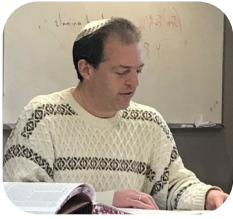




Temple Chayai Shalom



Confirmation

Thursday night, May 25, overflowed with joy! Of course our festival of *Shavuot* is always a special day, but particularly so when we mark the Confirmation of our students who continued their formal Jewish education through tenth grade. It is truly one of the great blessings of my rabbinate to teach the Confirmation class, to get to know these teenagers even better as individuals and as a group, to study together, to laugh together, to wrestle together. I am privileged to share their lives in this intense way at this intense time in their lives. Through their study, their actions, and their example, these eight amazing young adults have confirmed their place as leaders of our congregation. *Mazal tov* to David Beckenstein, Zoe Colchamiro, Hannah Farber, Danielle Marzella, Lexi Weintraub, and their families!

The service they led that evening provided further “confirmation” of the firm foundation on which our future rests. They chose English readings and reflections that represented their emotions and their thoughts about where they are now. They skillfully led the vast majority of the service. They all wrote brief pieces identifying important components of their Jewish identities, and shared longer talks about parts of their journey that are particularly meaningful to them. They agreed to share their words here: I hope you will find them as moving as I did.

[Read More](#)



Seven Great Jewish Songs of Summer

by Cantorial Soloist David Rothberg

Summer is a great time for Jewish music! But, really, what time of year isn't a great time for Jewish music? As we go into the months of summer vacation, let's give a listen to a bit of great Jewish music that I associate with the season.

I can't resist starting with a title that's crying out for inclusion in this list. This largely wordless niggun by wonderfully talented Jewish Reggae singer-songwriter Mikey Pauker has a laid-back chill vibe perfect for hangin' out in the summertime, when the livin' is easy. [Summer Niggun](#), by Mikey Pauker

[Read More](#)



Exploring Jewish Summer Camp: Great Options are All Around!

by Jeri Robins, Director of Education

It's the summer - slower days, peaceful nights with no homework, and time with family enjoying the warmer weather. Growing up, it was also the time we went to camp and, specifically, Jewish overnight camp. For my parents, who were raised in Dorchester and were the children of immigrants, money was always tight, and, yet, they both went to Jewish overnight camp. Across the generations over the last eighty years or so, Jewish camp has been a pivotal experience in solidifying Jewish identities and providing opportunities for children to live with their peers in a Jewish environment, developing deep friendships and shared memories that last a lifetime. Observing *Shabbat* rituals, singing prayers before and after meals, complete with hand motions and lots of *ruach* (spirit), and, depending upon the camp, learning about Jewish history and traditions. A [recent interview on NPR](#) related the rise of Jewish camps after World War II, and my own understanding was that camps gained popularity as a way to get kids out of hot, crowded cities during the summer to get some fresh air and avoid polio and tuberculosis.

[Read More](#)



Singers Wanted for Our Choir, Kol Shalom, for the High Holy Days!

If you like to sing, we'd love to have you add your voice to our choir! No experience or music reading skill needed -- just a desire to sing. Rehearsals are mostly on Tuesdays over the summer (with a few Thursdays). Please contact David Rothberg at music@templechayaishalom.org if you are interested.

Do you play an instrument or like to sing?

There may be opportunities to sing or play your instrument at TCS in one of our many musical services. Instrumentalists need to meet with David to see if you are a good match for any of our offerings. Please contact David Rothberg at music@templechayaishalom.org if you are interested.

Seven Great Jewish Songs of Summer (cont.)

If we're playing word association and I say "Jewish Summer," what's the most likely next word? Is it "camp"? Yes, indeed it is. There are so many songs that are staples of Jewish Summer Camp, which, especially in our Reform Jewish world, is so important to our musical culture. I semi-randomly selected three popular camp songs, which incidentally have also been very popular among our SULAM students. The first is by the Grande Dame of Jewish Summer Camp Music, Debbie Friedman, followed by long-time favorite, Rick Recht, and one of the newer Jewish stars, Elana Arian.

[Not by Might](#), by Debbie Friedman

[The Hope](#), by Rick Recht

[I Have a Voice](#), by Elana Arian

Let's not forget that in Jewish tradition, the summer is not just a time of fun and games. It is also the season of the saddest day of the Jewish calendar, *Tisha B'Av* (July 27, this year), commemorating the destruction of the temples in ancient Jerusalem and many other tragedies. Traditional Jews fast on the day and adopt mourning practices in the time leading up to it, which could put a damper on summer festivities. As such, there have not been many songs written for the day, but I decided to take up the challenge of finding meaning in it.

