



 **BROOKLYN HEIGHTS  
SYNAGOGUE**





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# Annual Meeting

May 30, 2024

## Opening Blessing

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו  
וְצִוָּנוּ לְעִסוֹק בְּצָרְכֵי צְבוּר:

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam  
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav  
v'tzivanu la'asok b'tzorchai tzibur.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God,  
Ruler of the universe, who sanctifies us through *mitzvot*  
and had commanded us to engage in the needs of the community.

## Agenda

- I **President's Welcome**
- II **Voting on Nominating Committee's Proposed Slate of Board Officers and Trustees**
- III **Voting on the FY2025 Budget**
- IV **Brief Presentations from Clergy and Senior Staff**



## President's Message



Dear BHS Community,  
I write this message with tremendous pride – tinged with sadness – as my presidency of the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue comes to an end. It has been a privilege to lead this extraordinary congregation.

I am thrilled to report that our synagogue is **thriving** with more than 520 member units (which translates into 2000-plus people), including a dedicated group who recently joined us from Congregation Mount Sinai.

During the past year, 131 Remsen roared to life with robust and enriching programming: movies, lectures, adult education classes, Israeli dancing, challah bakes, parenting workshops, singalongs, Torathons, Shalom Shabbats, Mah Jong and much more. Friday evening services are jam-packed with congregants and guests of all ages – we often need to set up extra chairs to accommodate attendees.

Our Preschool continues to reach new heights with the best kids, as well as the best parents. And it's even growing! Next year we will add another classroom to accommodate more students.

The BHS Religious School is bustling, too. I've had the pleasure of attending several joyous Shabbat B'Yachads under the leadership of our outgoing rabbinical intern **Eden Anolick** and cantorial intern **Sarina Elenbogen-Siegel**. We've continued to have a growing roster of religious school students, which is a testament to the strength of our stellar program.

The BHS Homeless Shelter hit its 40-year anniversary in January, another wondrous milestone. Thank you to everyone who volunteered to cook a meal, stay overnight or stock the pantry. And a special shout out to **Anne Landman** for keeping this remarkable tradition going year after year.

The vibrant BHS Social Justice Committee springs into action on a daily basis, working on dozens of important local and global initiatives in the spirit of Tikkun Olam. Thank you **Cliff Fonstein and Andrea Feller** for your tireless stewardship. One of my most meaningful experiences was attending a virtual

prison visit in February with a group of incarcerated men at a Colorado prison.

Big props also are in order to **Deborah Baruh** and **Erica Rosenberg** for your warm, compassionate and caring spirit while overseeing our vital Chesed program. Thank you for supporting our community when faced with illness, recovery and tremendous loss.

Thank you to Treasurer **Miriam Katowitz** for your leadership and the entire finance committee for making smart fiscal decisions that keep the lights on. We now have the budget to hire a full-time development professional, which is integral for our future growth.

It's easy to kvell about BHS. But it's a lot harder to talk about how everything changed for the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue – and the world – on October 7. When I woke up early that morning and saw the news alerts about the attack in Israel, my heart fell into my stomach.

It has stayed there ever since.

"You're a wartime president," my husband told me in the days that followed.

We did not waste any time rethinking our protocols, and safety remains our top priority. I want to thank our Security Committee – **Adam Riff, Don Shacknai, Shari Hyman** and **Laura Edidin** – for their hard work. There are big financial implications to our enhanced security measures. If you have not paid your security fee, I hope that you'll do so ASAP.

Kudos to the entire **Board of Trustees** of the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue. We have survived the trifecta of COVID, construction and war together. Your deep commitment to BHS is the foundation for our continued success and the future of Reform Judaism.

To my rock star Executive Committee cabinet – **Aaron Zimmerman, Nancy Cohen, Alan Schiffres, Alan Gertler** as well as **Miriam Katowitz**: You are all partners and friends. Thank you for your numerous (!) opinions, unlimited guidance and strategic decision-making skills.

In terms of the BHS staff, the level of professionalism and care that goes into managing everything we do is astounding. Here are a few more shout outs before I disappear into the annals of BHS history...



**Pam Karlin:** You dazzle me with your sense of humor and ability to connect with children and parents alike. You give wonderful hugs. And your exceptional educational expertise is valuable to the community, city as well as the entire state. You are a gem.

**Katie Rein:** Kol Havavod for being the most organized person in the galaxy; for your excellent taste in pets and for running a spectacular religious school program. You are unflappable!

**Lisa Kopel:** You are sunshine and rainbows! Thank you for your welcoming spirit and innovative ideas. I love working with you on membership initiatives. I love that you often show up at a mitzvah or event, just because, to make sure *everything* is in order.

Special thanks to **Lauren Broggin**, who manages many important tasks behind the scenes, including grant writing and putting together News & Notes each week. You make it look effortless.

**Isabel Benebgui-Montilla:** Are you a magician? Inevitably, you pull off a dazzling feat with essentially no notice. Thank you for keeping our clergy team sane and organized.

**Erik DiFrisco and the entire facilities crew:** Thank you for everything you do, day in and day out. The Herculean care and love you give to our building is much appreciated. And the fruit-infused water is a lovely touch.

I also want to acknowledge our security guards, **Fortune and James** and everyone else who keeps us safe with a welcoming, watchful eye.

It's hard to believe that **Rabbi Bailey Romano** has only been our associate rabbi for a mere year. It feels like Rabbi Bailey has been part of our community – and my life – forever. Bailey, your enthusiasm and Jewish pride is infectious. You are radiant. It has been an honor to embrace you into the BHS family.

**Cantor Ayelet Porzecanski:** You are a beautiful human inside and out. Your voice is transcendent, and you are a beacon of hope. Thank you for everything you do for our congregation, as well as the broader Brownstone Brooklyn interfaith community.

I have learned so much spiritually, professionally and personally from **Rabbi Serge Lippe**. It will take decades to unpack it all. Serge: I am blessed to call you my rabbi and friend. As I worked closely with the wider Jewish community in the past two years,

I know how fortunate BHS is to have such a strong, dynamic and tireless senior leader. (I also know your sacred sauce is **Deb Speyer** as well as your phenomenal children!)

In short: I worship you.

In addition, our Executive Director **Linda Harvey** continues to astonish me with her organizational prowess, logistical mastery, incredible work ethic and uncanny ability to keep calm and temple on, no matter what is thrown her way. Linda: We are lucky to have you at the helm of our congregation. Thank you (on steroids) for everything you have accomplished – most of it simply miraculous – in the past year! I cherish and appreciate you so much.

I'm an accidental president, who was not actively groomed for this role. I had a lot to learn. I navigated many difficult conversations. I played referee. And I certainly made some rookie mistakes. I now look forward to joining the esteemed ranks of the BHS Presidential Alumni Club. Speaking of which, thank you to our former presidents, especially immediate past president **Marcia Bellows**, for your never-ending insight, unwavering support and wisdom during the past two years.

It gives me tremendous pleasure to hand over my key(card) to **Aaron Zimmerman**, first vice president. Aaron will be the first BHS president who literally grew up in our community – he even was part of Rabbi Lippe's first confirmation class. The ultimate l'dor vador: Aaron's fabulous children **Louisa** and **Eli** attended BHS preschool and are current students in the religious school. Aaron's parents, **Barbara** and **Michael Zimmerman**, are beloved and steadfast supporters of BHS. In addition to a million other things, Aaron's brilliant wife **Alycia** oversees the Purim Carnival, which – as you all should know by now – is the premier BHS event. As our synagogue enters its 65th year, I know you are in strong, capable hands.

I will wind down this swan song by thanking the entire BHS membership. I enjoyed getting to know many of you and your families. You are the heart and soul of BHS. Thank you for becoming my mishpachah.

Finally, I want to thank BHS for giving my son **Leo Gordon** a formidable and exemplary Jewish foundation, which has served him well during a tough year at college. (When I joined BHS 12 years ago, so that Leo could become a bar mitzvah, I never

imagined I'd become president of this congregation!) This summer Leo will be working in Israel as a Birthright Excel fellow for the Hapoel Jerusalem Basketball team. And it will be Leo's third visit to the Holy Land – the first was on the 9th Grade trip with his BHS Religious School class. Leo, I am so proud of you!

To my stepsons **Zev** and **Sasson Lonner**, I always say you are the greatest wedding gift. You are funny, you are kind and you are the best travel partners. I am lucky to call you my children, and I treasure your weekly Shabbat calls every Friday.

I especially want to thank my husband **Jonathan Lonner**, who “lent” me to BHS for the past two years. (I know he is very excited to get me back.) Jonathan: Your Jewish day school education came in handy during my term! You are a trusted adviser as well as an excellent support system. I love, adore and treasure you.

The best thing about being part of the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue is how we stand together to face life's challenges. And now we are being tested: It is a hard time for Jews all over the world. Yet, whenever the state of the planet makes you feel off-kilter, just walk through the doors of 131 Remsen Street to feel grounded, connected and restored.

