Stepping Up to the Challenge

HONORING AND RECOGNIZING SOLDIERS
We celebrate and commemorate soldiers for Yom Haatzmaut, Victory Day and Memorial Day PAGE 10

CELEBRATING SHAVUOT WITH OUR LITTLE ONES
Crafts, activities, books and more you can do with your children to celebrate Shavuot and Lag B’omer PAGE 12

FAMILY FACES NEW STAY-AT-HOME CHALLENGES
With the continued help of JCARR, an asylum-seeking family from Angola continues to learn at home PAGE 5

NEW STAY-AT-HOME CHALLENGES

SHAVOUT RECIPE IDEAS page 17

NEW HAVEN SPECIAL ONLINE EDITION • MAY 2020
Humbled by Our Community’s Efforts

My heart is bursting with joy! I know it’s hard to believe that given the current circumstances we are all confronting due to COVID-19. This quote by me has been broadcasted often after being recorded on April 25th during our volunteer drive to package surgical masks in socially distant volunteer efforts. We had cars stacked up a mile down Amity Road with people who just wanted to help. It was heartwarming and a reminder of the best of our community.

The Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven began planning for COVID-19 in January. While we may not be able to leave our home to be together, we have been gathering online with record participation in fitness classes and programs. There is no question that our community is experiencing pain both personally and communally. Our effort to reach out to each of you through our phone calls has been one of the great blessings of this moment. As we have called to check in and see how your community can help, we have received such warm responses. We are grateful that we can all support one another during this challenging time. Our calls will continue through this crisis; we will be here for each of you to help in any way we can.

We are also assisting with rising needs through our Jewish Federation and Jewish Foundation COVID-19 Response/Maimonides Fund, which provides resources to meet urgent human needs. We have granted two rounds of support to Jewish Family Service and The Towers at Tower Lane. The fund is open for applications and congregations to apply for help. We expect the needs to continue and encourage those who are able to support the fund with a contribution. In this alternate reality we are living through, it is a reminder that we will struggle with melancholy from time to time. But if we can find the sunshine and rainbows in small acts of kindness and compassion, the best will come through.

My first grandchild was born a couple of weeks ago. While the circumstances may not be what all were expecting—and it will be some time before we will another Dylan in his Bubble’s—just thinking about his arrival gives me great hope for the future. With my best wishes for your continued strength and health.

Lisa Stanger, Esq.
JCC Executive Director
Scott Cohen
Chief Executive Officer
Dr. Jeffrey Hoos
President
Mark Oppenheimer
Chief Financial Officer
Chesky Holtzberg: Chair
Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven

Our community is filled with hope. The Sun is rising. All Jews are responsible one for another—Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh La’zeh. The COVID-19 Response/Maimonides Fund is a mechanism for us to fulfill our Jewish values in these times of crisis. Through this fund, we will meet the needs of those suffering due to COVID-19. Our Community is resilient and will come through this crisis together.

Copied from the upcoming Shalom New Haven June issue

Maimonides Fund
https://www.jewishnewhaven.org/covid

CONTINUE ON PG. 16

The Jewish Federation and the Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven have launched the COVID-19 Response/Maimonides Fund, seeking to raise $100,000 to support the community’s most vulnerable. As of May 4, the fund has distributed $163,600 in emergency grants—and another $51,600 pending—to provide critical human needs to synagogues, Jewish Family Service (food assistance and social services), JCARR, the Towers at Tower Lane (food assistance) and the Jewish Federation.

Your support of this fund will enable us to make grants to our Jewish agencies and synagogues to help provide services related to food insecurity, unemployment and mental health support. We are facing unprecedented times. United as one Jewish community, we will meet the rising needs in our community and overcome the great challenge before us.

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JCC Executive Director
Scott Cohen
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Walking is a weight-bearing exercise—which means it’s good for bone health—and an app or pedometer to meet the U.S. Surgeon General’s moderate goal of 10,000 steps per day can help you count your steps. It is a fun way to get outdoors.

Thankfully, modern-day technology has allowed us the incredible capability to check our fitness progress and get back to a routine. With our JCC closing, many of us aren’t able to maintain our everyday workout routines. The JCARR Families Face Challenges Living in the United States will serve them once again, and that one day they will come to this country and get the six-year old enrolled in first grade and the father account so it can pay for rides in case of an urgent need. The families are listening to the news in their native language, and they are often the first to communicate with them almost every day—usually in their native language. The families speak. The families are listening to the news in their native language, and they are often the first to communicate with them almost every day—usually in their native language. The families speak.