[Losing Everything We Love on Tisha B'Av](#), by David Rothberg

Summer is also the time when the month of *Elul* begins, the month that leads up to the High Holy Days. This year, it starts on August 17. In this month, we begin preparing for the High Holy Days by doing *teshuvah*, which means "return" – return to our best selves, freeing ourselves of self-defeating behaviors and attitudes. To aid in the process, the Rabbis added Psalm 27 to the daily prayers. It's become customary to sing one of the verses, starting with the words, "*Achat Sha'alti*," at services during *Elul*. Chava Mirel, an excellent singer and songwriter, wrote an updated version. Another fine singer-songwriter, Micah Shapiro, combined two verses from *Tanakh* (Jeremiah 31:18 and Lamentations 5:21) to create a beautiful song to aid in our *teshuvah*.

[Achat Sha'alti](#) by Chava Mirel

[Hashiveini](#) by Micah Shapiro



Founded in 1980, The Un-Common Theatre Company is dedicated to producing quality productions performed by aspiring young actors, singers, and musicians and supported by aspiring young technicians. They provide opportunities to work under the guidance of theatre professionals and perform in professional theater houses. Their vision is to develop the life skills of youth through the professional theatrical experience.

RSVP by Friday, July 14th

Tickets are \$25.00 each

Please send a check, made out to Rona Slotnick, to Temple Chayai Shalom, 239 Depot Street, Easton, MA 02375.

If you have any questions, please email [Rona](#).

Sunday, July 23rd at 2:00 pm
Join the TCS Senior Group
Marilyn Rodman Theater in Foxboro

**Info for carpooling,
 group dinner, and
 parking coming soon.**

Exploring Jewish Summer Camp: Great Options are All Around! (cont.)



In her blog, [Nine Things to Love about Jewish Summer Camp](#), Leah Jacobson, a counselor and former camper at a Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) camp in Indiana, lists conquering her fears, learning to coexist with others, and finding independence among the reasons that Jewish camp made such an impact on her, in addition to the friendships, the community, Friday night dance sessions, and bonding with Jewish adults in a fun setting.

Research has shown that Jewish camp is an investment that helps ensure a strong Jewish future. Youth who attend Jewish camps foster a deep and personal commitment to their Jewish identity, owning their Judaism, and feeling connected to Israel. Alumni of Jewish camps are more likely to prioritize Jewish experiences and incorporate Jewish values into their lives. Jewish camp prepares the next generation of leaders.

As you craft your summer plans, I encourage you to explore camp options for future summers. You can schedule tours and visit camps to get a sense for which one would be the right choice for you and your family. Some even offer “Family Camp” weeks, at the end of the summer, as a fun vacation. In the Massachusetts area, there are many options for Jewish camps, starting with day camp at Camp Grossman in Westwood (<https://www.bostonjcc.org/program/camp-grossman/>) and spreading out in every direction for overnight camps.

Starting in the west, the URJ has several camp options. In the Berkshires, there are Camp Eisner (<https://eisnercamp.org/>) and Crane Lake Camp (<https://cranelakecamp.org/>). For students who are more technically oriented, there is the 6 Points Sci-Tech Academy in Byfield, MA (<https://6pointsscitech.org/>), which is celebrating its tenth summer this year. There are also 6 Points Sports and Creative Arts camps.

South of us, there is Camp Jori in Wakefield, Rhode Island: <https://campjori.com/>. Several Temple Chayai Shalom families over the years have found Jori to be a wonderful place for their children.

Camp Pembroke, part of the Cohen Camps, is a girls’ camp in Pembroke, MA and we have several current Geshher students who are there: <https://www.cohencamps.org/pembroke/>. There are also two boys’ camps in the area, Camp Avodah in Middleboro, MA (<https://campavoda.org/>) and Camp Bauercrest in Amesbury, MA (<https://bauercrest.org/>).

Heading north, the other two Cohen camps are Camp Tel Noar in Hampstead, NH, which is the camp I attended, and Camp Tevya in Brookline, NH. You can learn more at: <https://www.cohencamps.org/>. Camp Young Judaea is also in Amherst, NH (<https://www.campyoungjudaea.com/>). Further north in Maine, there are Camp Micah in Bridgton (<https://campmicah.com/>) and Camp Modin in Belgrade (<https://campmicah.com/>).