And, with that, dear congregants, it is time to say “Shalom.” But I leave you with a challenge. In the coming year, show up to services! Volunteer! Join a committee! Make it a priority to do just one thing at BHS every month.

Continue to shine. Continue to be the light. Am Yisrael Chai.

**Lauren Young**

23<sup>rd</sup> President of the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue

## Mazel Tov to our Fall 2023 – Spring 2024 B'nai Mitzvah!

Liev Arpante . . . . . September 23, 2023  
 Cooper Richardson . . . . . September 30, 2023  
 Ella Haim . . . . . October 7, 2023  
 Declan Barowitz . . . . . October 14, 2023  
 Abigail Marcus . . . . . October 21, 2023  
 Daniel Tiger . . . . . November 4, 2023  
 Coco Conovitz . . . . . November 11, 2023  
 Avery Arden . . . . . November 18, 2023  
 Morgan Shap. . . . . December 9, 2023

Julian Dachis. . . . . January 20, 2024  
 Valis Schanzer-Yu . . . . . February 3, 2024  
 Zoe Ball . . . . . March 3, 2024  
 Sadie Schwartz . . . . . March 23, 2024  
 Max Dettler . . . . . March 30, 2024  
 Tobias Berenson. . . . . April 6, 2024  
 Mera Schoenburg . . . . . April 13, 2024  
 Charlie Germain . . . . . April 20, 2024  
 Daphne Leighton . . . . . May 4, 2024  
 Nicholas Strohmenger. . . . . May 11, 2024  
 Eleanor Holz . . . . . May 18, 2024  
 Polina Salzberger . . . . . June 1, 2024  
 Cecilia Korhammer. . . . . June 8, 2024  
 Walter Block . . . . . June 15, 2024

## Senior Rabbi's Report



We began our 65th program-year firmly ensconced in our physical restored and renovated home at 131 Remsen Street.

Once again, we celebrated the High Holy Days at Plymouth Church while continuing to offer a remote option

via livestream. We celebrated Sukkot, Simchat Torah\* and Chanukah, then Purim (special mention of Rabbi Romano and Cantor Porzecanski's efforts putting together the Super Hero inspired shpiel) and our annual Carnival. We prepared for Passover and held our PS Seders and Miriam's Seder in person at BHS. Rabbi Romano and I led a restored Second Night Seder in our second floor Event Space. We hosted this year's community wide Yom HaShoah observance and we participated in the community wide Yom HaZikaron/Israeli Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers and Victims of Terrorism at Kane Street. We are looking forward to Shavuot with our Confirmands on Tuesday evening, June 11 and Festival morning services and yizkor on Wednesday morning, June 12.

\*It is impossible to describe in this limited space how the events of October 7/Simchat Torah (what is called Black Shabbat in Israel) have impacted not only our synagogue and the Jewish community but our entire world. The synagogue leadership was called upon once again to pivot in mere hours and days to insure the security of our premises, programs and people. The singular worst atrocity and murder of Jews since the Holocaust, we have been left reeling by the facts of that day and its aftereffects. Some 1200 individuals were murdered and 250 kidnapped. Each of the clergy team has traveled to Israel to show our support and better comprehend the situation there. (I went in late October, the Cantor during Chanukah, Katie Rein in January, and Rabbi Romano most recently). Members of our own community have been deeply impacted, including one member whose relative was among the kidnapped but thankfully released. One of my oldest son's former Eisner campmates, First Lieutenant Yanai Kaminka, an IDF officer, was murdered. We have held solidarity services at BHS and in the Brownstone Jewish community, and many of us have attended rallies near the United Nations.

We shared a bus with Congregation B'nai Avraham and traveled down to Washington, DC National Mall to stand in support of Israel.

In the fall, I reached out over Zoom to our college students and Rabbi Romano is in the process of reaching out now as the collegiate year concludes. Some of us have been deeply involved in the efforts to reveal the level of sexual violence committed by Hamas. We heard from our Israeli born member Yigal Rechtman, from visiting Israeli Rabbi and Poet Osnat Eldar, from Eric Alterman (as part of the Israel Matters group) who spoke about his book: *We Are Not One, A History of America's Fight Over Israel*, from Kenneth Bob director of Ameinu spoke on Resisting Despair, and from Rabbi Nammah Kelman and her husband Dr. Elan Ezrachi on their experience as Israelis. We have kept a chair on the bimah dedicated to one of the hostages and have kept the pictures of all the hostages on the board outside the Sanctuary entrance. In the last seven months we have seen a level of antisemitism unleashed in the world, in America and here in NYC and in Brooklyn that we could not have imagined previously. We are still dealing with its impact. [Our former Rabbinic Intern, now the Rabbi at the Village Temple, Diana Fersko, spoke to us about her newly published book: *We Need To Talk About Antisemitism*.]

And our Chesed Committee continued to check in by phone with our older, home-limited or pandemic isolated members. Members of the committee volunteered to make food purchases and to transport members to the doctor, and to make special deliveries on Jewish holidays and occasions. The Committee touches so many of us individually! Thanks to Deborah Baruh and Erica Rosenberg and our Social Worker Rabbi Adam Huttel.

Our membership efforts are always crowned by our Getting to Know You Dinners on the last Saturday evening in January and had a fantastic turnout this year!

The Social Justice Committee deserves kudos for all their efforts and activities. Thank you to Andrea Feller and Cliff Fonstein and the many dedicated hard-working members of the committee. The committee sponsored our Social Justice Shabbat where we heard from Ruth Messinger on Refugee Shabbat on February 9. At Repro Shabbat on March 8 I spoke on Judaism's historical attitudes toward abortion and we heard from our member



Andrea Kopel, President of the National Council of Jewish Women-NYC. The Social Justice Committee continues its work on Climate Change and Prison Outreach thanks also to Sharon Kosakoff, Mike McQuillan and Bette Birnbaum.

The Ritual Committee's efforts taking up the nuts and bolts issues of the Sanctuary this year. New memorial boards were installed thanks to a generous donation. New sanctuary seating (the pews have deteriorated) will be installed thanks to the generosity of seven BHS families. I want to extend a personal thanks to Jeremy Primer, who is stepping down as committee chair (but not from the committee!), and welcome Rachel Schnoll as our new chair!

I also continue to participate regularly in the Finance Committee. Many thanks to our outgoing BHS Treasurer, Miriam Katowitz, without whom BHS frankly would not have made it so successfully through the past four years! Yesharkocheich!

In addition to the weekly Welcoming Shabbat program that I facilitate for our youngest, I also continue to teach 10<sup>th</sup> Grade (Confirmation) every Tuesday, and 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Grades at my home twice a month. I also continued teaching Advanced Hebrew reading throughout this year over Zoom on Thursday mornings, as well as a number of shorter term Adult Education offerings: Judaism, Tort Law, and The Environment; Elijah the Prophet – Bible & Legends; and Discovering the Mishna – A Survey of Orders and Tractates.

We continued to restore programs that COVID put on hold. This year in addition to our Second Night Seder, we also restored our annual Torathon Study evening on Saturday evening May 4. We got off to a terrific start with some 35 registrants and instructors that included Rabbi Romano, Cantor Porzecanski, RS Director Katie Rein, Rabbi Sue Oren, Rabbi Hara Person, Rabbi Naamah Kelman, BHS Member and Bible Professor Ellen Lerner, and myself.

Thanks to Anne Landman, Sam Fishman, Ben Fishman, Lizzie Fishman, and Lincoln Restler, and all the committee members and volunteers for their efforts at getting CAMBA to support a limited run of our homeless shelter even in the absence of NYC funding this past year.

Myriam Bucatinsky started our "Israel Matters" group which has held several large gatherings to discuss

books, topics and guest speakers on Israel. Many, many thanks Myriam – Kol HaKavod!

I was honored to be acknowledged by the Brooklyn Heights Blog (belatedly for my 25 years of service to BHS and the community, two years ago!) as one of The BHB Ten 2023: The Most Notable People of Brooklyn Heights This Year.

This year saw numerous baby namings in the Sanctuary as families move to the neighborhood and many decide to join BHS (thanks to the amazing work of Lisa Kopel)!

We celebrated the B'nai Mitzvah of Liev Arpante, Cooper Richardson, Ella Haim, Declan Barowitz, Abigail Marcus, Daniel Tiger, Coco Conovitz, Avery Arden, Morgan Shap, Julian Dachis, Valis Schanzer-Yu, Zoe Ball, Sadie Schwartz, Max Dettler, Tobias Berenson, Mera Schoenburg, Charlie Germain, Daphne Leighton, Nicholas Strohmenger, Eleanor Holz. We still look forward to Polina Salzberger, Cecilia Korhammer, and Walter Bloch being called to Torah over the coming weeks.

Next year 29 students are scheduled to be called to Torah as B'Mitzvah.

