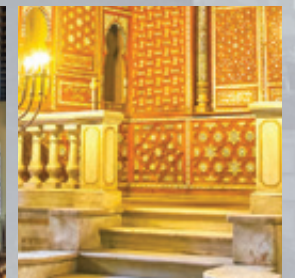
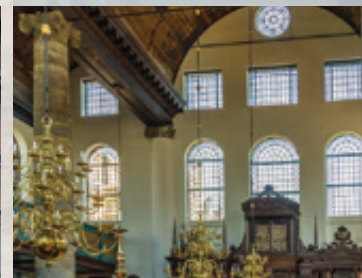


SANCTUARIES AND CITIES:

Synagogues of the World
and the Stories They Tell



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April - May 2022 | Nisan-Iyar 5782



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GREETINGS FROM RABBI MEIR SOLOVEICHIK

What is a synagogue?

We tend to refer to one as a “house of God,” and in a certain sense that may be true. But Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik insisted that whereas the Temple in Jerusalem is genuinely a “*Bet Hashem*,” a House of the Lord, a synagogue is actually an embodiment of *Knesset Yisrael*, of generations of the Jewish people. Precisely because the synagogue is our home, therefore this God wishes to visit us therein, and dwell there. In my “Sanctuaries and Cities” lectures, I have attempted to illustrate how the synagogues of the world embody the story of our people, a story of sacrifice and suffering, but also of love and learning, fortitude and faith, a story that is ultimately miraculous.

Few synagogues embody how a house of worship can embody Jewish history more than our own, and we work every day to connect past to future. My profound gratitude goes therefore to all of you, who supported this series and thereby helped all of us at Shearith Israel continue to do all that we do. It is thanks to your generosity that our story continues.

Meir Y. Soloveichik

BEVIS MARKS *and the* CHAIR of MOSES MONTEFIORE

Every week after performing the ritual that marks the end of the Sabbath, the Montefiores (like all Sephardim) read a hymn in honor of the prophet Elijah, whose task it is to announce the coming of the messiah. On one such Saturday evening, Montefiore and Judith fell to talking about “the good news of which this prophet’s appearance was to be the harbinger for Jerusalem.” What fun it would be, they thought, to visit Mount Carmel and see the very spot where Elijah had confounded the priests of Ba’al. Many years later, an elderly Montefiore showed his nephew Leonard a simple gold ring, engraved with the Hebrew words *Koneh hacol*, meaning “possessor of all things.” Montefiore told Leonard how that night “I dreamed I saw in front of me a venerable man whom I knew to be Elijah the Prophet: he pointed to Jerusalem which I recognised in the distance, and said only those two words engraved upon my ring ... I awoke, and then dreamt this a second time and then a third time, each time hearing only the words *Koneh hacol*. And the dream made so strong an impression upon me, that I resolved the very first thing I would do when I had time would be to go to the Holy Land.”

Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore: Jewish Liberator,
Imperial Hero*



Chair and plaque for Moses Montefiore. Video still frame courtesy of Shalom Morris, Rabbi of Bevis Marks Synagogue in London

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWtOFENy2ho>

THE REMUH SHUL:

A REMNANT *of a* WORLD THAT WAS

The Remuh synagogue, the smallest of all historic synagogues of Kazimierz, currently functions as a place of worship serving the tiny Jewish community of Krakow and the many Jewish visitors to the city.

The old Jewish cemetery of Krakow is located just behind the Remuh synagogue and is an integral part of a unique historical complex. The inscription above the current gate, moved from its previous location at the original gate on the Jakuba St., testifies that the cemetery was founded in 1552, being one of the earliest extant in Poland. The Old Cemetery served as the main burial place for the Jews of Krakow until 1800, although some prominent Jews were buried there after that date. In 1845, at the intervention of Rabbi Dov Beer Meisels (1798-1870), who emphasized the historic and spiritual importance of the cemetery, the authorities of the City of Krakow canceled a town-planning scheme that could have led to the destruction of the graveyard. However, the cemetery fell in decay and in the 1940s, the Nazis brought about almost total ruin. Only about a dozen tombstones survived the Holocaust destruction, among them the graves of Rabbi Moshe Isserles and his family.

