickinger, and Deb Landrum. Please consider adding your name to this list.



I appreciate the continued support you give to this mitzvah project. Let me know which items you'd like to make. Don't hesitate to contact me with your questions and concerns at: [conifoster@hotmail.com](mailto:conifoster@hotmail.com) or 786-382-6359.

Thanks again to all these amazing women who have made a difference. You rock!!!!



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Celebrate a special occasion with the congregation, honor or remember a special someone, or commemorate a yartzheit.

For more information, or to sponsor an Oneg  
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**UPCOMING** *Mark Your Calendars* **EVENTS**



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# Tributes From 03/08/22 to 05/16/2022

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*We apologize for misspelled or missing names. Please email us at [claudie@wrjc.org](mailto:claudie@wrjc.org) with any corrections.*

*Thank you.*

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