We mourned many deaths, parents and partners, especially of our members: Steven David Inz, Martin Halpern and Joel Oppenheim.

Special mention must be made of the passing of our decades-long-serving BHS Custodian Delroy Alleyne in late February.

This past July, Rabbi Bailey Romano joined us as BHS Associate Rabbi. She hit the ground running and has already had a profound impact on our community and congregation. Her responsibilities include many of the programs that create and support community for our youngest and younger families. She works in partnership with Pam Karlin and the ECE staff as well as with Katie Rein. She has taken over our B'Mitzvah Family programs and also our TOFN (The Other Friday Night – Young Adult/Professionals Group). Rabbi Romano supervises our Rabbinic Intern Eden Anolick and recently (along with Dory Weiss) interviewed and hired our next Rabbinic Intern Morgan Folger from HUC-JIR. She is an active clergy partner with Cantor Porzecanski and myself in baby namings, b'mitzvah, weddings, funerals and shivas and all other elements of lifecycle care as well as on our Chesed Committee. She is a regular presence on the bimah and has already offered a number of truly

thoughtful sermons on the High Holidays, Festivals and Shabbat. She is also a very regular facilitator of the Saturday morning BHS Chavurah prayer and study group. We have also been blessed by the presence of her husband Ben Romano who while pursuing ordination as a Cantor, finds time to assist with music in our Religious School. She has been a true godsend, expanding our clergy team to better attend to the needs and aspirations of our growing community!

Our Student Rabbi Eden Anolick will be moving on after two years with us at BHS, Student Rabbi Morgan Folger will join us in the Fall as our formal Rabbinic Intern via HUC-JIR and we look forward to her joining the team. In part Morgan will be mentoring and supervising BHGSY – the Brooklyn Heights Group of Synagogue Youth. Student Cantor Sarina Elenbogen-Siegel will continue for a second year alongside Cantor Porzecanski as our formal Hazzan Sheni (Cantorial Intern)!

Rabbi Sue Oren continues to help lead our Saturday morning Chavurah, as do Cantor Porzecanski and I on occasion.

Lisa Kopel, our Director of Membership Engagement and Programming, has brought in a surge of new members and she is attentive to the community in the manner to which we have always aspired. Kennedee Geffinger our Assistant Director for the Parenting Center, has done a wonderful job working alongside our veteran staff Karen Epstein (Ass. Dir. of PS) and Melis Bromberg (PS Registrar & Dir. of Operations), kudos to them!

Cantor Porzecanski has proven a remarkable colleague and partner over the course of the last five years. I was so appreciative of our monthly Shir Shabbat (monthly band service)! This year's Yom Ha Shoah service was extraordinary because of her passion and efforts. And Kol HaKavod on being re-elected co-president of the Brooklyn Heights Interfaith Clergy Association.

Deepest gratitude also to Miriam Daly our music director extraordinaire!

Pam Karlin proves her dedication and value far beyond precious gems every day for the last eleven years!

Our Director of Religious School, Katie Rein, has continued to develop, improve upon and expand our program and registration numbers (way up!). She has partnered with Rabbi Romano as we seek to further engage our Religious School families and parents!

A reminder that we too often tend to forget to offer 'thanks' to our custodial staff (under the supervision of Erik DiFrisco) as well as our security personnel; they are all essential and integral to our safe and sound operation!

This was Linda Harvey's third year as our BHS Executive Director. I wrote these words previously and they remain ever true: "Words alone are insufficient to praise or describe the Herculean efforts she has put in to address all of our needs as we have dealt with federal and state grants, the bank construction loan, our massive construction project, and an almost entirely new administrative staff. And that's just the stuff that stands out!!! Linda is an awesome partner and a deeply dedicated professional." We as a community and institution and I as BHS' spiritual leader could not be more lucky to work with Linda!!!

To all the members of the Executive Committee, and most especially to my partner in all things BHS – our out-going President Lauren Young, who offers not only hours upon hours of her time and attention, but also her enthusiasm, professional expertise, dedication and vision to the leadership and governance of our congregation. Lauren, you said 'YES' when I asked. THANK YOU!!! It has been my privilege and pleasure to partner with you over these past two years. May you and yours be blessed with good health and well-being and move from strength to strength!

To my wife Deb, who is the foundation of all that I do: I love you. To our children – Michael (now a college graduate!), Alex and Risa who have all successfully launched: we love when you visit!

Lastly, I give thanks to You, Eternal God, the Foundation Place of Existence, for blessing me, and my family with health and well-being, and for finding Your Presence manifest every day in serving this congregation and community.

### **Rabbi Serge A. Lippe**

*May 10, 2023 / 2 Iyyar 5784*

P.S. – Join Us for the Celebrate Israel Parade on Sunday, June 2, 2024, 11:30am-3:00pm, Fifth Avenue from 57th St. to 73rd St.

P.P.S. Erev Rosh HaShana is Wednesday evening, October 2, 2024.

## Cantor's Report



This year marks the first “normative” year for me: being back in our building, and managing a full calendar at BHS. It is my fifth year with BHS! It has been packed with life-cycle events, holy celebration days, special journeys, and the return of all our programming.

Since our last annual meeting I can report that the return of our teen Israel trip was a resounding success. Fourteen teenagers, Dory Weiss and I embarked to Israel at the end of May for a week. We rode camels, walked through Hezekiah’s tunnel, visited holy sites, ate delicious food, swam in the Mediterranean Sea and then floated in the Dead Sea. It was such a privilege to watch 14 of our teens make lasting friendships and fall in love with Israel for the first time.

All summer long I met with our B’Mitzvah students wherever they were: be it summer camp, vacationing with their parents, or “staycationing” right here in Brooklyn. I prepared for the High Holy Days, and helped prepare the Torah readers, as the Holy Days were unusually early this year.

For a second year I was once again asked to be President of the Brooklyn Heights Interfaith Clergy Association. We met for an Interfaith service commemorating the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center towers. I continue to coordinate weekly lunch meetings at our respective houses of worship, where we hear from local police, politicians, and community activists about Brooklyn Heights community concerns.

After an intense few weeks of rehearsal in September, the High Holy Days at Plymouth Church were meaningful and beautiful. Thank you to Rabbis Lippe and Romano for their co-leadership, and to our rabbinic intern Eden Anolick. Thank you to our pianist and music director, Miriam Daly, for her support and musicianship. Thank you to all the people who read Torah and Haftarah, blew shofar, and who sang in the choir: Stefanie Teitelbaum, Jessica Brown, Jennifer Zaslou, Ellen Rittberg, Olivia Sohmer, Daniel Rosenbaum, Barbara Underwood, Robert Underwood-Halpern, Barbara Dienhardt, David Jaroslaw, Robert Weiss, Eve Hall, Michael

Lasky, Benjamin Schak, Rita Schwartz, Dorothy Lahm, Laura Szapiro, Sharon Kosakoff, Matthew Bloom, Babette Krolik, Sandra Wertheimer, Karen Brody, Linda Rapchik, Mark and Elias Katz, Jonathan Lonner, Matt Rosenzweig, Alycia Zimmerman, Rachel Schnoll, Jeremy Primer, Lilah Zelanko, Isaac Wise, Alison Besunder, Dahlia Radley-Kingsley, Mark Landman, the Avram Family, Jennifer Wilkov, Rafael Piatigorsky, Phoebe Barowitz, Nanoush Rubin, and Ryden Kaplan.

After a brief celebration of Sukkot, our reality changed dramatically on Simchat Torah, October 7. Thank you to those who gathered with broken hearts to chant Torah on Simchat Torah: Rabbis Lippe and Romano, our Rabbinic and Cantorial Interns Eden Anolik and Sarina Elenbogen-Siegel, Stefanie Teitelbaum, Ben Schak, and Miriam Katowitz.

As the fall unfolded, we welcomed our new addition to the Cantorial team, HUC Cantorial student Sarina Elenbogen-Siegel. In addition to our Rabbinic Intern Eden Anolick, Sarina has worked with our religious school to teach Hebrew and Tefillah class, has tutored our B’Mitzvah, has led SBY services, enhancing them with her guitar, lead Chavurah on Saturdays, and brought her talents to our Friday night services. I am happy to share that Sarina will be returning next year, in a more expanded internship. We also added to the Clergy team our assistant, Isabel Benezgui-Montilla, who has proven herself to be indispensable in helping me manage all the various details of my role.

Our Shir Shabbat services returned with our congregational band and choir. Thank you to all the regular band members Roy Walter (guitar), Eve Hall (flute), Daniel Shacknai (clarinet), and Aaron Shacknai (cello). Thank you also to all the choir members who regularly added these Shabbatot to their busy schedules. With the help of Miriam Daly and professional percussionists, we were able to make this happen every month this year! Of note were: in October, when we were joined by members of the First Presbyterian Church choir who wanted to sing with us in solidarity; in November, when we brought Shir Shabbat to the installation ceremony of Rabbi Romano; and in January, when we combined choirs with Grace Church to celebrate the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr’s commemorative weekend. On the following page is a picture of us rehearsing.