During the late 1940s and the 1950s, hundreds of old tombstones were uncovered by archeological excavations conducted on the grounds of the cemetery. Some of the tombstones are thought to have been deliberately buried in order to escape devastation by the invading Swedish troops in 1704. Hundreds of fragments were fixed on the inner side of the cemetery wall along Szeroka St. It soon became known as the Wailing Wall serving as a memorial to the destroyed Jewish community of Krakow. Some of the recovered tombstones belong to illustrious rabbis and members of the Jewish community of Krakow, among them the most venerated is that of Rabbi Moshe Isserles. His tombstone is covered with lots of notes with requests from pilgrims coming from all over the world.

ANU Museum



The Remuh Shul and Grave of the Remuh. Photos courtesy of www.anumuseum.org

ADDRESS *of*
AMERICAN CHAPLAIN
AARON PAPERMAN
in the
GREAT SYNAGOGUE
of ROME
1945

CHAPLAIN AARON PAPERMAN: It is indeed symbolic for the Jewish people that this traditional period of nine days of mourning over the ancient destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Roman legions of Titus, should be transformed almost 1900 years later into a period of joy, celebration and thanksgiving for the Jews

-3-

CHAPLAIN PAPERMAN:
(CONT'D)

of Rome at their deliverance from their Nazi and Fascist tyrants and oppressors. Yes, centuries ago pagan Rome tolled the apparent death knell of the Jewish people. Today its children in the first capitol of Europe to be liberated, found the time and the hope and the courage for the survival of the Jewish people.

It is most fitting that the happy celebration of the liberation of the Jews of Rome should be manifested in this religious services of thanksgiving to God. For the godliness in man played as decisive a role in the preservation of their lives as the armed might of the Fifth Army played in their liberation. If it had not been for the very large and substantial succor and aid extended to them by the Vatican and church authorities in Rome, these hundreds of refugees and these thousands of Jewish inhabitants would undoubtedly have perished long before Rome was liberated. May God grant the preservation of our remaining brethren in the still enslaved countries of Europe, that they, too, may rejoice with their compatriots of all faiths at their liberation from Nazi oppression by the

CHAPLAIN PAPERMAN:
(CONT'D)

"This is a proud day for the Fifth Army, for the Jewish people and for the free world. For us who are fighting this bitter struggle, today's services represent the fruit of what we are fighting for, the promise of what the United Nations will bring to a liberated world."

ANNOUNCER: (CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT) Ladies and gentlemen, you have just heard a special broadcast presented by the National Broadcasting Company in cooperation with the American Jewish Committee marking the first Jewish broadcast from Nazi liberated territory. The program originated in the Synagogue of Rome and celebrated the triumph of all religious forces over Nazism. Participants in the program were Rabbi Israel Zolli, Chief Rabbi of Italy and Chaplain Aaron Paperman, of the United States Army.

Complete copies of this historic broadcast may be secured free of charge by writing directly to the American Jewish Committee, 386 Fourth Avenue, New York 16, N.Y.



The Great Synagogue of Rome. © Livioandronico2013
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THE ALTNEUSCHUL *and the* ORIGIN *of the* ISRAELI FLAG

The “official” use of the Shield of David began in Prague and spread out from that city, in the 17th and 18th centuries, through Moravia and Austria. We do not know whether the Jews freely chose this emblem for the sign on their “flags,” or whether it was thrust upon them by the Christian authorities. But even though it may have come about through compulsion and the orders of superiors, constraint became custom, and the sign came to be cherished by the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia.

In surviving notes on the contents of ancient documents concerning the Jewish community of Prague, which were destroyed by fire more than two centuries ago, it is said that the Emperor Charles IV in 1354 gave the Jews the “freedom” (privilege) “to bear a flag” as a special token of his grace to the Jews of the city. This is no mere legend, since we later find the flag mentioned in the chronicles of Prague Jewry as a well known thing. In 1527 the authorities ordered the Jews of Prague to greet Emperor Ferdinand I, on his entry into the city, “with their flag.” On this flag was a large Shield of David (not in the form of a five-pointed star, as some books would have it). If in that early period the Jews of Prague already saw in this symbol King David’s shield, according to the tradition of the German Hasidim that I have cited, we must suppose that they chose it themselves and bore it proudly on their banner. If, on the other hand,

the authorities chose it for the Jews, we cannot say whether this was because of its widespread magical use or because of its decorative quality. In the light of the unbroken tradition of this symbol among the Jews of Prague, however, there is cause for the belief that this was a deliberately chosen symbol of Jewish pride and a memento, as it were, of the days of old. The original flag was not preserved, but a new one was made in the days of Emperor Ferdinand, and when it was damaged in the course of the years, still another was made in 1716, which is kept to this very day in the Altneuschul synagogue. Apparently the authorities of the state had no less respect for the flag than the Jews, since in 1716 they fined the elders of the community for not taking proper care of it and allowing it to be damaged!