You can learn a lot more about the benefits of Jewish overnight camp on the URJ website at: <https://reformjudaism.org/tags/summer-youth-experiences>. The Foundation for Jewish Camp, through its One Happy Camper initiative, offers grants to first time campers to offset the tuition cost: <https://jewishcamp.org/one-happy-camper/>.

Please reach out if you would like more information or help in narrowing down these many wonderful options. I look forward to hearing if you visit any camps and decide to sign up for next summer!



Registration for SULAM and Geshher is ongoing for next year.

Please share information about our wonderful educational programs with anyone for whom Temple Chayai Shalom could be a good fit.

Step 1

[Click here for SULAM Registration](#)

One form per family - all children from the same family are registered using the same form. The data is secure and available only to the school administration.

Step 2

[Click here to download the medical and permissions form to be completed and signed electronically.](#)

Please email the completed and signed form to [Denise Morgan](#), School Administrator.

Step 3

[Click here to pay the registration fee online using a credit card.](#)

Registration fee information: One Student: \$100; two or more students: \$200 total per family.

Once you have completed these 3 steps, you are done!

Sisterhood News

Thank you to everyone who purchased Purim bags during our annual fundraiser. We raised over \$2300, of which \$600 was donated to local food pantries. The rest will go to our yearly commitments to the TCS community. We are especially grateful that we can provide a \$500 scholarship award to a graduating senior.

The recipient for TCS Sisterhood Tikkun Olam Service Award for Community Service and Social Action for this year is Gabe Silverman. We thank all seniors who participated and are amazed by their dedication to community service and wish them well on all future endeavors.

Finally, we had fun **bowling with Brotherhood** at the end of May. Everyone had a fun afternoon throwing strikes, gutter balls, and cheering each other on all while enjoying pizza and drinks.



Sisterhood Backyard Get Together and BINGO



JOIN
TEMPLE CHAYAI SHALOM
FOR A FREE SEMINAR PRESENTED BY
ORCHARD COVE

Optimize Your Brain Health

Understanding how lifestyle options and interventions can help you and your loved ones live better

Thursday, August 10th, 2023 • 1:30pm

TEMPLE CHAYAI SHALOM | 239 Depot St. • South Easton



Orchard Cove
Hebrew SeniorLife



Join us as Dr. Maggie Syme, a licensed psychologist at the Deanna and Sidney Wolk Center for Memory Health, at Hebrew SeniorLife, will present on whole-person healthy aging and what each

of us can do to keep our bodies and brains living healthier, longer.

Refreshments will be served.

RSVP to Ruth Albert

Ruthalbert@comcast.net

Come As You Are - Open To All

chayaishalom.org





Temple Chayai Shalom welcomes you to TOT SHABBAT

FRIDAY, AUGUST 4 • 5:45–7:00 PM

TEMPLE CHAYAI SHALOM | 239 Depot St. • South Easton

Dinner starts at 5:45, followed by:

SONGS • STORIES • CRAFTS • AND MORE



Enjoy Shabbat dinner at TCS! Join us in celebration of family and community at our monthly Tot Shabbat. Rabbi Ken, Cantorial Soloist David Rothberg, and special guest Aileen Newton will lead kids in songs, stories, crafts, and a Shabbat candle-lighting. Be sure to invite your friends and family.

Come As You Are - Open To All

For more information, please email Rabbi Ken

at rabbiken@templechayaishalom.org or call
508-238-6385.
chayaishalom.org



T.O.R.C.H. Update

The T.O.R.C.H. Committee has had a busy Spring. In May, T.O.R.C.H. partnered with SULAM for a very successful *Mitzvah* Day. *Mitzvah* Day activities included making lunches for Father Bill's, making flowerpots for the residents at Five Corners, Donations for My Brother's Keeper, making soup bags for Ukraine, a lemonade stand raising money for Children's Hospital, stocking at the Mansfield Food Pantry, and visiting residents at Five Corners. Thanks to everyone who came out and helped. The T.O.R.C.H. Committee was very excited about our participation in the Town of Easton Pride Event. On June 11th, we manned a TCS table at the Pride Event to show our solidarity with the event and show our pride with the LGBTQA+ community.

This past year, TCS became a founding member of RAC-MA, a group of Reform congregations in Massachusetts dedicated to social and political justice. This spring, the RAC has identified its first statewide campaign, a campaign for Housing Justice. This is a much-needed cause in this state considering the inequities of housing opportunities for a number of communities around the state. The T.O.R.C.H. committee will share information, educational materials and actions steps as the RAC-MA shares them with us.

The T.O.R.C.H. committee is also looking into partnering with Second Nuture (2N), which marshals community resources to support foster families. As part of an interfaith group, the T.O.R.C.H. committee is learning more about 2N's expansion into the Boston area and ways in which we can help.