The key is to start off slowly and increase your time or distance by no more than 10% each week. For both running and walking activities, it is important to get a good pair of shoes. Pay attention to the surface on which you run, and remember, it is okay if they are softer, but they’re uneven and could have holes. Concrete is harder, but good shock absorption is also vital.

Cycling is another excellent cardiovascular choice. It is also a great way to explore your community, bike paths and trails. It is important, however, to make sure your bike is fitted properly to your body to avoid putting too much stress on your back or knees.

Most of us think of money, business or personal relationships when we hear the term “timing.” However, timing is also critical to our health and well-being. When making decisions, we often listen to the advice of others or simply follow our instincts. Sometimes, we think we make the right decision and it works just “perfectly.” Our “timing” has little to do with these personal decisions, especially when it comes to health-related decisions.

During a time when the media seems to target our deepest uncertainties and fears, we have all been affected in one way or another. It might be worrying a bit more, or just learning how to cope with things in a different way. The media can make us feel helpless or overwhelmed. However, there are ways to manage these feelings and regain control of our lives.

It is important to recognize that we have control over our own lives and that we can take steps to improve our health and well-being. We can change our habits, our environment, or even our way of thinking. The key is to start off slowly and increase your time or distance by no more than 10% each week. For both running and walking activities, it is important to get a good pair of shoes. Pay attention to the surface on which you run, and remember, it is okay if they are softer, but they’re uneven and could have holes. Concrete is harder, but good shock absorption is also vital.

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“It was the first time I smiled in a week.”

“Speaking with Sandy from the JCC felt like I had a new friend. It was the first time I had smiled in a week. I told her I was having a hard time finding toilet paper and she offered to drop some off outside and saw the toilet paper and a plate of decorated cookies from her! You are all doing excellent work and I am so proud to be part of this community. God bless!”

“My needs were met and I was able to receive the things I needed.”

“Thank you for being there.”

“I needed help getting to a doctor appointment since I can’t drive due to a disability and public transportation isn’t the best now. I called the hotline at 11:30 a.m. on Eric on the other end of the line assured me that he would be able to do it. He was tremendously accommodating—especially considering the appointment was a 90-minute drive on a weekend and I wasn’t sure exactly how long it would be. Thank you for being there for me when I needed your support.”

“A donation is all I can think of, but it wouldn’t be enough.”

“I just got off the phone with Eric, who answered the hotline. He helped me with my Mac; I couldn’t send emails out. He spent over an hour with me; he’s terrific. I’ve got to do something to thank him or the JCC. A donation is all I can think of, but it’s not enough.”

Alerted by the rise of COVID-19 cases in Connecticut and the lack of access to personal protective equipment (PPE), the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven, in collaboration with Madison residents Bob and Amy Stefanowski, have created Masks for Heroes. Masks for Heroes delivers much needed protective surgical masks to hospitals, nursing homes, physicians and first responders throughout Connecticut.

However, with the new state guideline requiring the usage of masks in public spaces, Masks for Heroes added Masks for CT to address the widespread public need for masks. With efforts which so far delivered 800,000 surgical masks to 160 towns in Connecticut, are conducted in partnership with the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven.

Since the agency physically closed in the middle of March, the Jewish Family Service (JFS) of Greater New Haven’s staff quickly adapted to continue to meet clients’ needs in creative ways.

The mental clinic continues to run smoothly over video connection and is accepting new clients, just as if the office were open.

The staff has focused on aging adults in the community with accessibility to the hotline. Previously planned groups are running through video or conference calls with participants able to engage at one time. These groups are meeting weekly; they provide social interaction and therapeutic support to the most vulnerable.

The therapeutic foster care team has also created a re-imagination of volunteer service and has been extended to us as we care for the community’s most vulnerable. With your continued support, we will stay strong, stay safe and stay connected.

To get involved and help The Towers, contact Volunteer Coordinator Sarah Moskowitz at (203) 389-5599 or via emails available at jfsnh.org.

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE: Stepping Up in Crisis

The Towers at Tower Lane’s Volunteer Coordinator and Spiritual Leader Sarah Moskowitz has been transforming life for The Towers’ residents and community since she began two years ago. Since her start, she has helped over 170 community members engage seniors in meaningful ways.

The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated a re-imagining of volunteer service once again. Thanks to the hard work of Moskowitz and Healthy Living Coordinator Dean Tinari, The Towers at Tower Lane residents are getting newly delivered programming and volunteer services.