Gershom Scholem



Flag of the Jews of Prague in the Altneuschul

THE NEWPORT MINISTER WHO LOVED HEBREW *and* CAME *to* SYNAGOGUE

“December 2, 1763, Friday. In the Afternoon was the dedication of the new Synagogue in this Town. It began by a handsome procession in which were carried the Books of the Law, to be deposited in the Ark. Several Portions of Scripture, & of their Service with a Prayer for the Royal Family, were read and finely sung by the priests & People. There were present many Gentlemen & Ladies. The Order and Decorum, the Harmony & Solemnity of the Musick, together with a handsome



Touro Synagogue, Newport, Rhode Island. © Kenneth C. Zirkel
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Assembly of People, in a Edifice the most perfect of the Temple kind perhaps in America, & splendidly illuminated, could not but raise in the Mind a faint Idea of the Majesty & Grandeur of the Ancient Jewish Worship mentioned in Scripture.

Dr. Isaac de Abraham Touro performed the Service. The Synagogue is about perhaps forty foot long & 30 wide, of Brick on a Foundation of free Stone : it was begun about two years ago, & is now finished except the Porch & the Capitals of the Pillars. The Front representation of the holy of holies or its Partition Veil, consists only of wainscotted Breast Work on the East End, in the lower part of which four long Doors cover an upright Square Closet the depth of which is about a foot or the thickness of the Wall, & in this Apartment (vulgarly called the Ark) were deposited three Copies & Bolls of the Pentateuch, written on Vellum or rather tanned Calf Skin; one of these Bolls I was told by Dr. Touro was presented from Amsterdam & is Two Hundred years old; the Letters have the Rabbinical Flourishes.

Ezra Stiles



Portrait of Ezra Stiles, including Hebrew books

FROM *the*
N EZRA SYNAGOGUE'S
CAIRO GENIZAH:
THE LAST LETTER
of MAIMONIDES'
BELOVED BROTHER

Close to eight years have now elapsed and I still mourn for him for there can be no consolation. What can possibly comfort me? He grew up on my knees, he was my brother, my pupil. He went abroad to trade that I might remain at home and continue my studies. He was well versed in Talmud and Bible and an accomplished grammarian. My greatest joy was to see him. Now every joy has been dimmed. He has departed to his eternal life and left me confounded in a strange land. Whenever I come across his handwriting on one of his books my heart turns within me and my grief reawakens.

Moses Maimonides



Letter from David ben Maimon, to Moses, informing him of the trip to India from which he did not return

AMSTERDAM: A GENTILE ARTIST PAINTS A SYNAGOGUE VISITED BY JEWS AND GENTILES



Above and top right: Paintings of the Esnoga, by Dutch painter Emanuel de Witte



The synagogue has changed very little since the seventeenth century. The wood pillars have been replaced by stone, and there is now an enclosed wooden vestibule at the sanctuary's entrance. The building and its contents have survived the ravages not only of time but also of modernization. The true miracle, however, is that they have also survived the ravages of war and hatred. Almost alone among the synagogues of Holland, this unmistakable monument to Jewish achievement was left standing, undamaged, by the Nazis. Inside the hechal is a Torah said to be the one brought to Amsterdam from Emden in 1602 by Moses Uri Halevi.

In 1680, the sixty-three-year-old painter Emanuel de Witte walked into the Amsterdam Portuguese synagogue and went to work. Over a span of thirty years, de Witte had made a name for himself with depictions of church interiors. This new project was essentially no different from so many others. He would treat the Esnoga just as he had the Oude Kerk in Delft, the Sint Jans-Kerk in Utrecht, and the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam. He had painted Protestant churches and he had painted Catholic churches. The Jewish synagogue was just one more opportunity to display his proficiency with light, color, and architectural form. When he was done, there would be three paintings, each memorializing not just a building but an environment, with all the social and political relationships that it represented in the Dutch golden age.