In December I was privileged to go on a solidarity trip to Israel with six of my fellow Reform Cantors. We observed Chanukah in our homeland, and witnessed the pain of Israel's people first hand. My journal chronicling this experience can be found on our Israel support page on our website.

This year I was fortunate to partner with Rabbi Romano for Purim celebrations. We interwove the Megillah readings with our Superhero Spiel this year, resulting in most families staying to watch the whole thing, as well as having several young children participate as characters in the spiel. Thank you to Rabbi Romano for her child-wrangling skills, Miriam Daly for recruiting and rehearsing our band, all the wonderful Spiel performers, and those who worked hard to prepare all the chanting of the megillah: Ella Haim, Valis Schanzer-Yu, Dan Rosenbaum, Olivia Sohmer, Daniel Tiger, Laura Szapiro, Alycia Zimmerman, cantorial intern Sarina Elenbogen-Siegel, Wilder Kingsley and Jeremy Primer.

This year once again Miriam's Seder was held in our new event space. The seder was attended by almost 90 female-identifying persons, and I led them all in a meaningful, at times boisterous, seder. A special thank you to Julie Irwin and her daughters Sophie and Emily for teaching us about the challenges faced by female professional athletes. Also a special thank you to all our volunteers who helped set up and clean up, all those who brought delicious food, flowers, and Judaica shop items, and a huge thank you to our staff, Linda Harvey and Lisa Kopel, who worked tirelessly to make this incredible event happen.

This year I continued my adult education series, inviting special guest Shiraz Biggie, our Hebrew specialist in the religious school and a PhD candidate. She taught us about the history and development of Yiddish Theater, and in the winter about Jewish comedy. This spring I taught about new developments in Synagogue music at our "Torathon." I was also a special lecturer and performer for Brooklyn Heights Wednesday Music Club, where I lectured on "hazzanut" and performed selections from the repertoire of famous cantors from history.

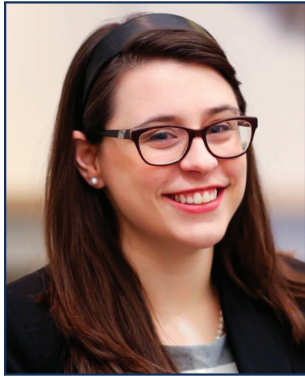
Throughout the year I have shepherded 23 B'Mitzvah through their preparation and ceremony, officiated several weddings, baby namings, and sadly several funerals. I continue to serve the larger Jewish community by counseling and working with Jewish-Interfaith couples on their path to a lifelong commitment. It was an honor to host this year's Brownstone Brooklyn Yom HaShoah commemoration at BHS, and welcome my fellow Cantors to make music together.

Thank you to all the support staff at BHS who make my work possible. Thank you to my colleagues, Rabbis Lippe and Romano, for their partnership. Most importantly thank you to my family: my son Rafa, who this year was co-president of BHGSY, and my husband Aric who pitched in last-minute to be Haman in our Purim Spiel, and who brightens every one of my days.

**Cantor Ayelet Porzecanski**



## Associate Rabbi Report



Before coming to BHS, I was searching for a community I could call “home.” For me, “home” is a sense of rootedness and connection that cannot be explained. Home is where I feel seen, known, and centered; home, for me, is belonging. Truly, after ten months, Brooklyn Heights

Synagogue has become my home. I feel a deep sense of belonging here, and I pray that my work this year has helped others to find and or rediscover their sense of belonging and home at BHS.

I was so honored in November to be formally installed as the Associate Rabbi at BHS. Although Rabbi Wise was unable to attend, I was grateful that Rabbi Lippe was able to share my rabbi’s blessing with the congregation and offering me a blessing of his own. It was such a pleasure to meet so many of our congregants and to celebrate together in our new event space with a dinner sponsored by Marcia Bellows and Allan Brilliant.

This year, I led numerous Friday night services alongside Rabbi Lippe and Cantor Porzecanski, given sermons, and led Chavurah. I worked closely with our Rabbinic and Cantorial Interns, Eden Anolik and Sarina Elenbogen-Siegel, as they prepared our Religious School students for their Shabbat B’Yachad Services and weekly Religious School Tefilah. Through my work with the Religious School, I helped to lead and coordinate Camp Shabbat and Consecration.

I co-led High Holiday services with our clergy and rabbinic intern. I gave a sermon on Rosh Hashanah morning and on Yom Kippur Afternoon in addition to sharing my spiritual journey. Additionally, I worked closely with Eden to write and deliver their first High Holiday sermon on Second Day Rosh Hashanah, while supporting our Director of Education, Katie Rein, in developing Youth High Holiday services and programming.

Throughout the year I participated in Festival Services for Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Passover, and next month Shavuot. I worked closely with the Cantor on our Superhero Purim Spiel ensuring that children participated not just in the megillah reading but in the spiel itself as well. I hope this will lead to

more children being active participants in the spiel in the future. Although I was unable to attend the Miriam’s Seder this year, I partnered with our Cantor and Lisa Kopel to engage younger women in the ritual by inviting Julie Irwin and her daughters Sophie and Emily Landis. This year, along with Rabbi Lippe and Lisa Kopel, we reinstated our Congregational Seder on the second night. It was a lively event with kids and families of all ages.

I’ve been honored to welcome many babies into the Jewish people through namings and Brit Milah. This year I named Teddy, Zoe, Noah, Alice, Maple, Lily, Camila, Henry, and Hudson, and each new day I’m working with a couple to plan their child’s naming ceremony and celebration.

It’s been a pleasure to work with families as they celebrate their child’s B’Mitzvah service and celebration. This year I officiated Abby Marcus, Max Dettler, and Meira Schoenburg’s B’Mitzvah services, and I’m in the process of working with other families whose ceremonies will take place this summer. I officiated two weddings this year for Kara and Zachary Whitman and Gideon and Margret Olshansky.

In the fall, I called all eligible families of teens in grades 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> to introduce myself and to help their teens engaged in Jewish life at BHS. Because of this, we have a nice cohort of students who regularly attend classes on Tuesday nights in grades 8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup>. Next year’s 7<sup>th</sup> grade class is well bonded, and we believe will be more likely to continue on into Hebrew High in the fall.

We’ve seen a significant increase in the number of madrichim serving in the Religious School this year, and we anticipate that many more will help in Religious School classrooms next year. With rising teen engagement, next year, we plan to take our 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders to Israel.

Although we started out the year uncertain as to who would lead BHGSY, Gianna Gordon and Rafa Porzecanski rose to the challenge. Our two co-presidents and the board have done a great job. BHGSY has consistently well attended events, and some of our 8<sup>th</sup> graders are getting more involved. Our last event, BHGSY prom, brought teens from all across NFTY-NAR to celebrate the end of the year at BHS.

Once a month, I’ve hosted family programs for at least one grade of families in grades K–7. Our first K/1 program was lightly attended as was our 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>

grade program. However, our 4<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> grade programs have been very well attended. I plan to host lunches and happy hours going forward to grade level parents to come together to get to know me and know each other in April and May. I lead All School Shabbat with Pam Karlin weekly for the preschool, and welcome families to the sanctuary with Shalom Shabbat and PJ Havdalah. These services have allowed me to connect with preschool and young families in the neighborhood. Slowly, these families are finding times to meet with me and taking me up on my offer of doing britot and baby namings for their children.

Throughout the fall, I led a number of family programs for our families in grades K-3 where parents and students came together to learn about Shabbat, Torah, God, and holidays. Next year, we will be expanding this programming so that each grade has two programs one in the fall and one in the spring. I partnered with the clergy and the Religious School Director to offer B'Mitzvah Family programs for 4<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> Grades utilizing Moving Traditions' curricular materials. These programs have gradually increased in attendance over the course of the fall and spring, and parents and their children are connecting more deeply as they share what B'Mitzvah means to them and learn more about its history and the logistics involved.

Although I've supervised many teachers, I had never supervised a rabbinic intern until this year. I've found deep meaning and joy in helping Eden to grow over the last eight months. Their sermons, bimah presence, and Torah study skills have improved significantly. I can see how they've really pushed themselves to get to know congregants of all ages and to see themselves not just as an educator but as a rabbi. It has been a true pleasure helping them to grow in their journey towards ordination.

While supervising Eden, I also worked with the clergy and staff to interview and hire our new rabbinic intern, Morgan Folger, who will be joining us in the Fall. Dory Weiss, our Religious School Chair and Board member, was a huge help in interviewing candidates at HUC this spring. We look forward to welcoming Morgan to our BHS family come September.

In the fall I taught Beginner Hebrew on Thursday nights, and I'm currently teaching Prayerbook Hebrew. I taught two adult ed series on Prayer and Theology, and I'm currently teaching a class titled Pirkei Imahot from now until Shavuot. Additionally, I've held sessions for parents to discuss challenges around Anti-semitism and the War in Israel.