Currently, Towers volunteers are writing letters weekly and handmade cards. Local schools and synagogues have been donating arts and crafts supplies, puzzles, crossword puzzles, books and magazines. A brigade of volunteers, with the leadership and help of Doris Zelinsky and Linda Schultz, are making masks for employees and residents, The Towers volunteers are also calling several residents weekly for friendly chats and social connection.

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There are 26 “super volunteers” who are calling an entire floor of residents seven days a week between 10-11 a.m. to check in on them. They have been so critical to residents’ well-being in addition to helping The Towers team follow up when someone needs more care and attention. They are forming deep relationships with the residents.

Director of Support Services Dawn Stanton is grateful for the tirelessly working team supporting residents and their families. "President Gavriel Beach Long expresses his gratitude as well: “We are grateful to the entire community for showing us support during the pandemic. We appreciate the expertise, financial support, time and partnership that has been extended to us as we care for the community’s most vulnerable. With your continued support, we will stay strong, stay safe and stay connected.”

To get involved and help The Towers, contact Volunteer Coordinator Sarah Moskowitz at (203) 772-8214 x410, or jen@ttowerlane.org.

Zoom support group to connect parents and children who are now at home.

JFS foster care volunteers supported a woman who was fostering an 11-year old who was a danger to himself and others. Together, they brainstormed with the child on ways to help him. Through this collaboration, and with the help of Crisis Hotline at 11:30 p.m. Eric on the other end of the line assured me that he would be able to connect the child with his birth father—something he identified as important to him.

JFS volunteer coordinator and parnty director have organized pre-packaged bags that clients in need are able to receive through a no-contact pickup model.

During one of the virtual groups, clients talked about the need to take it one day at a time and push themselves to be flexible. The JFS staff are inspired by their clients’ tenacity and resiliency.

SOS case managers helped a newly unemployed partner obtain Rhode Island health insurance for himself and his daughter. With the help of mental health services he received, he contained his anxiety before he could take that next step.

JFS continues to seek innovative ways to engage with clients and meet the ever-changing needs of the community.

Contact JFS at (203) 389-5599 or via emails available at jfsnh.org.

Water Bill Assistance from Dollar Energy Fund

JFS is able to help community members with their water bills by partnering with Dollar Energy Fund (dollarenergy.org), a grant organization that provides monetary assistance for utility payments. In Connecticut, qualifying individuals who have South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority may be eligible for assistance. Individuals whose household income is at or below the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines in the last 30 days could be eligible for a one-time payment of $175 towards their bill.

Currently, JFS social workers are placing these applications over the phone. Applicants must digitally provide their water bill and income verification for household members reflective of the last 30 days. To be screened for eligibility and apply, call Lu DeVyver, LMSW, at (203) 389-5599 x117. Leave your name and callback number.

Journey through Grief Support Group

During these times of uncertainty and social isolation, friendship and loneliness may intensify. Andrea Joseph, LSW, will be holding a virtual bereavement support group for adults 60 and older who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Come talk about what you are experiencing in a supportive and safe environment. The 1-hour group session will begin on Friday, May 8, at 11 a.m. and will continue to occur on the second Friday of the month during the public health crisis. To RSVP, and for more information about the group and how they can connect, email ajoseph@jfsnh.org.

GETTING 900,000+ SURGICAL MASKS TO 160 TOWNS
COVID-19 Fund, PLUS Annual Grants & Scholarships/2020

COVID-19 FUND

THE JEWISH FEDERATION AND JEWISH FOUNDATION OF GREATER NEW HAVEN COVID-19 RESPONSE/MAIMONIDES FUND

Monies from this fund will be deployed in two ways:

1. Emergency grants to our Jewish agencies and synagogues to allow them to meet increased and immediate community needs such as food insecurity, unemployment and mental health needs.

2. To provide direct assistance to individuals, families and households in need. Monies will be made available to and paid to an agency or synagogue, upon the request of the agency head or rabbi. No application or names are required. Requests will be made by a rabbi or agency head to the fund, on behalf of persons in need. In the past, these monies have been distributed to assist with rent, medical bills and emergent needs related to unemployment, health and food insecurity. We expect this fund to receive many requests in the upcoming days, weeks and months; we want to be able to meet all of those requests. This fund has already made $136,400 in emergency grants to Jewish agencies, including Jewish Family Service (for food assistance) and to The Towers at Tower Lane (for food assistance).

The Jewish Foundation COVID-19 Fund, created with a grant from the Arthur Eder Family Fund, supports urgent needs of Jewish and non-Jewish residents throughout Greater New Haven. The fund has backed issues from domestic violence and health to acculturation and spirituality. The endowment has more than doubled its size since its inception, on the strength of the application and financial need.

