



# THE BRIDGE

A newsletter highlighting stories  
from Geshher L'Torah  
JUNE – JULY 2021 | 5781



**Geshher L'Torah is building a community that embraces everyone's unique story, offering meaningful Jewish Insight in a personal way.**



# THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

*Mitchell Hershkowitz*

## **GLT IS OPEN AGAIN!**

Join us for Shabbat as in-person services return to GLT.

Last week I said Shabbat Shalom to the same number of people sitting in the Kramer Sanctuary as watching us on Zoom. Since the lock down nearly 14 months ago, we have been all remote for services and only recently have allowed a limited number of members to join us outside for Friday night services.

However, the past few weeks we have opened our Sanctuary to a larger number of attendees, and I can say we are truly in a period of hybrid services at GLT. While we continue to strive for better in-person attendance, it is wonderful to see the adoption of streaming services for those who are not quite ready to return to Shul, or simply prefer to watch services from their virtual sanctuary at home.

Now more than ever, GLT provides services to our community as well as remote communities that may have once lived in Alpharetta and attended services with us, or who may be related to current members and enjoy watching with their families. The next step in our evolution will include a permanent video streaming infrastructure in our sanctuary and classrooms. This will allow us to stream not only services, but classes, events, and other features that we wish to promote to the masses. If you haven't attended a service in a while then please join us this month before you head out for that much needed, and well-deserved vacation.

Reserve seats now for Saturday, June 12 and June 19 (additional weeks will be published in What's Happening on a weekly basis).

Join us all Summer as an updated schedule of events appears on our website at <https://wearegesher.org/events> and in the weekly GLT e-newsletter.

Please stay up to date on the latest events at GLT and join us as we navigate our way to remain connected and ALWAYS here for one other. Have a fun and safe Summer!

Save the Date

Musical Family Shabbat 6:00pm. Adult Services at 7:00pm led by Hannah Zale and Rabbi Michael Bernstein – Friday, June 18

GLT's Annual Event – Sunday, June 27

Shalom,

**Mitchell Hershkowitz**

*“It's exhilarating to be alive in a time of awakening consciousness. It can also be confusing, disorienting and painful.”*

*Adrienne Rich*





# A MESSAGE FROM THE RABBI

*Rabbi Michael Bernstein*

There is a strange story in the Talmud about a particular sage, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, and his son Elazar who find themselves wanted by the Roman authorities and forced to flee to a cave. There they are ensconced with no human contact for twelve years, nourished miraculously by an always blooming carob tree and ever flowing spring of fresh water while they study secret mysteries of Torah. Perhaps we see some similarities to our past year in this lonely scenario except of course for the much longer duration, Instacart instead of mystical tree and bingeing Netflix instead of Torah, which are undeniably pretty big differences - along with the anxiety over lives and livelihood experienced by so many of us.

What is interesting to me though is what happens when they hear a voice that says that it is safe to emerge from the cave. Perhaps it would be expected that the two sages would run to embrace the world they missed, find joy in everyday interactions, and hurry back to reunite with old friends and colleagues. This is not however what the father and son do. Instead, they look with scorn at those who engage in such day to day activities neglecting the chance to do something more profound and pious such as study the Torah. So much scorn do they have that every place their eyes look, bursts into angry flames. G\*d, rather than being happy to see that the sages had become so zealous on behalf of Torah, shouts at the two "Get back in the cave! I did not bring you back out here to destroy My world."

Can we learn anything from this striking story about what it means for our own community to emerge from extended isolation and rejoin society?

One thought is that this story hinges on the suddenness of the reentry, the need to immediately readjust to life as before. On paper this immediacy is not the case with the pandemic with official guidelines and phases in all different areas as well as at Congregation Gesher L' Torah. In reality though change comes fast. Just like we went from wondering if the pandemic would affect us to total shutdown in the course of a couple of days, we have hit a tipping point where even as we act with prudence and follow precautions, the feeling of returning for work, play, family, and community has been palpable. The doors of the sanctuary have swung open and relying on the high percentage of vaccinated attendees, in-person services feel more and more like normal. And for many of us in many ways that return has been exhilarating.

Rabbi Shimon and his fiery eyes, though, are still part of the story. We need to account for the build up of difficult emotions and the trapping of so much energy that would normally have found its way out. First and foremost, grief, communal and individual, compounded with resentment in facing the unfairness of this time. Frustration with what we cannot control and in some cases with those we feel are controlling us. Fear of the consequences of this singular moment. Blame. Guilt. Anger. Hurt. Some or all of these emotions burn behind the eyes of Rabbi Shimon and Rabbi Elazar.