Please remember to bring in donations for **Family Table**. We are responsible for collecting 30 cans each of tuna fish and vegetarian soup every month. The donation box is located in the lobby of the temple. Family Table serves more than 100 towns across Greater Boston, the North Shore, and the South Area. It is the largest *kosher* food pantry in New England. Donations have been running a little short lately so please remember to bring these when you come to temple. Thank you to Amy Glaser who has been coordinating this for the TCS community.



Finally, the T.O.R.C.H. committee would like to remind everyone that T.O.R.C.H. can be specifically identified when making donations to the temple. We are looking forward to being able to increase our ability to put on social justice programming for the community this upcoming year, so any assistance from the congregation would be appreciated.

Giving *Tz'dakah* is a Primary Jewish Value

A donation to the temple is a meaningful way to mark any occasion to celebrate a life cycle event, to honor someone, to remember a loved one, to thank the professional staff, or for any other reason and is always appreciated. A big thank you to everyone who has contributed. [Click Here to Donate](#)

General Giving Fund

Ruth Albert, in memory of Ralph Goldberg
 Maxine Bloom, in memory of her sister, Roberta Clayman
 Michael & Ruth Feldman, in memory of Joseph Feldman
 Rhonda Fleming, in memory of Roger Jellenik
 Rhonda Fleming, in memory of Marcia Zeidman
 Edward & Lawrence Glaser
 Howard & Esta Jacobs, in memory of their son,
 Michael Jacobs, and Howard's mother, Mary Jacobs
 Erica Krull in memory of her father, Marcu Meghid
 Susan Polikoff, wishing a speedy recovery to Michael
 Gottfried & Kimberley Phillips
 Charles Reingold, in memory of his parents, Dora & Eli
 Reingold, on the anniversary of their *yahrzeits*

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Malcolm & Sukey Denniss, in appreciation of Rabbi Ken
 and Cantor David for their devoted time in preparing
 Emilie Rosen for her *Bat Mitzvah*
 Sheri Richards, in memory of Murray Steinberg

Malie Baier Fund

Denise Kravitz, in memory of her son, Christopher Betts
 Joni Mayer, in memory of beloved mother & grammy,
 Bea Wilensky

Confirmation (cont.)

Hannah wrote:

The connections I have fostered with my friends and family through Jewish traditions are fundamental to my Jewish identity. Whether it be attending a BBYO event with my friends or a Passover *Seder* with my extended family, these are among the most meaningful experiences to me.

Some of my fondest childhood memories were made at my grandparents' old house in New Jersey. Each year, they would host a Passover *Seder* and invite many members of my extended family. What made this particularly special for me was that it was the only occasion when I would see my cousins on my father's side of the family. Though some live as far away as California, my extended family would always make the trip to see everyone. Since they saw me on such rare occasions, they would always tell me how tall I'd grown and give me, my brother, and my cousin, Sadie, art kits. Because I was the youngest child present at the table who could read the Hebrew, I was given the responsibility of singing the Four Questions. I remember being nervous the first time that I sang them at the table; I had never been so involved in the *Seder* before! To ease my nerves, my dad was by my side and sang along with me. Another aspect that was memorable to me was my grandpa's involvement in the *Seder*. Year after year, he would lead the service from his chair at the head of the dining room table. He always seemed to be "in his element" as he read from the *Haggadah*. Just over three years ago, my grandpa passed away. His death marked the end of the yearly *Seders*, as my grandma sold their house a few months later. When I think back to all of the *Seders* my grandma and grandpa had hosted in the past, the memories put a smile on my face.

More recently, I have made many connections with other Jewish youth through BBYO. It has given me the opportunity to meet so many girls from neighboring towns whom I would have never met otherwise. So far through BBYO, I have helped make cards for sick children at Boston Children's Hospital as well as make meals for people in need. I found that doing these charitable works can be personally gratifying and foster connections with other Jewish teens. Other bonding experiences I have had with my regional chapter include going apple picking at CN Smith Farm and attending a Thanksgiving dinner hosted by one of our members. Although the bonding experiences weren't focused around charity, I felt an overwhelming sense of belonging that came with making new friends who shared the Jewish faith with me. I am very grateful to have discovered BBYO and I look forward to the future events that our chapter will host.