The first applications may be submitted beginning on May 13, and we will accept applications until midnight on June 30, 2020.

GRANTS

To apply for any Jewish Foundation grant, go to jewishnewhaven.org/grants for online applications and descriptions.

For THE JEWISH ELDERLY

There is $120,000 available in grants for the Jewish elderly. These monies are from the Jewish Home Building Fund Corp, which were recently transferred to the Jewish Foundation. This will be an annual grant initiative. This year’s funding will be made on a rolling basis. The first applications may be submitted beginning on Monday, April 13, and we will accept applications until midnight on June 30, 2020.

SECURITY GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR SYNAGOGUES, CAMPS AND DAY SCHOOL

These grants are made possible thanks to the generosity of the Arthur Eder Family Fund. This will be an annual grants initiative. This year, the awards will be made on a rolling basis.

To apply for any Jewish Foundation grant, go to jewishnewhaven.org/grants for online applications and descriptions.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Collected here are a few of the many awards being offered. For information on any of the awards, go to jewishnewhaven.org/scholarships for online applications and descriptions.

To apply for any Jewish Foundation scholarship, go to jewishnewhaven.org/scholarships for online applications and descriptions.

• Stuart J. Drell Scholarship Fund: May be awarded for any college year. Awards are based on the student's need and merit. Awards are based on the strength of the application and financial need.

• Emma Kohn Podoloff Scholarship Fund of the National Council of Jewish Women's Greater New Haven Section: For high school seniors. The average award is $1,500. The application includes an essay and three recommendations. Awards are based on the strength of the application and financial need.

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

All applications must be completed online by May 15. All applications are competitive. To be considered for any of these awards, applicants must reside in Greater New Haven. Awards are based on the strength of the application.

• Mary Taylor Finletter Memorial Scholarship Fund: For high school seniors. This scholarship is not needs-based and requires an essay concerning what peace, justice and righteousness mean to you and your Judaism. Awards range from $500-$2,000. Applicants must reside in Greater New Haven. Awards are based on the strength of the application.

• Emma Kohn Podoloff Scholarship Fund of the National Council of Jewish Women's Greater New Haven Section: For high school seniors. The average award is $1,500. The application includes an essay and three recommendations. Awards are based on the strength of the application and financial need.

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ISRAEL EXPERIENCE SCHOLARSHIPS

The Jewish Foundation Israel Experience Scholarship Program enables local Jewish students to have the opportunity to participate in an Israel experience to develop and enrich their Jewish education and reinforce their Jewish identity. The Jewish Foundation provides scholarships for both short-term (3-week program minimum) and long-term organized Israeli educational programs. Greater New Haven youths ages 14-19 are eligible.

For 2020 summer trips, awards have already been made. For the 2020-2021 academic year programs, applications are due by May 15, 2020. An essay and two recommendations are required. All applications are confidential and anonymously reviewed by the Israel Experience Scholarship committee. Go to jewishnewhaven.org/scholarships for more information, a list of qualifying programs and application requirements. This is a competitive process and, in most years, not all applicants will receive an award.

JEWISH OVERNIGHT CAMPGRAFT AND SCHOLARSHIPS

One Happy Camper

The Jewish Foundation’s One Happy Camper program provides 1. Needs-blind incentive grants of up to $1000 for first-time campers and 2. Needs-based aid for first-time and returning campers to over 195 Jewish overnight camps.

SYNAGOGUE SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS

One Happy Camper

The Jewish Foundation offers needs-blind incentive grants for first-time campers as well as needs-based aid for first-time and returning campers.

Go to jewishnewhaven.org/scholarships/one-happy-camper.

Thank you to the following organizations for financial and material support:

Association of Jewish Aging Services

The Jewish Federation and The Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven

The Community Foundation United Way COVID 19 Fund for Greater New Haven

The Jewish Community Center of Greater New Haven

Jewish Family Service of Greater New Haven

 Masks For Heroes

Ezra Academy

We appreciate your continued support. Thank you for making a difference!

Ezra Academy's online learning program continues with children virtually meeting together as a class, in small groups and one-on-one with their teachers. They continue to celebrate first aliyot to the Torah and first-time Torah readings. During the month of April, they had over 50 people sign up for such milestone occasions with grandparents, friends and relatives joining in from as far away as Israel.