I've worked to rebuild The Other Friday Night, our prayer experience for Jews in their 20s-30s. To do this, I brought in a number of song leaders who feature new music each time we gather. Our numbers have slowly increased, and we're growing a new cohort of Jews in their 20s and 30s who come from Brooklyn Heights, Williamsburg, and beyond. This summer, I'll be working with some of our regulars to do continued outreach and relationship building as well as long term planning for growing and deepening TOFN's impact.

Each week, our Chesed team meets to discuss the pastoral needs of our community. This has led to many in person visits, meal trains, and ongoing support for families and individuals with chronic or ongoing illnesses. It has been beautiful to see individuals who were once recipients of meals or visits from Chesed to then join the committee to help other families in need.

Although I've surely celebrated more simchas this year, I've also been there for families as they've experienced loss. I've supported a number of our congregants and community members as they experienced the loss of loved ones by officiating funerals and memorial services for Steven Brown-Inz, Charles Steinberg, Barbara Orloff, Carl Kane, and Aviva Lipsky-Karasch.

This year was especially challenging with the events of October 7th and the ongoing war in Gaza. I found observing the Israeli High Holidays at BHS to be a particularly poignant experience. I worked with Rabbi Lippe to update the Yom HaShoah Service booklet, and supported our 6<sup>th</sup> graders through their learning and development of their own Yom HaShoah service for 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> graders and parents. Celebrating Yom HaAztmaut with our Religious School students felt different this year, but also extremely important. I was proud to hand out blue and white cookies to our kids as they danced in the Oneg Room with Israeli flags.

Every day as I walk from my apartment in Carroll Gardens, down Clinton Street, to 131 Remsen St, I see more and more faces I recognize. More often I find myself walking alongside a preschool family on their way to drop off, running into a 6<sup>th</sup> grader from our Hebrew school on their way to a soccer game, or stopping to chat with a regular from Chavurah. In ten months, Brooklyn Heights Synagogue and Brooklyn have become my home, and it is an honor to connect with families of all ages and stages, and to help them find belonging and home.

**Rabbi Bailey Romano**











## Treasurer's Report



### I. Overview of the Current FY24 Budget (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)

It has been a privilege to serve as BHS's Treasurer for the past four years and work with such a dedicated group of talented volunteers on

the Finance Committee and dedicated staff who work diligently to ensure that BHS's finances are sound.

On April 30, 2024, the Synagogue's cash balances in the operating accounts were \$2,850,000; the reserve funds were \$871,000; and the capital campaign accounts were \$67,000. Our restricted fund account balances were \$138,000.

As of April 30, operating revenues were \$5,582,000 and operating expenses were \$4,759,000. In accrual accounting, which BHS uses, the revenue is recorded when earned, which means that most of the full year revenue has been recorded; however, expenses are recorded as incurred. This means that there are two months remaining of expenses that have not yet been recorded and there tends to be a lag in receiving expenses from vendors. Funds received from grants and contributions are helping to cover the expense increases in security coverage and maintenance since there is a return to a full active calendar in the building of worship, programming and education. Mortgage interest costs are higher than budgeted. The expectation is that there will be a deficit when the final results are available in August.

#### Mortgages

As of April 30, 2024, the outstanding balance on the first mortgage payable was \$653,000 (from the purchase of 127 Remsen) and the second mortgage from the construction/renovation project was \$1,863,000. In July 2023, we converted the construction financing loan to a mortgage at the rate of 6.08%.

On March 1, 2024, the Synagogue made a \$1 million payment towards the second larger mortgage, and as result this allowed the monthly payments to be reduced from \$19,000 to \$13,000. The funds came

from payments on the capital campaign pledges along with funds from our reserves. The terms of the mortgages allow for a prepayment in March of each year without a penalty as long as the funds do not come from another bank and the hope is that next year, we can potentially be in the same position to reduce our monthly payments further.

The Capital Campaign reached its goal of \$9.5 million. Many thanks to all those who have contributed to the campaign. And extra thanks to those who have agreed to accelerate their capital campaign payments as this continues to help in reducing the new mortgage outstanding.

### II. Key Points Related to Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

- Revenues from the Early Childhood Center including the Preschool and the Parenting Center have continued to increase with the number of children enrolled in our Preschool increased to 106 and summer camp returned to a robust season.
- Revenues from the Religious School have increased as well with the number of children (222) enrolled slightly higher than the previous year.
- Membership revenue has also increased. As of April 30, 2024, there were 520 member units. At the close of the prior fiscal year there were 486 member units with a net increase of 34 new member units.
- The annual appeal as of April 30, 2024 is at \$246,000, an 11% increase of over what was budgeted. However, overall donations and fundraising are \$70,00 below budget as of April 30. Additional fundraising income from the June 9 annual benefit is needed to meet our overall fundraising goal for this fiscal year. (Please be a sponsor or buy your tickets if you have not done so already.)
- Security costs have increased dramatically since October 7, 2023. The current projection is that we will end up running \$100,000 over budget, which includes substantial extra personnel coverage both by NYPD Paid Detail and additional private Security USA outside coverage. In addition, BHS undertook a comprehensive security assessment review by a highly regarded security firm to recommend what security enhancements the Synagogue can



implement to enhance our security further and there were some unexpected but necessary costs incurred in this review. An additional one-time security assessment fee was put into place in January and that has helped close the gap on security costs for this fiscal year, and the hope is that a good portion of the remaining \$50,000 uncollected will be paid by those who have yet to pay.

- The mortgage interest has increased over the original budget due to the increase in the rate when the construction loan was converted to a mortgage at 6.08%. Our payment of \$1 million in March 2024 to reduce the outstanding mortgage will help in FY 2025.
- Expenses have also increased this year due to increased staff to accommodate our educational programming. Benefits costs (health insurance) are expected to be approximately \$75,000 over). In addition, there has been significant increase in our maintenance costs related to the building as we have nearly doubled the size of our facilities and programming has increased to 7 days a week.

### **III. Budget for FY 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025)**

The budget approved by the Board shows a breakeven budget for FY 2025. To meet our increasing expenses, there are increases in membership dues (3.5%), religious school tuition (4%), preschool tuition (avg. of 7%) and several modest increases in fees. The budget is based on the assumptions that membership will increase. Religious School students are projected to be at 241, and the Preschool will have 117 children.

The budget shows operating revenues of approximately \$6,290,000 and expenses of \$6,289,000. (See summary on p. 14)

#### **The key assumptions in the FY 2025 budget are:**

- Donations and Fundraising Income increases by \$160,000 reflecting enhanced development efforts next year. FY 2025 will include a celebration of BHS's 65th Anniversary. A new position for a Director of Development has been included in the budget to help strengthen our efforts in this area.
- The Early Childhood Center shows a preschool student body of 117 students and more students in the Parenting Center programs. Summer Day Camp is also showing an increase in students.

- The Religious School is projected to bring in more tuition money from an increase in approximately 20 more students.
- Outsourced maintenance costs are increasing due to the increased square footage of the new space created from the capital project and an increase in days available for programming and more overall programming generally that requires labor to maintain the building in excellent shape.
- There are increases in major maintenance items for some items not included in the capital budget that will be for some of the security enhancement upgrades and increases for our security personnel costs.
- Modest salary increases have been budgeted for all staff. Increases in health benefits are also projected, which have been included in the budget. Overall, the salary and benefits increases are estimated to increase by approximately \$500,000. We have begun to explore some ways in which to reduce our benefits costs, including the possibility of using a PEO (professional employer organization) for these services.

### **IV. Audit Report for Fiscal Year 2023**

An audit report was issued showing the results of Fiscal 2023 following accounting principles generally accepted in the USA. The audit was performed by PKF O'Conner Davies who issued an unmodified opinion. The audited financial statements are available to all members upon request to the Executive Director. Total revenues, which include the capital campaign and operating funds were \$5,079,000; Expenses, including depreciation were \$5,636,000.

- Assets were \$19,989,000 and liabilities of \$5,315,000 including \$3,328,000 of loans payable.
- Net Assets without donor restrictions totaled \$12,692,000 and Net Assets with donor restrictions totaled \$1,982,000.