The experience that was most influential in shaping my Jewish identity was becoming *Bat Mitzvah*. It is especially impactful to me because of its being a tradition on my dad's side of the family. The process of learning my Torah portion exposed me to Biblical text and allowed me to consider its relevance in today's society; it further emphasized the importance of treating others with care and compassion. It also inspired me to continue my Jewish studies into Confirmation class! During the preparation for my *Bat Mitzvah* service, I built a strong connection with Marci, my tutor, and enjoyed her guidance through the prayers of my ceremony. My service itself introduced my friends and non-Jewish family members to a traditional Jewish coming-of-age celebration. To have shared such an impressive milestone with people who are so important to me made it all the more memorable.

Finally, the *Purim Shpiel* that I participated in about 2 months ago also helped me make connections with other kids and adults at TCS. The characters were dressed as they are in *Beauty and the Beast*, but they played the roles of characters from the *Purim* story! I had a great time learning the modified *Beauty and the Beast* songs that were made suitable for *Purim*, as well as dressing in a clock costume to play the role of "Coggschwartz." The audience found the play to be hilarious, and it was gratifying to see their enjoyment of our light-hearted *Purim* rendition. I will definitely engage in more TCS plays in the future!

Altogether, there are many ways that I've bonded with the people who are in my life today. The said experiences have shaped my Jewish identity and helped build in me a strong sense of community and friendship within the congregation and beyond.

Lexi wrote:

I believe that, for Jews, our culture, ethics, and values contribute greatly to our success. We Jews are special in that we have very different ways of life than the general population. When I say this, however, I am not only speaking about the different holidays that we celebrate, but rather about our mindset. Though our celebrations and holidays are comparatively different, I am focusing more on how this fact impacts our human nature. I definitely understand that there seemingly may be some negatives to our culture such as the difficulty of fasting on *Yom Kippur*, or even just as simple as being a kid and feeling left out as apparently the only one who does not celebrate Christmas. These feelings, however, contribute to the greater success that we as Jews are then able to achieve. We do not conform to what everyone else is doing. We create our own path and in this way we help ourselves to create a sense of individuality and strength.

Jews are proven to be one of the most successful groups. I genuinely believe that this derives from how Judaism does not allow for us to take the easy way out of situations. A great example of this is exactly what I am doing right now. In order to be confirmed, I obviously had to attend a series of classes throughout the years, but not only that. I had to create a presentation that I displayed to my class, learn an *aliyah*, as well as write and deliver this speech to the congregation. While Judaism and this temple could have only had the requirement of showing up to the final confirmation service,

shaking someone's hand and sitting right back down, we don't. From one perspective, this is extremely frustrating because it may seem like a large waste of time. On the opposite end of the argument however, this is very beneficial for the students in the long run. The amount of work and dedication assigned to us in order to be confirmed has shaped the hardworking and success-driven people that we are and will continue to become. This also goes to show that Judaism is not superficial, and it is not only about going through the motions but rather taking advantage of all that Judaism has to offer us.

I would bet that almost everyone in this room has experienced the feeling that being a Jew has made life difficult at times. For instance, having to stay home from school or work and sit through a long service having not eaten or had anything to drink for too many hours, all while stressing about the work that we will have to make up once we return to reality. Or how about for a whole entire week refusing to consume anything containing wheat or anything that rises. We go to work or school and cram in everything that we have to do before we congregate with our families for a seder in which we are forbidden to eat anything other than bitter herbs or parsley dipped in salt water for what feels like an eternity. In both of these examples, absolutely no one forces us to follow the rules. There is genuinely nothing stopping any of us from sneaking into the pantry when no one is paying attention during *Yom Kippur*. There is no one inspecting every little thing that we ingest during Passover, so why don't we just *cheat* in this aspect? Although it would be easy to do so, we don't because it is important to both us as individuals, as well as the preservation of the religion itself. This develops mental toughness. Mental toughness is defined as "a measure of individual resilience and confidence that may predict success in sport, education and the workplace". It is a quality that supports one's work ethic and determination to be a greater version of themselves. Within our culture as Jews, we grow strong in that very aspect of mental toughness which aids us in ultimately achieving a successful life.

We Jews make up about 0.2% of the world population, but we account for at least 20% of Nobel prize winners. We make up 2% of the population in the United States, yet Jews make up about 20% of the population at Harvard, the most prestigious school in the country. Clearly there is a pattern here and it is not a coincidence. This statistic is derived from our core values as Jews. I would consider education to be one of the main priorities of the Jewish household. Wanting and valuing an education and working hard to learn and grow as a person is not a mindset that people are born with. We in particular instill this priority into children from a young age. Studies have proven that those who do better and work harder in school tend to lead more successful lives.