Students continue to engage in project based learning. For instance, they made movies to depict Newton’s Laws of Gravity. They have engaged in music, art and building Minecraft projects to respond to the reading of a novel. Students have also participated in two online learning with the likes of Bill Gates and Hadi Partovi, founder of Code.org.

“Perhaps the most touching moment for me has been the video our community made to express their appreciation of our faculty and the amazing work they are doing in this difficult time,” says Dr. Melanie Waynik, Ezra Academy’s Head of School. “You can see their joy and sense of pride despite the challenges we are all facing. Students also participated in a Jeopardy-like game with all categories involving Israel among other fun activities to celebrate Israel.

Ezra Academy’s online learning continues in earnest, students took part virtually in a special ceremony for Yom Ha’atzmaut on April 28. On April 29, on Yom Ha’atzmaut, they joined the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven in a virtual “party” for the Israeli emissaries who had served the Greater New Haven community until they had to return to Israel in March. After the party, Ezra Academy students played an online Jeopardy like game with all categories involving Israel among other fun activities to celebrate Israel.

The Towers expresses our gratitude and appreciation to all the community members who are stepping up to help us through these trying days.

Thank you

Our Resident Residents
Our Supportive Families
Our Wonderful Volunteers
Our Impactful Donors
Our Dedicated Staff
Our Board of Directors for their Leadership
Our very special Robert Katz who has gone above and beyond

Thank you to the following organizations for financial and material support:

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Masks For Heroes

Ezra Academy

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For more information, please visit EzraAcademy.org.

Ezra Academy

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From the Frontlines of the Everyday Fight

Brothers Jacob (left) and Alex (right) Wyner stand together.

We truly appreciate the service and sacrifices of those that have served in the armed forces. Our community is tied together commemorating and celebrating three holidays from three different countries honoring those currently serving, veterans and fallen soldiers. We would like to take this opportunity to spotlight stories about those connected to our New Haven community for Yom Haatzmaut (April 29), Victory Day (May 9) and Memorial Day (May 25).

Israeli Soldiers From Our Community by Sasha Weitzman

Throughout my childhood in Greater New Haven, my Jewish identity was integrated woven into the fabric of my community for Yom Haatzmaut (April 29), Victory Day (May 9) and Memorial Day (May 25).

Our community is tied together celebrating and commemorating three holidays from three different communities remembering lost friends and relatives in the war. More than 500,000 Jews fought against Nazi Germany in the ranks of the Red Army, and over 200,000 of them lost their lives. That is why, if U.S. Jewish communities honor the Soviet Union. Eighty percent of the Soviet males born in 1923 did not survive WWII.

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY: Honoring Russian-speaking World War II Veterans by Yelena Gerovitch

Seventy-five years ago on May 8th, 1945, World War II came to an end in Europe. As the news of Germany’s surrender reached the rest of the world, joyous crowds gathered to celebrate in the streets.

The German Instrument of Surrender signed on May 7, 1945 stated that all hostilities must cease at 23:01 Central European Time on May 8, 1945, just an hour before midnight. It was already May 9 in Russia at the time the agreement took effect. As a tradition, Russia and the other former Soviet states celebrate Victory Day on May 9.

Israel also marks Victory Day on May 9, as a result of the large number of immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

World War II has been the most destructive conflict in history. It killed more people, cost more money, damaged more property and had more far-reaching consequences than any other war in history. Almost everyone in the Russian-speaking immigrant community remembers losing friends and relatives in the war. More than 500,000 Jews fought against Nazi Germany in the ranks of the Red Army, and over 200,000 of them lost their lives. That is why, if U.S. Jewish communities honor the Soviet Union. Eighty percent of the Soviet males born in 1923 did not survive WWII.

Life Lessons Learned in the IDF by Jacob Wyner

I drafted into the IDF near a year and a half ago, right before Hanukkah began. I was fresh out of college and full of ideas and motivations that were mainly abstract. It was important to me to make an impact and to serve in the army because I felt a calling to do so. In the past I had gone to Jewish summer camp and I believed strongly in Zionist ideals. While still in college, I decided that I was interested in serving in the IDF and I began preparing myself for the army. I began preparing myself for the army.

I was selected for the IDF program, which was started a few years ago and involves the two-year program, learning everything from nighttime navigation to handheld-hand combat to guided missiles. One of the things I was asked to do was to work with a soldier who had been injured in the war and I began preparing myself for the army. I began preparing myself for the army.

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Jewish Historical Society:

The Jewish Historical Society (jewishnewhaven.org) is dedicated to collecting and preserving historical documents, photographs, and memorabilia of the Jewish community of Greater New Haven.