The story doesn't end there, however. After Rabbi Shimon and Rabbi Elazar go back into the cave for an additional 12 months something changes. Rabbi Elazar continues to ignite but Rabbi Shimon brings healing to the flames everywhere he looks. There is a recognition that after this time of conflagration is over compassion is very much called for.

One last addendum that serves as both the last word of this strange Talmudic tale and a focus for us. During his reemergence from the cave Rabbi Shimon sees a person running frantically on a Friday afternoon to get extra bundles of myrtle before Shabbat. He questions him: Why do you need the extra? Why waste the time and resources? The person responds that his tradition is to take one for the commandment to “Remember” Shabbat and one for the commandment to “Guard” Shabbat. This answer is the source for why we light two Shabbat candles every Friday night.

When all is said and done, the answer to Rabbi Shimon’s inevitable anger at those who live differently than him, those who choose to do or not do things he would or wouldn’t, is realizing that what we do can be holy, not just practical. Not every choice is about bare necessity or urgency. We can choose to elevate our lives and emphasize opportunities for community, celebration and worship. So from our own versions of the cave we return to the place that inspires us to be holy. We return to Gesher L’ Torah, to the Pavilion and to the Kramer Sanctuary to see each other’s faces and heal.

Rabbi Michael Bernstein

*“What is hateful to thee, never do to thy fellow man: that is the entire Torah; all the rest is commentary.”*

*-Hillel in Talmud*





# EDUCATION NEWS

*Rebecca Gordon*

## **I APPLAUD YOU!**

I applaud every child/teen that survived countless hours learning virtually and being isolated from friends and just hanging out.

I applaud every parent that became home school mentors, entertainers, master chefs and play buddies.

I applaud every person that went above and beyond keeping family and friends safe during a scary time.

I applaud all the teachers at GLT and beyond. You became fearless leaders and the glue that kept our children learning and growing.

I applaud all of you, you have earned the right to relax and breathe a little easier this summer. Enjoy family and friends. Have fun on playdates and double dates.

Break out of the bubble we have been in and live life again.

A special **I APPLAUD YOU** to our Pearl Sutton Religious School Teacher of the Year and the Sylvia Newman Memorial Teacher of the Year through the Jewish Education Collaborative and the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta – Mr. Josh Needle.

Have you ever had a teacher that made you want to learn, to dream big, to try new things and to be yourself in the process? Our students at GLT are incredibly lucky because we have THAT teacher. Josh Needle, a self-employed tech guy with a degree from UGA found his passion for teaching religious school students when his 3 children were very young. With his background in technology, Josh brought life to our school. He created an atmosphere for the one group in our school that is difficult to retain. 7th graders have one foot out the door, they just want to learn enough to have

their Bar/Bat Mitzvah and then they can sleep in again on Sundays. Josh changed that mindset. Students even showed up to school the morning after their parties.

Josh created a classroom where his students can explore and learn from all types of mediums. They acted out bible stories and videotaped them for the whole school to watch. They learned about Israel culture while skyping with Israelis all over Israel. Community service was not just collecting things, but really understanding the needs of the community and how to lend a helping hand. Hands down the coolest thing Josh developed for his students is a world in which they can build and learn using Minecraft. As a student (or director), you never knew what new lessons Josh would bring to the class using Minecraft and his technology wisdom. Students built the Kotel, created interactive ways to learn mitzvot, they brushed up on their Hebrew reading lessons, and so much more. Josh brought and still brings COOL into the religious school classroom.

I never have to worry about the student that is too shy to participate, Josh finds a way to include them without embarrassment or pressure. From the class clown to the student with a chip on his/her shoulder, Josh always treats his students with respect and in return receives their respect. Josh will never leave a student behind. Out of the classroom, we can always count on Josh to assist with High Holiday programs - he is our master shofar blower and brought to our students the annual Shofar Challenge. He is first at a Sunday morning minyan to assist a student in putting on tefillin for the first time. If you ever need a bingo caller, Josh is your man. And he is always around if a student just needs some one-on-one time.



Josh wants our students to excel in their Jewish studies. He wants parents to be a part of their learning experience and he is ready to lend a helping hand to our staff of amazing teachers. Week to week, I know that Josh is teaching his students, that the students are learning, and that when they move into our madrichim program as 8th graders, they will be ready for the challenge.