To bring all of this full circle, our Jewish culture and priorities help to make us more successful. Our religion in itself structures us into having a more determined and scholarly mindset. Our religion has a way of creating opportunities for us that push us out of our comfort zones and help us to grow not only as individuals, but as a community. Judaism also instills values within us that encourage us to be driven and mentally tough. The whole basis of being Jewish is to take the harder path that will mold us into better and more successful people. I am proud to be a Jew. It has so much to offer and our heritage is why I am who I am to this day. Judaism has played a major role in my life in how I work hard to achieve my goals and how I operate on a daily basis. It teaches all of us how to strive to be the best version of ourselves and how to push past boundaries into the greater joys and successes of life.

Danielle wrote:

Since I started attending Camp Pembroke 4 years ago, I have become more in touch with my Jewish identity. While at camp, it was clear that although people had different interests and hobbies, we were all connected through our Jewish identity. We were all there for the same reason; We were in it together. The sense of community and religious importance at camp helped me not only to discover my core religious values but also that being religious is a choice and a privilege. I honestly believe that if I hadn't started attending camp Pembroke all those years ago, I wouldn't be the person I am today.

Camp Pembroke was the first place I learned to love praying. I learned the importance of understanding the meaning behind our words used in prayer. I remember my first meal the day I arrived at camp; It was gooey grilled cheese with French fries. As I walked into the dining hall, I was met with nearly 400 hundred girls huddled at tables chatting and laughing. Even though I knew nobody, I was welcomed with open arms. I quickly found a seat and started talking. After a couple of minutes, our camp director came over the microphone and announced it was time for prayer. At first I was confused why nobody had groaned and why the people around me were so excited. Before I knew it, everyone around broke out into loud and joyous prayer. There were handshakes and dances that went along with the rhythm, and although I didn't know the words or movements, I felt more included in the moment than I had ever before. Over the next couple of days, I quickly became a master at all the prayers we sang before and after our meals. Unintentionally, the prayers became my favorite part of the meal. I no longer looked forward to the food and dessert; I only looked forward to finding out who could sing the fastest or who could do the drumming pattern the best. By the time I got picked up by my mom four weeks later, I couldn't wait to share what I learned with her. On the car ride home, I didn't talk about my friends or my summer activities; all I did was sing my prayers to my mom and plan for the summer ahead.

In addition to helping me embrace the meaning of prayer within my Jewish identity, camp provided me with an amazing Jewish community. Although I already had a strong Jewish community at my temple, the one at camp is different. At

camp, my Jewish community consists of over 300 girls. Not only does this provide me with a big support system, but it also allows me to find other Jews with similar interests as me. I no longer felt like the only thing I had in common with my community was my religion. Camp allows me to share my true feelings on all sorts of topics, helping to further my own opinions and thoughts regarding religion in my life. In addition to allowing me to share my feelings, my camp community allowed me to be myself free of judgment. Camp isn't like school. There are no popular kids waiting to judge others at any moment; everyone cares about each other. Another main benefit of having a strong Jewish community is that I am able to take part in events with my friends that help me connect to my culture and Israel. For example, while at camp, my friends and I would often learn about different dances that were often performed in Israel. The opportunities at camp to learn about my ancestors with my camp allows me to further my understanding of what it means to be Jewish. I now know how my religion came to be and why it's important to honor the past. All in all, my camp community not only helped me make the strongest friendships of my life, but it also pushed me to learn more about my Jewish culture and identity.

Finally, camp helped me discover what type of Jew I want to be. While at camp, we are given many opportunities to do things that follow the morals of Judaism. To be more specific, camp helped to teach me the importance of kindness and empathy. The main way I learned these lessons is just from living with such a large group of people in such a small place. It forces everyone to interact with each other and take responsibility for their actions. Throughout the past couple of summers I have spent at camp, I have been put in situations where I was uncomfortable. I then had to figure out how to make my situation better; this helped to teach me patience and kindness. For example, at camp people don't get to choose who they share a bunk with; everyone just has to make it work. In addition, when thinking of how camp shaped my morals in Judaism I think of the chores at camp. Every bunk has a set of chores that must be completed every day after breakfast. The bunks are then checked after the day's first activity and rated on a score of 1-13. If the bunk achieves a certain amount of points, they are rewarded. Thus, everyone works together to make sure the bunk gets cleaned. This system not only taught me to keep a clean area, but it also helped show me the importance of teamwork. All in all, the traditions and ways of camp helped show me how to be a kind and respectful person. I believe that this specifically ties into my Jewish Identity, because while at camp, I learned that I want to become a Jew who is kind to others and knows how to be a useful part of a community.