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Jewish American Soldiers by Lillian E. Chasnov

Excerpt and Abridgment of My Brother’s Memoir of His service in the Jewish-American of the Jewish New Haven Community.

Stanley Charles Fishman was born in New Haven on July 30, 1924. His early education at a religious school was interrupted during the war and he attended a public school in New Haven.

When he arrived to be taking part in combating this global crisis and its people. Though the job is not yet done, I am grateful to be taking part in combating this global crisis and its people. Though the job is not yet done, I am grateful.

As stressful as COVID-19 has been, the leadership and organizational training I received from my service as an instructor and officer have prepared me for this new role. Throughout this experience, I gained a unique opportunity to connect with soldiers and nurses alike, to hear their stories, and work together to safeguard the nation and its people.

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SHALOM NEW HAVEN, MAY 2020
SPECIAL ONLINE EDITION Page 12

As we just passed Israel’s Independence Day and continue to learn to celebrate holidays in all new ways, I thought I’d share how I celebrate Shavuot—and to one of the least known connections of this holiday—namely its connection to water.

The holiday of Shavuot has many meanings; it is the time of year that God speaks to the Torah in Mount Sinai, and metaphorically, all of us present to receive Torah. We recognize Ruth, a convert to Judaism, as a heroic woman, teaching us to look for “hanaim”—for what they are and not who may think they are. It teaches us to value nature and walking in the wilderness where we receive the Torah. We celebrate by eating delicious dairy food like delicious blintzes and ice cream—even though we are not sure why! I hope you’ll continue to learn to celebrate holidays in all new ways and to one of the less known connections of this holiday—namely its connection to water.

Global awareness and the need to upgrade our thinking and appreciation of our resources, the earth and one another may help us pause to consider other ways water is invaluable to life as we know it. It helps us find ways to preserve and value water with more consideration.

Teaching ourselves and our kids to turn off water when we are not actively using it—such as when we are washing dishes or brushing teeth—is one small, easy-to-change habit. Collecting rain water for first lawns is difficult but worthwhile considering. As a kid growing up in Israel and Florida, most kids heat lawns and sidewalks with water.

I loved—and still love—jumping into rain. Rain dances are so much fun!

PJ Library would like to thank Little Scientists offering a water-focused program in kindness as a service to our community and the planet. In this two-part series on May 3 and 24 at 10:30 a.m. for families with children ages 4-8, we will connect Judaism and science, including learning about water. There is no charge but pre-registration is required.

If you would like your children to learn more about science, Little Scientists’ experience the opportunity, from your own hands-on learning environment (jewishnewhaven.org/littlescientists.com, facebook.com/LittleScientistsInc or instagram.com/greatscientists)

For more information and registration for May events, contact PJ Library’s Mindfulness Educator Stacey Battat at pjlibrary@jewishnewhaven.org or visit jewishnewhaven.org/library.

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During this time, we are also separated from our congregation families and leaders. We turn to two local rabbis for their words of wisdom about this challenging time.

by Rabbi Alvin Wainhaus

We wake up and go to sleep these days with question marks: “When will we be able to return to normal?” “When will I return to my job?” “When will our kids return to school?” “When will a vaccine be developed?” The answer, of course, is we don’t know! COVID-19 has put much of our future on hold.

Recently, I was asked by a member of my synagogue, “Rabbi, what does Judaism say about coping with uncertainty and question marks?” I replied, “no people has grappling with life’s uncertainties more than ours! We’ve certainly learned something about it, haven’t we?” As I proceeded to reply to his question, an image sprang into my head: it was Marc Chagall’s painting of a fiddler on the roof. In the painting, Chagall depicts a smiling, dancing Jewish violinist who plays his instrument while somehow managing to balance himself on the edge of his village. It was his way of depicting the fiddler idealized Chagall’s answer—and mine—to a question. What does Judaism say about coping with an uncertain future?

Chagall’s painting evokes basic questions. Why doesn’t the fiddler seem worried about losing his balance and tumbling down those steep roofs? Why does he appear so serene in this precariously world where, at any moment, a violent pogrom might suddenly appear and unnerve him and his villagers? Why, as almost the fiddler’s reply, “Tell, my future is neither certain or unknown. But that is my strength, for it makes me to curm my way and rise above the uncertainties in my life.”