From Steven Nadler, *Rembrandt's Jews*

DIVERSITY *and* UNITY: THE JEWS *of the* VENICE GHETTO

A variety of tongues was heard in the ghetto. Hebrew chants and Mediterranean dialects were superimposed on the colorful tones of Spanish, Turkish, Portuguese, and Greek, along with the argot spoken by some of the polish and german refugees and with the many Italian dialects: a true babel of people and tongues, , where adventures and ambiguous Marranos stood out, different in everything, even to the color and style of their garments, living testimonials to the costumes of far off lands. The rhythm of daily life was marked by the traditional morning afternoon and evening prayers and at night by the closing of the gates, and the boat making its rounds on the canals. The great square, a center of Jewish and Christian life during the day, after dark became a sort of independent Jewish republic in the heart of Venice.”

Riccardo Calimani, *The Ghetto of Venice*

Ashkenazim and Sephardim were brought into dialogue with one another through the printed word. Bomberg’s printing house brought sephardi commentaries, Italian sermons, medieval philosophical traditions, and even the scientific studies of Padua’s famed medical faculty to a new and wider audience. Yeshiva students in Krakow, Christian burghers in Amsterdam, and Jewish scholars in Constantinople were, for the first time, exposed to some of the same Jewish voices.

Jane Gerber, *Cities of Splendor*, on the Bomberg publishing house of Venice



Ghetto Square in Venice



Interior of the Spanish Synagogue in Venice. © Markhole

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GREETINGS

from our

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In memory of our friend
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Alvin Deutsch

*Peter and Naomi
Neustadter*



The Solomon Family
would like to celebrate
our Clergy and those who
run our Synagogue.



With gratitude and
devotion to our spiritual
home at Shearith Israel

Regards from afar
but always close at heart

The Stanton Family



With best wishes,

Stan and Madelene Towne



We salute
Congregation Shearith Israel
and the remarkable and
enriching work of
Rabbi Meir and
Layaliza Soloveichik

The Agus Family



Warmest wishes from
Karen and Jack Daar



In loving memory of
Barbara Herlands Smith
and
in honor of
Layaliza and Rabbi Soloveichik
and all the clergy
at Shearith Israel

With deep appreciation for all
the love and support

Raquel, Steve, Josie and Jack Herz



Rabbi Soloveichik, in his many sermons and lectures, has provided penetrating analyses of the visual arts (painting, photography, sculpture) and its relationship to our tradition. This time, he turned to synagogues of the world, uncovering the history of our communities in the manner of a skilled architect and archeologist.

Lewis Bateman



“The greatest sefer consists not of ink on parchment, but rather of words written directly onto people themselves...”

Drashot HaRav

In tribute to Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

By your example of living a life based on Torah values, you have impacted our lives and those of future generations. Your erudition and scholarship have brought us closer to our Jewish heritage and you have touched the hearts and minds of your congregants and students. You are an exemplary role model. May you continue to go from strength to strength.

*With love and admiration,
Sharon Dane and Gail Propp*



In blessed memory
of our beloved sister

BARBARA H. SMITH

who adored Shearith Israel, cherished
its traditions, and treasured her deep
connection to the synagogue's clergy
and her co-congregants.

May Barbara's goodness, warmth,
and elegance inspire us always.

*Rachel Neumark Herlands and
Jonathan Herlands*



Kon salud i berakha,

Juan Mesa-Freydell



With gratitude,

The Nathan family



Young Israel of Scarsdale congratulates
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America's oldest congregation,
and salutes your rabbi,
Rabbi Meir Soloveichik.