#### **Miriam Katowitz**

Treasurer

## Brooklyn Heights Synagogue FY 2025

	FY2025 BUDGET	FY2024 BUDGET
<b>REVENUE</b>		
DONATIONS & FUND RAISING	555,000	365,900
MEMBERSHIP	1,452,950	1,449,900
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	3,524,497	2,915,603
RELIGIOUS SCHOOL	428,500	389,000
RITUAL & ADULT EDUCATION	158,300	137,450
GENERAL & FACILITY	171,900	98,250
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>6,291,147</b>	<b>5,356,103</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
DONATIONS & FUND RAISING	133,700	41,795
MEMBERSHIP	93,850	64,750
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	2,258,626	1,968,850
RELIGIOUS SCHOOL	505,000	433,200
RITUAL & ADULT EDUCATION	983,150	940,750
GENERAL & FACILITY	2,315,550	1,905,000
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>6,289,876</b>	<b>5,354,345</b>
<b>CHANGE IN NET ASSETS FROM OPERATIONS</b>	<b>1,271</b>	<b>1,758</b>

## Executive Director's Message



It has been a remarkable year; one filled with so many positive things to write about and yet one that is colored by the tragic events of October 7. Our community has come together in a multitude of ways since that horrific day that it fills me with great pride to be Jewish. I am grateful to be working

with such intelligent, dynamic, and compassionate individuals as we work hard to keep this community flourishing and at the same time lean on one another for strength during these painful times.

I am genuinely excited to see how much our membership has grown in the past year. Today as I write this message, we are 520 member families strong, 50 more families since last year at this time. Among this growth are at least a dozen member units who joined us from Congregation Mt. Sinai (which had rented space from us for nearly a year). Our Religious School continues to grow (now at 227 students), our Preschool is thriving with 106 students, and our Parenting Center continues to flourish as well. It is no surprise that our newly renovated building is in use each and every day from early in the morning until 9:00 or 10:00 some evenings. Everything that the Project Management and Capital Campaign Committees imagined about how our building would be used has come to fruition.

Our building came to life in the past year as we hosted countless onegs, brises, baby namings, kiddush luncheons, and other lifecycle events. We brought in speakers and lecturers on a wide range of topics exploring Jewish identity and historical talks, and our clergy did a remarkable job teaching a broad array of classes covering everything from Prayer Hebrew to Jewish Comedy. Our Membership Committee aided by the incomparable Lisa Kopel arranged for programming for our new members and brought back some fun activities, including Mah Jong Mondays, Israeli dancing, and watercolor classes. With the help of the Chesed Committee we provided significant outreach to those in our community in need, and the College Committee sent Chanukah packages to nearly 60 students.

I was particularly thrilled to see our Shelter back in action during the winter months, and I am so impressed by the number of people who find meaning in volunteering to cook, buy food for the adult men who sleep over, and stay the night to ensure all runs smoothly. It is very much the truest form of Tikkun Olam and our community continues to have a very active membership that ensures we give back to the neediest. There were several clothing drives, aid to Afghanistan refugees, food collected for the Community Fridge, and a blood drive to take place shortly, just to name a few of the ways in which our membership contributes.

At the heart of the Synagogue is our remarkable clergy who lead us in worship each week. With our new Associate Rabbi Bailey Romano, our clergy was at full strength this past year and we were all thrilled to welcome Bailey with her infectious laugh, deep compassion, and keen intellect. We celebrated the High Holidays once again at Plymouth Church and our in person attendance numbers were back to pre-Covid times. Our family services have grown so much that we outgrew the space we used for these services at Plymouth and held them in our Sanctuary at 131 Remsen. This year, we bought a new Sukkah, since we had the space to erect one in our expanded rear yard. It was rewarding to have the space to do so much more for our members with the Jewish holidays and festivals throughout the year. In addition to keeping the Sukkah open for the duration of the holiday, we brought back the tradition of holding a second night community seder at BHS. And Miriam's Seder was bigger than ever. We also hosted Yom Hashoah this year.

With our newly renovated building we focused this year on ensuring that our facilities overall were kept in tip top shape, and we made sure to enhance some areas that were never included in the large construction project but required repair. Among the enhancements were new ductless units for heating and A/C in our lower floor rooms, including the multipurpose room, kitchen, and meeting room. In addition, we did a good deal of work on the front facade of our main entrance (currently closed) that had been in disrepair, undertook some much needed planting of new shrubbery at our section of Maimonides Cemetery, refaced the stone work in the rear yard, and are about to install new flooring in our

multipurpose room, a project that is long overdue. In addition, funds from donors for two Sanctuary projects have enabled us to install a new memorial board, and this summer we will install new interlocking chairs to replace our pews. We are grateful for our seven members who generously supported this project.

I am also extremely grateful for the tremendous support we received for our annual appeal – an 11% increase over last year. In the coming year we will celebrate the 65th anniversary of the founding of Brooklyn Heights Synagogue with many different events, but be sure to **save the date for May 15, 2025** for our gala. Our membership numbers are strong as are the number of students in our educational programs, and I am optimistic that our balanced budget is one that brings in enough revenue to support all that we hope to do in the year ahead.

We will continue to keep security as our number one priority as we have done this entire past year. I am thankful to our Security Committee – Don Shacknai, Shari Hyman, Adam Riff, and Laura Edidin – who gave generously of their time to carefully review our current security measures, work with our security consultant on new enhancements we hope

to implement, thoughtfully analyze what fees were needed to increase our security coverage, and assist with the application for new state grants. We are unfortunately living in a time when antisemitism is on the rise and we must do everything we can to ensure that we keep our entire community safe. This above all else has been paramount.

Finally, as I complete my third year with BHS I can honestly say the best part of my position is working with such a talented and dedicated team of professionals – thank you Ayelet, Bailey, Pam, Katie, Lisa, Lauren B., Karen, Isabel, Eytan, Kennedee, Melis, and Erik for everything that you do with such care and excellence. I am proud to be part of this exceptional team. Most especially, it has been a privilege to work so closely with my partners in all things BHS – our Senior Rabbi Serge and our President Lauren – I am in awe of their steadfast commitment, moral rectitude, and deep compassion for the BHS Community. And a special thanks to the Board for their unwavering support.

**Linda Harvey**  
Executive Director

P.S. I hope to see you on June 9!

# shavuot summer shmooze off

*fundraiser!*

SUNDAY, JUNE 9  
12 – 2 PM @BHS  
HONORING OUTGOING PRESIDENT  
**LAUREN YOUNG**



## Early Childhood Education Report



### **Our Home Away from Home**

As Director of Early Childhood at BHS, it is a pleasure to give admissions tours in a brand new building! Our beautiful classrooms and play spaces elicited smiles and compliments and were surely a factor in how easily we were

able to fully enroll our school. Who can blame us for being a bit house-proud this year?

As much as we love our space, we also love the community it houses – and felt its importance throughout the school year. October 7 was heartbreaking and the ensuing concerns about security added to our need to gather in community. In our home away from home, we continued working to ensure that our children, staff and families were safe. Perhaps our Shabbat grape juice was a bit sweeter knowing all that was going on in the world outside and that here on Remsen Street, at least, we could preserve the happiness and sweetness all children deserve.

### **Our Numbers**

This year we had 106 enrolled children in the school and next year we will have 117. As our community settles in after the upheaval of COVID, we are seeing more opt to stay in the area and stay at BHSP through the Pre-K year. These figures are far more than numbers – they represent more time for more children to experience a uniquely Jewish, progressive early childhood education.

The Preschool raised tuition considerably for the third year in a row. Two years ago, we raised tuition 10% and last year about 16%. This year we increased 7%. We are now in line with comparable programs and our tuition is in keeping with our excellent educational programs and new facility. Total tuition for our programs will top 3 million – up from about 2.4 million for this past year.

Summer Camp and other auxiliary programming like Enrichment Classes, Extended Day, and Early Bird were popular this year and income continues to be significant.

For 2023-24, the Parenting Center’s on-going classes filled more gradually, and by spring of 2024 they were at capacity. For the 2024-25 year, they are completely full before they begin, and we are adding a class. Toddler programming is growing and our Assistant Director for the Parenting Center, Kennedee Keffering, is developing infant programming as well.

Our Preschool “Paint the Town” Benefit proved to be a wonderful gathering, and exceeded its hoped-for budget by about 50% due to high sponsorship participation among parents, grandparents, members, and the BHS Board. This year our theme highlighted our community’s flair for celebration, and boundless creativity. We also honored a creative person in our midst – our Movement teacher, Dalienne Majors who retired after a 50 year career in dance and education.

### **A Stellar Staff with Wonderful Outcomes**

Every classroom teacher has agreed to return for the 2024-25 school year! This is highly unusual for any school - and a testament to their affection for the community, and to our on-going commitment to offering a place for an educator to make a career. BHSP has continued to become more competitive in teacher salaries, to cover 90% of individual health insurance, and to be a place that views educators with respect. A new building and classrooms also help to make this a wonderful place to teach.

We had the great good fortune to add Rabbi Bailey Romano to the Preschool week as she has been bringing her gorgeous voice and beloved puppets to All School Shabbat every Friday. Having a clergy member with time to drop in with a shofar or to sing a song means that our students have a real comfort and familiarity with the clergy and consider a Rabbi just a part of everyday life. How wonderful that they get to take that for granted!