What is that “something?” Well, an entire play has been written about that question. It was, after all, Chagall’s painting that was the inspiration for the title of the well-known Fiddler on the Roof musical. In fact, Tevye, the main character of the musical, echoes the symbolism of the fiddler in the opening scene: “A fiddler on the roof? Sounds crazy, no? But here, in our little village of Anatevka, you might say every one of us is a fiddler on the roof, trying to scratch out a pleasant, simple life without breaking a sweat or getting into trouble. I mean, how do we keep our balance up, you ask? Well, that, I can tell you in a word! Tradition! For, without our traditions, our lives would be as shaky as... a fiddler on the roof!”

By “tradition,” of course, Tevye means the “kiddushin,” the Jewish religious way of life that gives him and his fellow shtetl dwellers a sense of stability in their unpredictable lives. And for sure, Tevye also means the blessings supported by tradition: love, family, optimism, friendship, laughter and community; these were blessings that were readily available to the Jews in my day, he’s, he’s, when he was young. “You see in the back, we had nothing, but on the other hand, we had everything.”

In this time of uncertainty, I can hear the fiddler speaking to us while carefully balancing on the edge of the roof. As Fiddler, he teaches us how to integrate those two seemingly opposite realities.

So, what is the fiddler’s answer? And what does Judaism say about coping with question marks? The Roman occupying the land of Israel wanted to execute Rabbi Yochai for criticizing their rule. He and his son, Rabbi Elazar, isolated in a cave. No health, no privacy, no privacy. They prayed and studied Torah all day. With no distractions, they grew in spiritual stature until they were like angels on earth. When they emerged from the cave after 12 or 13 years, they saw farmers plowing their fields, people going about their daily life. But they were equally amazed by the sight of their children running around in the streets. They could not reconcile the two. Are people blind to their purpose, to strive higher and unite with the Divine? Where is a world that shuns these values? They struggled with this question until, on Friday eve, they saw an old man run through holding two bunches of sweet-smelling myrtle. When asked, the old man told them that the two bunches were in honor of the Shabbat. Two bunches because of the two mitzvos in the Torah to “remember Shabbat and “keep” Shabbat.”

What does it look like to “return to normal life” after a long confrontation? We can learn from Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, whose life we celebrate on Lag B’Omer. Lag B’Omer is a name for a covey

THIRVING IN SPRING—WELL WISHES FROM WOMEN’S PHILANTHROPY

In these unusual times of staying home to stay safe, it is easy to distance ourselves from our “usual” community resources. Women’s Philanthropy members have been uncertain about “Zooming” to meetings, exercising choices, showing our love to family, friends, and neighbors due to this virus. Our Women’s Philanthropy continues to educate our younger Jewish community members. Our JCC, the heart of our community, continues to provide a safe space for the future. We also remind each other that we are not alone in our greater New Haven community are also more stressed than ever before. We are all adjusting to this new normal and are unsure as to what the future brings. Let’s remember to continue to give generously to our Annual Campaign and to support our community at an even higher level than before. It is not all “doom and gloom.” Thanks to the Jewish Federation of New Haven’s dedicated professional staff, Women’s Philanthropy has continued to offer programs and services. A series of Zoom lectures helped us learn about an unique Passover experience. Other virtual social opportunities include a Happy Hour at 5 p.m., on Fridays, a monthly book club, and classes on generic cooking and other topics. We have postponed, but not canceled, some upcoming events including Bingo (previously Handbag Bingo). The fundraising campaign continues, with Bingo (previously Handbag Bingo). The fundraising campaign continues, with

Register in advance for this meeting: https://zoom.us/j/4218816195?pwd=U2t2U2Z3d1V6aj9raTZvN1l1ZnRveE09

BRING TO A SIMMER, STIR UNTIL SUGAR HAS DISSOLVED. REMOVE FROM HEAT AND LET COOL. READY TO USE.
Local Volunteers Offer Safe Healing Place for Homeless

CONTINUED FROM PG. 2

by Eliaz Shlaman Berman

Many of us feel these days that we have lost track of time, days, weeks. These weeks of quarantine seem like years; we wish we could have been able to already count 50 days. At the same time, Jewish tradition tells us to keep track of counting the omer—a tradition derived from the Torah to count 50 days from Passover until the holiest day of Shavuot. That is the day that, according to tradition, we received the Torah.

We could have thought that those days between the two holidays would be only days of celebration; however, in Jewish tradition, they also include some mourning customs. According to tradition, 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva—a leading sage in the first century CE—died during those days. Some say they died of a plague, while others say they were killed during the rebellion against the Roman Empire's persecution of Jews. Rabbi Akiva himself died as a martyr defending the right to teach and observe the Torah.