In conclusion, without camp I wouldn't be who I am today. Before I arrived at Camp Pembroke, I assumed that I wouldn't come home any different, but I was wrong. Not only did camp help me discover my own Jewish identity, but it helped me learn and appreciate others and their customs. The act of attending a Jewish summer camp as a child is a tradition that I hope to pass onto my future children. I hope they will be able to grow their ideas of Judaism and their Jewish identities through their experiences at camp just like I have over the past couple of years.

David wrote:

The Jewish people, now and always, have had a strong and unique sense of community. At some points in our history, that was all we had. It is no secret that the past of the Jewish people was not an easy or particularly peaceful one, with our ancestors being attacked, persecuted, and murdered by many strong empires of their respective times. However, we are here, carrying on the Jewish legacy despite the numerous attempts to end it. When our ancestors were captured and attacked, they did not give up and surrender. They relied on community to overcome their oppressors and work their way out of every bind they found themselves in. They realized that community was their strongest weapon, stronger than any of the artillery of the opposing armies.

This lesson of the power and importance of community proved true again recently, during the pandemic that left us separated and alone. When we look around here, in this Temple, I'm sure that we see friends and family and people who, during the tough and painful parts of our lives, have always had our backs and never gave up on us. Now, for most of us, we have always been surrounded by this constant support and love, and I think it is fair to say that a lot of us take it for granted. I admit, I too have occasionally thought of the cozy and supportive warmth of community as a common, standard feeling that holds no extraordinary traits. However, sometimes it takes an especially strong and powerful display of community to remind us of how vital it is to all of our lives. One of these such occurrences took place a few years ago, on the day of my *Bar Mitzvah* service. Not the planned day of my *Bar Mitzvah* service, near the end of March in 2020, but the slightly delayed day of my *Bar Mitzvah* service which took place over Zoom due to health and safety precautions from COVID. Now, some people might be wondering how a Zoom meeting, an event where people aren't even physically present, can display a great sense of community. Well, that's exactly what made it so special. Over Zoom, it would have been so easy for people to not join or to have their camera off and leave halfway through, but people didn't. At an in-person service there is a certain level of shame and embarrassment that coincides with leaving early or napping or just not going in the first place, but at my *Bar Mitzvah* service, everyone stayed and watched and supported me even when presented with the option to opt-out at any time. Everyone truly cared about me and wanted to see me accomplish something special, and at my *Bar Mitzvah* party, everyone celebrated me and cheered me on as I ran around the room high-fiving people to the triumphant sound of the Imperial March from Star Wars, my favorite movie. See, that is what makes community so special. When I saw how over 100 people joined my service on Zoom and celebrated my accomplishment with such joy and love, I suddenly valued community as much more than a simple,

everyday occurrence. I realized that it was an exceptional, unstoppable, greater-than-life gift that I was part of such a charismatic, fun, and supportive community that allowed me to follow through and complete my *Bar Mitzvah* celebration at such a strange time in my, and all of our, lives.

I think it's critically important that we recognize the power of our community as it is one of our greatest strengths. The Jewish people have used community to overcome obstacles for many centuries, and since more tough times will undoubtedly happen in the future, we can use this community, here, at Temple Chayai Shalom, to get through them. Since I am not extremely religious, community is a large part of my Jewish identity, and I find that now, having reflected on its importance in my life, I appreciate it even more. So, I believe it is crucial that we should always remember: When times are tough and the situation ahead looks impossible and daunting, we can just reach out to our community and we will realize that we can do anything.

Zoe wrote:

I have been a student at TCS since I was in preschool. For as long as I can remember, a large part of my Jewish identity has been belonging to Temple Chayai Shalom and doing Hebrew school activities like singing all the songs I learned in Hebrew school with my friends and going up for my birthday every March to dance around the room while everyone else sang "*Yom Huledet Samei-ach*." TCS has had a huge impact on my Jewish identity but even more so has my family.

Both my parents grew up in families that identified very strongly with their Jewish heritage. They celebrated every Jewish holiday with their families, went to high holy day services, and continued their Jewish education through Hebrew high school. Growing up in Newton and Sharon, they were surrounded by other Jewish kids and families. However, when moving to Mansfield, and raising my brother and me, they didn't know that many other Jewish families with kids our age. Despite not having too many others in Mansfield who celebrate all the Jewish holidays and go to high holy day services, my parents never gave up their Judaism and continued to celebrate it and keep the Jewish traditions my family has always had. Their continued commitment to Judaism and their Jewish heritage has influenced my Judaism and been the most influential thing to my Jewish identity.