Our teachers led classrooms of 2s, 3s, and 4s through lively and meaningful holiday curriculum and taught them so much about literacy, math, science, the arts, and being strong and compassionate members of their learning communities. The excellent education offered at BHSP also contributed to our students’ acceptance into top private schools including St. Ann’s, Packer, Fieldston Brooklyn Friends, Friends Seminary, Spence, Berkeley Carroll, Hannah Senesh, Lycée Francais, Little Red, Avenues, Poly Prep, and others.

## **A Report on Synagogue Membership in the Preschool**

Synagogue membership is not required in the Preschool. But we always hope that those who come to BHSP feel a sense of community and will consider joining over time. In 2018, to further that aim I researched other programs across the country and proposed that we consider ways families could be encouraged to join earlier in their time at Preschool. The Board created an ad hoc committee to explore this and with Aaron Zimmerman. Alicia Zimmerman, Jen Germain, Andrew Saltoun, and Hayley Geftman-Gold we proposed a program in the spring of 2019.

We began to offer first-time Preschool families a gift membership in the 2019-20 school year and have continued to do so. This entry membership requires no dues and does not offer the 5% tuition discount paying members receive. Families who accept gift memberships are “rolled over” after the first school year into young-family membership track at the first tier dues level. After a year at the first tier for dues, families move on to higher dues in a second tier young family membership and then they pay full dues.

### ***What Were the Goals of the Gift Membership Program for New Preschool families?***

- Accelerating the typical year of joining by three years (joining with a 2-year-old instead of waiting until the child is 5).
- Building an increased sense of belonging and Jewish identity in the young families attracted to BHS by the Preschool.
- Increasing Synagogue membership over time.

The program began in the fall before the pandemic began and has been difficult to evaluate. But we are starting to be able to do so.

### ***Here is our 2023-24 membership story in numbers.***

We began the year with 38 member families (representing 42 children).

- 12 were paying full dues.
- 16 were at the second tier for dues.
- 10 were at the first tier for dues.

As the year began, 10 new families opted to join with gift memberships, so we ended the year with 48 member families – representing 52 children.

### ***What do the numbers tell us?***

The high number of first tier families as we began the year tells us that those who accepted gift memberships in the 2022-23 school year tended to continue to paying memberships. Our gift membership acceptance rates are somewhat consistent. Now that families are returning to, and staying in, Brooklyn Heights, gift memberships are leading to paying memberships as we hoped. Families are attending events, enjoying Shabbat, and considering BHS their home away from home. We will continue to monitor this program but feel encouraged by what we see.

## **Thanks to So Many**

There are simply too many people to thank all by name this year. Our Book Fair and Benefit Committees, the new Early Childhood Committee, our Parents’ Association chairs and the Class Parents who offered so much support to the school and to one another. Preschool and Parenting Center administrators, Karen Epstein, Kennedee Geffinger, and Melis Bromberg are an absolutely terrific team. The leadership offered by Linda Harvey and the partnership with Lisa Kopel, have meant that BHS runs more smoothly than ever in very challenging times. We are grateful to our Maintenance team and to Security for keeping us running, too!

I look forward to a time of learning, community, and peace for the 2024-25 school year.

### **Pam Karlin**

Director of Early Childhood Education

# Religious School Report



## Overview of the Year

5784 started off with many Shechianyu moments, first and most importantly, we returned to BHS for our first full school year since 2019 with no construction or pandemic disruptions. We began the year welcoming Eytan Layman, our Education Program Administrator who will be

staying on with our program next school year. Rabbi Bailey Romano spearheaded our teen and family programming in addition to helping throughout our Religious School. Cantorial Intern Sarina Elenbogen-Siegel led our 3/4/5/6/7<sup>th</sup> graders in T'filah and together with our Rabbinic Intern Eden Anolick lead our students in their B'Mitzvah tutoring, preparing them to lead Shabbat B'Yachad Services, and helped with Hebrew in our Religious School classrooms. We welcomed song leader Ben Romano who leads our k/1/2<sup>nd</sup> graders weekly in song and prayer as well as Mural Artist Jennifer Levine who leads a monthly mural art project with our Tuesday students as well as during the High Holidays. LCSW Lisa Karlin joined our faculty part time offering support and guidance to teachers and students. I am grateful for an abundant staff, including our 30 teachers especially during this school year which posed significant emotional and educational challenges post the pandemic and October 7th and the ongoing war in Israel.

Our K/1/2/3/7/8/9/10th graders met once a week in person while our 4/5/6th graders were offered the option of a hybrid Sunday/Wednesday schedule or a fully in person Monday/Wednesday schedule. Our combined 11/12th grade class continued to meet bi-monthly at Rabbi Lippe's home. Enrollment is outlined below:

### 5784 Religious School Enrollment by grade:

K . . . . .	<b>19</b>	7th . . . . .	<b>18</b>
1st . . . . .	<b>27</b>	8th . . . . .	<b>9</b>
2nd . . . . .	<b>19</b>	9th . . . . .	<b>1</b>
3rd . . . . .	<b>22</b>	10th . . . . .	<b>4</b>
4th . . . . .	<b>33</b>	11th . . . . .	<b>4</b>
5th . . . . .	<b>29</b>	12th . . . . .	<b>2</b>
6th . . . . .	<b>35</b>	<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>222</b>

## High Holy Days and Shabbat B'Yachad

The High Holy Days children programming moved to BHS as we officially outgrew Plymouth Church. On Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur we offered services to our K-3rd and 4-7th grade families and students as well as an extended day of activities at BHS, including lunch which allowed for main services to finish at Plymouth and parents to return to BHS to pick up their children. Activities included art, a quiet room, outdoor play, mural painting and sandwich making for the community fridge. Students were happy to be at BHS in their familiar classrooms and we truly needed the larger space for days of activities and prayer. Rabbinic Intern Eden co-led services with musical leader Izzy Gliksberg.

Shabbat B'Yachad services were led by the students under the tutelage of Rabbi Romano, Cantorial Intern Sarina and Rabbinic Intern Eden, and all were extremely well attended by families including the dinner held beforehand in our event space. Many B'Mitzvah families generously sponsored the Oneg afterwards as well. We also had our annual Consecration Shabbat for new students coincide with our Camp Shabbat.

## Religious School Committee

Our Religious School Committee began the year with seven members helping with the High Holy Days, first day of school welcome back gifts, organizing grade-wide parent gatherings, hosting Rabbi Diana Fersko for a conversation on combatting antisemitism, organizing the Purim Carnival (thank you Alycia Zimmerman who chaired- we sold 158 tickets!) and attending and speaking at our monthly Shabbat B'Yachads. The RSC is truly an invaluable resource to me. We met monthly and helped developed school policy, reviewed curriculum, coordinated activities, enrichment, holiday programs. Thank you to Dory Weiss for organizing and leading this group!

## Youth and Teen Programming

We welcomed back our teens in three main areas; madrichim in our RS classrooms (13 total), students in our Hebrew High and also teens involved in our BHGSY Youth Group. Eden Anolick oversaw our Youth Group. They will be leaving their internship with us at the end of the school year and 6th grade Teacher Morgan Folger will join us as our Rabbinic Intern next year and will oversee BHGSY. This year's events included a scavenger hunt, High Holy Days

programming, an open house, Chanukah casino night, selling Chanukah candles and donating profits to Magen David Adom, an interfaith learning day with teens from Plymouth Church, the annual Chocolate Seder, an Escape Room, a Shul-Inn and an end of year prom/havdalah event. We are grateful to Gianna Gordon and Rafa Piatigorsky for their leadership.

### **Junior Youth Group**

In an effort to keep our 6/7th graders engaged and involved outside of Religious School we began a Junior Youth Group this year. Students had a Chanukah game and movie night at BHS and an outing to the Brooklyn Strategist. We look forward to continuing to grow this group next year!

### **Family Programs with Rabbi Bailey**

A huge thank you and job well done to Rabbi Bailey who brought back family programming this year! Each grade had the opportunity to attend two different evenings or Sundays to engage in age appropriate activities and class and family bonding. We are so excited to continue these programs next year!

### **Gratitude and Connections to Israel**

This year has been a success thanks to the hard work and dedication of our teachers, the engagement of our families and the belief that coming together in community truly helps in hard times. I am grateful for a full year back at BHS and a growing program. To all of our neighborhood restaurant partners for helping to feed our students, to the Brooklyn Educators Network and to the ARJE who help inform my decision making. I am especially grateful for our partners at Repair The World, the Social Justice Committee for speaking to our 7<sup>th</sup> graders, the Tenement Museum for hosting our 6<sup>th</sup> graders on a field trip, and the countless

families who organized sandwich making nights to fill the community fridge. I am especially grateful to the students who are curious to learn, engage in Judaism, seek and create community for themselves, ask and share hard questions and experiences as the war in Israel has continued and the encounters they have had with antisemitism outside of BHS have continued to occur as well. I am grateful to all of the staff at BHS always willing to lend a helping hand and to Shiraz Biggie our Hebrew and Curriculum Specialist and to our clergy, who are always available for support, wisdom and guidance.