The Talmud tells that after the horrible tragedy, five students of Rabbi Akiva survived and passed along the Torah. One of them was Rabbi Sheni on Bar Yochai (also known as Rashbi), one of the most famous rabbis. According to tradition, the thirty third day of the “counting of the omer” is Rashbi’s yahrzeit, celebrated as Lag Ba’omer. A famous Talmudic legend tells that as Rashbi was himself persecuted by the Romans, he hid in a cave in the Galilee with his son. When he got out of the cave, after 12 years, and saw Jews occupied with agriculture instead of learning Torah, he got furious and said: “What is amazing to me is how the community is coming together with medical volunteers to staff the facility, support from the city and mayor’s office, and community providers, food, clothing and medical needs.”

“With donations, we were able to get 15 tablets so patients could surf the internet. ‘Egg crate’ foam made the uncomfortable cots more comfortable.”

Dr. Rosenthal.

Healing Place for Homeless in New Haven

How relevant to our days. We all mourn the horrible deaths of thousands of our current “plagues” casualties. We arrive “in our own caves” at home, alone, missing the lives we have once had only a few weeks ago. But, unlike Rashbi and Rabbi Akiva, we are not hiding from persecution—although we are worried about the rising anti-Semitism in the past few years and specifically amidst these COVID-19 times.

Unlike Rashbi and his son, we do not think that “you and I” really suffice for sustaining this world. We know that the only way to fight any trouble that might come—plagues, hatred or persecution—to address it and countering it together, all of us cooperatively, Jews and non-Jews alike. Once we will be able to get out of our physical “caves,” we want to continue our tikkun olam efforts to build, replenish and purify the world. We want to continue to transform suffering and persecution into care for others, for those in need and for the most vulnerable in our society. As we say in traditional Jewish prayer, “May this time be a time of mercy and acceptance.” May we come out of this period stronger and united.

Eliaz Shlaman Berman is the Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council and Center for Jewish Life and Learning. Connect at eliasm@jewishnewhaven.org or jewishnewhaven.org/jewish-community-relations-council.

Exit Strategy from the Cave

Preparing to Nosh on Shavuot

Greasy and cheesy are the major characteristics of Shavuot-related foods. Blintzes and cheesecakes are traditional go-tos for the menu, while others say they were killed during the rebellion against the Roman Empire’s persecution of Jews. Rabbi Akiva himself died as a martyr defending the right to teach and observe the Torah.

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The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) will host a talk with Ellie Cohanim, U.S. Assistant Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, on the Global Rise of Anti-Semitism Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Register in advance for this meeting: jewishnewhaven.org/rsvp
Studies in the Western Massachusetts, and Connecticut’s Greater Hartford and New Haven areas. During his 10 years of leading Maimonides School in Brookline, Massachusetts, Katz oversaw a full curriculum of student development, and transformed the process of hiring and developing teachers. During this past year, he has served as the interim Head of Hilal Day School, the school of Maimonides.

Katz impressed the search committees, board of directors and parents during the interview process. His energy, pursuit of institutional improvement, vision for elevating the role of the school in the community, and personable manner and his walking commitment to the ideals of Modern Orthodox Judaism were clear during his past success and future motivations. “We believe that Katz is exactly the right person to lead us at this time,” said Dr. Sallie Ulrich, Chair of the Search Committee. “With his background as a successful businessman, an accomplished head of a day school and a school volunteer, he brings the kind of expertise that we need to take NEAR forward in this complicated period.”

Prior to joining Maimonides in a professional capacity, Katz founded two successful startup companies, H2O Furnishings and Dana Lighting. He also became a member of the Maimonides School Board of Directors with a focus on school fundraising and marketing. Katz took on the role of executive director in 2008 before becoming the head of the school. He is a lifelong downtown New Haven resident and is a frequent visitor to both the Maimonides School and England Jewish Academy. Katz is a member of both institutions, and the parents and students of both are thrilled to have him in the community.

For more information about New England Jewish Academy, please visit www.neja.org.

THE PATIENT CARE CENTER is second to none. My entire family are patients of this practice, including my son. I wholeheartedly recommend Brush & Floss Dental to anyone looking for a practice with a really hands-on, caring approach.

Steve, Parent
Our Jewish Federation is optimally positioned to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to tackling the greatest challenges facing our community. The importance of a strong and vibrant Jewish community has never been clearer than it is today. The Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven is proud to play a role in safeguarding the most vulnerable among us, and to help coordinate and communicate the efforts of our community partners. Make your gift today so we can come together as a community, tomorrow.