Josh, you deserve to be recognized for thinking outside of the Synagogue walls to ensure our students (and our GLT Family) receive the best religious school education possible.

Josh – WE APPLAUD YOU!

Happy Summer to all.

*“First learn much, and then seek to understand it profoundly.”*

*-Talmud*





# *Sisterhood of Gesher L'Torah*



So happy to be headed into June. Always love this season with the school year ending, camp beginning, vacations, boating season, and longer daylight hours. Also love that we appear to be headed back to some form of pre-covid normalcy.

Looking back, it was about 18 months ago when we started planning for a March 2020 Sisterhood Shabbat. It was about 14 months ago that the Sisterhood Shabbat had to be cancelled. We are very glad to report that despite the covid crisis, GLT Sisterhood still had some outstanding events including: a discussion with Sarah Aviram author of "[Remotivation: The Remote Worker's Ultimate Guide to Life-Changing Fulfillment](#)"; A Zoom cooking night with the Birnbaum sisters where we learned to make chocolate bombs; a Nourish the Soul Zoom evening with Tracie Bernstein around Hanukkah, and that Sisterhood worked with Tracie on the Israeli Cooking night with Rabbi Josh Weisberg. Not bad for a pandemic year. We hope you will join us for" a book-club discussion of Big Summer" by Jennifer Weiner. (Date to be announced soon)

Looking to next year, Andrea and I have agreed to head Sisterhood together for one more year. We look forward to a kick-off event in late August (hopefully face-to-face). With your help and support we plan to bring back regular book-club discussions, will arrange guest speakers, creative outings, good food, and the reschedule of the Sisterhood Shabbat. Please send other programming suggestions to us at [gltsisters@gmail.com](mailto:gltsisters@gmail.com).

Wishing you a safe, healthy, wonderful summer.  
Andrea Capuano and Janet Slosberg  
Sisterhood Co-Presidents



# MITZVAH CORNER

## Max Sheftel

Max will be collecting gently used sports equipment for his Bar Mitzvah project. Max loves sports and has played team sports since he was 4. He recognizes that playing sports is expensive and wants all kids to be able to play and experience the benefits.

He is currently in contact with different organizations to find out who has the greatest need for these items.

Descriptions of items being collected will be shared soon. Collection sites will be at his home in Johns Creek and Max's grandparents' home in Dunwoody.

*“We are as great as the challenges we have the courage to undertake.”*

*-Rabbi Dr. Lord Jonathan Sacks*



# OUR B'NAI MITZVAH

**Max Jacob Sheftel** will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah on Saturday, June 5, 2021. Max is the son of Debbie Sheftel and Larry Sheftel.

Max is a rising 8th grader at Taylor Road Middle School.

He enjoys playing football, baseball, and basketball, being outside, and spending time with his family and friends - which includes his twin brothers, Finn and Noah (11).



Max has always had a passion for baseball and team sports and has played at Ocee Park since he was five years old. The goal of his Bar Mitzvah Project was to gather gently used sports equipment and to raise money so that all kids can participate, enjoy, and benefit from team sports. Max has partnered with Experiences Foundation, a non-profit organization based in Canton, Georgia. Through his efforts, he has raised close to \$1,000 and collected truckloads of gently used and new sports equipment.

Max is looking forward to becoming a Bar Mitzvah and celebrating his special occasion with his family and friends.

# WE ARE GESHER

To make your pledge as part of the four-year campaign, please contact the GLT office at 770-777-4009 or Doug Konkel at [admin@gltorah.org](mailto:admin@gltorah.org)

*“The leader is one who, out of clutter,  
brings simplicity... out of discord,  
harmony... and out of difficult,  
opportunity.”  
-Albert Einstein*

# WE ARE GESHER

# GLT CALENDAR

All Virtual Events are via Zoom. [CLICK HERE](#) for live links.

## JUNE 2021 SIVAN-TAMMUZ 5781

M	T	W	T	FRIDAY	SHABBAT	S
	1	2	3	4 Services 7:00pm	5 Max Sheftel Bar Mitzvah Services 9:30am	6
7	8	9	10 Rosh Chodesh	11 Tammuz Rosh Chodesh Services 7:00pm	12 Services 9:30am	13
14	15	16	17	18 Musical Family Shabbat 6:00- 8:00pm	19 Services 9:30am	20
21	22	23 Adult Education 12:30pm	24	25 Services 7:00pm	26 Services 9:30am	27 GLT Annual Event
28	29	30			*Sisterhood Book Club Meeting to be determined	

# GLT CALENDAR

All Virtual Events are via Zoom. [CLICK HERE](#) for live links.