Connections to Israel this year have included our continued Mifgash Connection with Israeli students in Rishon Lezion and our Zoom pen pal project which has also extended to a Zoom with our faculty and the Israeli teachers as we know the support is needed. Our students made Chanukah cards for wounded IDF soldiers which Cantor Ayelet was able to personally hand deliver in December. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to travel to Israel in January with a group of NYC and Brooklyn Progressive Educators and Rabbis to show our support to am yisrael and to have met with our partners from the Reform Movement and our Yachdav led by our Shaliach Elad Bar Ilan. I am also grateful to our Shinshiniyit Ella Malachi for teaching our students about Israel and sharing her home and culture with us.

I look forward to continuing to grow our program next year and to returning to a fully in person Religious School on Sundays-Wednesdays at BHS. Thank you to all of our families for their partnership in our students Jewish education! Am Yisrael Chai!

### **Katie Rein**

Director of Religious School



## Membership Report



While I've been a part of the BHS community for many years, I'm especially grateful to be in this role, especially now. After October 7, our community has come together in shared sorrow and has found comfort whether it's at services or by simply being together. We strive to find ways to engage and support our congregation in meaningful ways.

Since July 2023, 68 new members have joined BHS! We welcomed 23 new families into our Religious School and 10 new Preschool families have taken advantage of the first year of free membership. We're also so pleased that 15 members from Congregation Mount Sinai have decided to join our community.

I'm constantly receiving phone calls and emails requesting tours of our beautiful building. So many people are looking to connect with our community and find a spiritual home here with us. While these are incredibly challenging times, I am very optimistic about our synagogue's future and look forward to planning a calendar full of programming and events for the coming year.

### Here are Highlights from the Past Year:

- We had an incredible turnout for our High Holy Day Services! Since we've outgrown space at Plymouth, Religious School students and their families enjoyed programming and services at BHS.
- In October, about 50 families joined us for a New Member Shabbat and we enjoyed a meal together in the event space. Rabbi Lippe and Deb Speyer also welcomed new members for a delicious lunch in their sukkah.
- We celebrated Rabbi Bailey Romano's installation in November and 100 members joined us for a sit-down dinner in our event space. Thank you to Marcia Bellows and Allan Brilliant for sponsoring this festive event.
- The annual Getting to Know You Dinners in January was an enormous success. A huge thank you to Melissa Benson and Marcia Bellows for helping to organize an incredible cocktail party in our event space and for managing the placement of about

120 guests in 13 different homes. We thank our hosts for their gracious hospitality!

- Our annual Miriam's Seder, was a very special event. Cantor Porzecanski led a beautifully meaningful seder and Julie Irwin and her daughters Emily and Sophie Landis did an extremely informative presentation about inequality in women's sports. Over 80 people attended and brought delicious food for our potluck and many of our members volunteered to make the seder run smoothly.
- We brought back the Second Night Community Seder this year. Rabbi Romano and Rabbi Lippe led the seder in our event space with 52 people in attendance.
- B'Nai Mitzvah families have been hosting kiddush luncheons and parties in our event space and we've been so excited to host so many baby naming and bris celebrations in our beautiful Oneg Room.
- Many members took advantage of our group sale to see *Harmony* on Broadway. BHS Member Stuart Zagnit gave a talk-back following the performance.

### Our Many Groups and Committees Engaged Our Members:

- The Social Justice Committee, chaired by Andrea Feller and Cliff Fonstein, continues to do important advocacy work. The committee hosted Refugee Shabbat with special guest Ruth Messinger as well as Reproductive Justice Shabbat with a presentation given by member Andrea Kopel.
- The Chesed Committee, led by Deborah Baruh and Erica Rosenberg organized meal deliveries and holiday packages for our homebound and home limited members. They are currently helping to organize a Blood Drive.
- The Membership Committee, chaired by Hayley Leipsic and Phyllis Starkman hosted a fun Game Night which has launched Mah Jong Mondays—a popular night for our Mah Jong lovers. The committee is already busy planning for the fall!
- The Israel Matters group was formed this year by and for BHS congregants to meet and share information in a “safe space” to help deepen our understanding and appreciation of Israel.
- BHS members put on their dancing shoes weekly for Israeli Dancing with volunteer instructor, Elaine Sohn.

- BHS Member Karen Brody has helped members welcome Shabbat with a soothing watercolor class on Fridays.
- The Women’s Group was formed this year and meets monthly with members Ruth Gerson and Dana Dorfman facilitating.

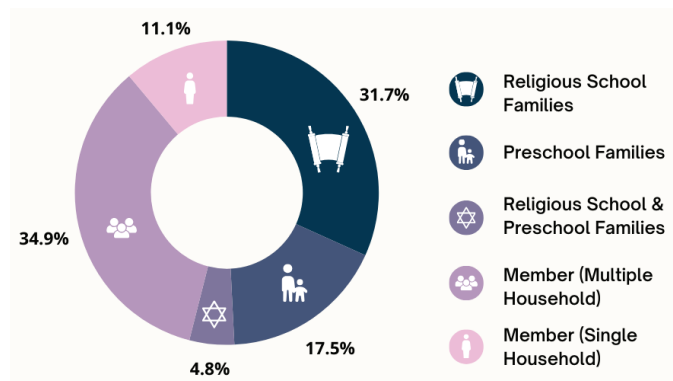
I do my best to get to BHS early, so I don’t miss the preschoolers bouncing into the building and I look forward to seeing the Religious School students

towards the end of my day. Seeing a packed sanctuary for Shabbat services brings me so much hope. It is a privilege to be part of this vibrant Jewish community and to work with our clergy, BHS staff and board and our incredible Executive Director, Linda Harvey. I long for brighter days for all of us.

**Lisa Kopel**

Director of Membership Engagement and Programming

**FY2024 New Member Data**

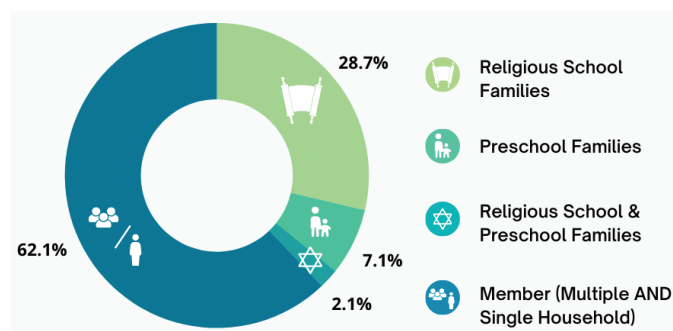


**68 new member units** have joined from July 2, 2023 – Present.

Of those, there are:

- **20** Religious School Families
- **11** Preschool Families
- **3** Religious/Preschool Families
- **22** Members (Multiple household)
- **7** Members (Single household)

**FY2024 All Member Data**



**Active Member Units: 520**

Of those, there are:

- **149** Religious School Families
- **37** Preschool Families
- **11** Religious/Preschool Families
- **223** Members (Multiple household)
- **100** Members (Single household)

## Board of Trustees Leadership Slate

The following individuals are nominated by the Committee for two-year Officer positions:

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (2024 – 2026)

#### President

- Aaron Zimmerman

#### First Vice President

- Alan Gertler  
*(also nominated for a second three-year Trustee term)*

#### Vice Presidents

- Alan Schiffres
- Nancy Cohen
- Frances Gottfried

#### Treasurer

- Stephen Yankauer  
*(also nominated for a three-year Trustee term)*

#### Secretary

- Adam Riff

The following individuals are nominated by the Committee to become new Trustees and/or Officers (Terms ending in May 2027, eligible for second terms):

- Ross Brown
- Yael Hantman
- Adam Steinberg
- Stephen Yankauer  
*(also nominated for a two-year officer position)*
- Molly Zaentz

The following individuals are completing their service on the Board; and the Congregation extends much gratitude for their service to Brooklyn Heights Synagogue:

- Marcia Bellows
- Lisa Smith Dince
- Jennifer Gordon
- Rachel Schnoll

### 2024-25 Board of Trustees

Andrew Ball	Adam Riff, <i>Secretary</i>
Ross Brown	Dan Rosenbaum
Nancy Cohen, <i>Vice President</i>	Alan Schiffres, <i>Vice President</i>
Alan Gertler, <i>1st Vice President</i>	Martine Smidt
Frances Gottfried, <i>Vice President</i>	Adam Steinberg
Yael Hantman	Dory Weiss
Miriam Katowitz	Stephen Yankauer, <i>Treasurer</i>
Max Leighton	Lauren Young, <i>Imm. Past President</i>
Barry Leipsic	Molly Zaentz
Jennifer Richardson	Aaron Zimmerman, <i>President</i>

Respectfully submitted,

### The Nominating Committee

Marcia Bellows, Chair  
Melissa Benson  
Rhonda Epstein

Max Leighton  
Haley Leipsic  
Alycia Zimmerman



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