As I said before, growing up in Mansfield, I didn't have too many friends who were Jewish or celebrated their Judaism. When I was little, I sometimes got discouraged, being the only Jewish kid in my friend group. I was never really ashamed, but sometimes I felt left out and regretted celebrating the Jewish holidays, especially when December came around and everyone was talking about when they were decorating their Christmas tree or what they got from Santa when we returned back from break. Although celebrating the Jewish holidays is about maintaining a connection to Judaism, as a little kid, all I thought about was how my friends celebrated the same holidays as each other, but none that I did. But as I got older, I observed my parents celebrating the Jewish holidays and never being ashamed of celebrating their Judaism. Even though we were in the minority of the town, my parents never stopped making the holidays special for my brother and me and never hid how Judaism was a big part of their identity. As I got older, their dedication to Judaism and their belief that being Jewish was part of their identity influenced how I viewed being Jewish. No longer did I wish that I could celebrate all the holidays that my friends celebrated like Christmas and Easter, but instead I was proud that I got to celebrate the Jewish holidays. I saw how my parents were proud of their Jewish heritage and because of them, I was proud of being different, of being Jewish, which became a large part of my Jewish identity.

In addition to influencing how I viewed being Jewish, my family also impacted the traditions that I consider to be part of each holiday. My family has always had certain traditions, whether they may be food or an activity or something else, during the Jewish holiday. Because we never failed to do these traditions each year, I have come to associate certain traditions with each holiday. For as long as I can remember, on the night before *Passover* begins, my family says the prayer for burning the *chametz*. Because during *Passover* we are supposed to avoid *chametz*, which is leavened food, it is customary to burn the last few crumbs of *chametz* before *Passover* starts. While this ritual is a traditional part of *Passover* preparation, this prayer is special to my family as the name of the prayer is *Col Chamira*. Although we may have done this prayer even if this wasn't the name, the connection between the title *Col Chamira* and my last name, Colchamiro, has ensured that we say the prayer each year. Since I have grown up saying this prayer with my family, I now consider it something that is a very important part of *Passover* to me and something that I will do with my family someday. Another *Passover* tradition that I will pass onto my children comes from having seders at my mom's parents' house, where my Papa never failed to keep one certain tradition. While my grandmother made the food, my Papa was in charge of leading the *seder*, including what I used to consider one of the most important parts, hiding the *Afikomen*. Although the seeking of the *Afikomen* is supposed to be challenging and the *Afikomen* is supposed to be hidden somewhere where no one would know, my Papa always hid the *Afikomen* in the same spot, under the couch cushion. No matter how many times we guessed where it would be and no matter how many times he actually hid the *Afikomen* there, it would never be in a different spot. This year, when my dad gave me the responsibility of hiding the *Afikomen* for my little cousins, I followed my Papa's lead and hid it under the couch cushion. The traditions, in addition to the many holiday foods that my Grandma and Mimi make, have become part of my Jewish Identity as they are a large part of the way I celebrate the Jewish holidays.

Another way my family has influenced my Jewish identity is by helping me feel connected to a certain part of my Jewish identity, being a Romaniote Jew. A Romaniote Jew is a Greek-ethnic Jew who is native to the Eastern Mediterranean. Long ago there used to be many living Romaniote Jews, but sadly, the Holocaust wiped out many of the Romaniote Jews. Today, lots of these Jews, including my family, have moved out of Greece to Israel or other countries. In the early 1900s, my dad's side of the family who was living in Greece moved to New York. Along with them was my 8-year-old great-grandfather, his mother, and some of his siblings. Even though they had moved out of Greece, his mother continued to make Greek-Jewish food, Romaniote Jewish food, that she had previously made in Greece. When my great-grandfather married my great-grandmother, she was taught these family recipes, and later, these recipes were passed down to my grandmother. Now these recipes have been passed down to me as I spent and continue to spend countless amounts of time making this Greek food. Learning these recipes and making all these Greek foods have helped me feel connected to being a Romaniote Jew because even though I am only $\frac{1}{8}$ Greek, I still have a piece of my family's Romaniote Jewish history that I can continue to share with others and pass down to my kids someday.

I am very proud to be here tonight at my confirmation and to celebrate the end of my formal Jewish learning, but I think I have learned the most about my Jewish identity and what it means to be Jewish from my family.

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Mazal tov to the confirmands of 5783! For more information and registration materials for the next Confirmation class and Teen Oasis programs that will be starting in the fall, please contact me (rabbiken@templechayaishalom.org) or **Jeri Robins** (education@templechayaishalom.org).