## JULY 2021 TAMMUZ-AV 5781

M	T	W	T	FRIDAY	SHABBAT	
			1	2 Services 7:00pm	3 Services 9:30am	4
5	6	7	8	9 Services 7:00pm	10 Av Rosh Chodesh Services 9:30am	11
12	13	14	15	16 Services 7:00pm	17 Services 9:30am	18 Tisha B'Av
19	20	21	22	23 Services 7:00pm	24 Services 9:30am	25
26	27	28	29 Chof Av	30 Services 7:00pm	31 Services 9:30am	

# DONATIONS\*

## Donation to General Fund

In memory of Joseph Marc, uncle of Allan Goldberg  
Allan & Roberta Goldberg

In support of GLT.  
Bala & Tracey Ganesh  
Morton & Meryl Shlossman  
Mrs. Leah Chase

In memory of Bernard Slosberg, father of Janet Slosberg  
Brad Fried & Janet Slosberg

In memory of Shalom Katz, father of Maynav Golomb  
Brad Fried & Janet Slosberg  
Don & Amy Pozin  
Holly Mays  
Sheldon & Elaine Palefsky  
Timothy & Samantha Quinn  
Steven & Betsy Kramer

In memory of Leon Katz, father of Debbie Gottlieb  
Brad Fried & Janet Slosberg  
Don & Amy Pozin  
Jeffrey & Elise Herbst  
Steven & Betsy Kramer



In loving memory of Florence Slosberg, mother of Janet Slosberg  
Brad Fried & Janet Slosberg

In memory of Gail Pozin, mother of Don Pozin.  
Don & Amy Pozin

In honor of Josh Needle being chosen GLT's Teacher of the Year  
and the Sylvia Newman Memorial Teacher of the Year of Greater  
Atlanta  
Henry & Karen Needle

In honor of Jill and Gideo Cohen and Eileen and Milton Silberstein  
for being awesome and lovely people.  
Ira Kirschner

In memory of Jeannette Dosal, grandmother of Elise Herbst.  
Jeffrey & Elise Herbst

In honor of Ayleet Bernstein's graduation from Purdue.  
Kenneth & Deborah Duchin

In memory of Alexis Harris, daughter of Marilyn Gottlieb  
Marilyn Gottlieb

In memory of Martin Shapiro, father of Steven Shapiro  
Mr. & Mrs. Steven Shapiro



In memory of Steven Watsky, son of Miriam Watsky  
Mrs. Miriam Watsky

In memory of Sarah Levy, mother of Miriam Watsky  
Mrs. Miriam Watsky

In memory of Jimmy Goldgeier, son of Sally and Charles  
Goldgeier  
Sally Goldgeier

In honor of Rabbi Bernstein, Anita Freedman, Rebecca Gordon  
and Doug Konkell for all they've done to make Isabella's Bat  
Mitzvah a success.  
Scott & Carla Birnbaum

With gratitude to Gary and Elizabeth Berliner for the assistance  
they provided in protecting vulnerable congregants during the  
pandemic.  
Steven & Betsy Kramer

In honor of Daniel Kramer's graduation with a degree in  
Astroinformatics from Northern Arizona University  
Steven & Betsy Kramer

In memory of Dr. Theodore Kushnick, father of Steve Kushnick  
Steven & Debra Kushnick



In memory of Arthur Poe, father of Debra Kushnick  
Steven & Debra Kushnick

Thank you to Rabbi Bernstein for making Shelby's first birthday  
so great  
Teddy & Jenna Brown

In memory of Charlotte Shaw, Mother of Betsy Shaw Kramer.  
Steven & Betsy Kramer

### **Donation to Preschool Fund**

In memory of Ernest Rennhack, father of Barbara Klein  
Joel And Barbara Klein and Family

### **Donation to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund**

In honor of Evie  
Arnold & Sue Ann Harrison

Thank you, Rabbi, for a wonderful memorial service for my  
father, Shalom Katz.  
Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence Golomb

In honor of Rabbi Bernstein for his work with Leah to prepare for  
her Bat Mitzvah  
Lee & Adriane Shapiro



## Donation to the Religious School Fund

Mazol Tov on becoming a Bat Mitzvah Isabel!  
Steven & Betsy Kramer

*“He that gives should not  
remember. He that receives  
should never forget.”  
Talmud*

**WE ARE  
GESHER**

# CONGREGATION GESHER L'TORAH

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