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In honor of Rabbi Soloveichik,
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In appreciation of
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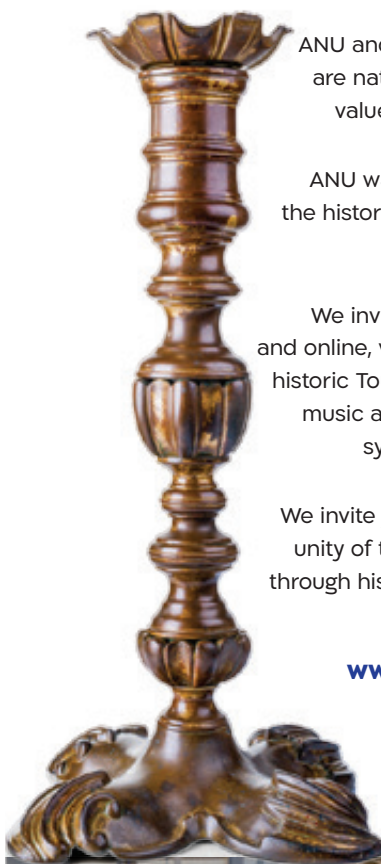
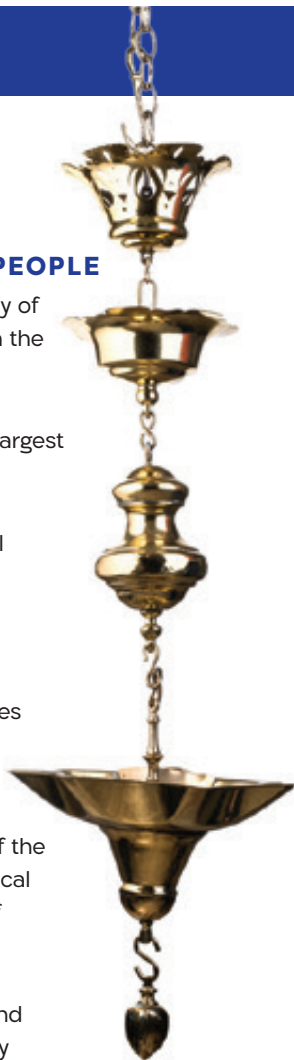
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*Candlestick (left) and Ner Tamid (right)
From Congregation Shearith Israel on display at the
Alfred H. Moses and Family Synagogue Hall at ANU*



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In appreciation,
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Rabbi Soloveichik's fabulous lecture
series, *Sanctuaries and Cities*



In honor of
Shearith Israel's *klei kodesh*,
professional staff, and
lay leadership

Martine and Jack Schenker



In honor and appreciation of
Rabbi Soloveitchik,

Alexandra and Chalom Silber



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amazing City of New York



Thank you, Rabbi Soloveichik and
Congregation Shearith Israel, for illuminating
the past of our sacred spaces and ensuring
their vibrancy for the future.

Zoya Raynes and Naftali Robert Friedman

In honor of the wonderful Shabbat
we spent with Rabbi Solovechik
at the Esnoga

Irene and Martin Kofman



In honor of
Eli Reuven Molinari
being called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah
at The Great Synagogue of Rome

Dr. Susan Lobel

In deepest appreciation to
Rabbi Soloveichik,
Rabbi Rohde, Zachary Edinger,
Barbara Reiss, and Bonnie Barest,
as well as to Lou Solomon
and our Board of Trustees.

David and Debbie Sable



The combination of Beauty and Awe
enhances our prayers
thus
Shearith Israel.

Judy and Joel Schreiber

In honor of Rabbi Soloveichik
and this amazing series of lectures.

Esther and William Schulder

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We proudly support Congregation Shearith Israel and Rabbi Soloveichik on his inspiring “Sanctuaries and Cities: Synagogues of the World and the Stories They Tell” lecture series.
In memory of William Barest, ז"ל ברוך ב. זאב, on his *nahala*
Bonnie Barest and Family

In memory of all the Synagogue builders
and their Kehilot who could not even consider dwelling
anywhere without one or several places of worship.
The Bengio and the Misrahi families

In memory of Dan's mother,
Gloria Bettinger,
on her 15th *nahala*
Nava and Dan Bettinger

With thanks,
Eva E. Deutsch

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Faith Fogelman

With thanks to our clergy and leadership
for all you do for our very special community.
Laury, Matea, and Reuben Frieber

In memory of Maurice “Moish” Friedman,
a lover of Jewish history and culture,
whose 4th *nahala* was May 30 (29th of Iyar)
Joyce and David Friedman

In memory of the 38th *nahala* of Robert's grandmother,
Selma Feiner, Sarah bat Avraham, who survived the
fires of the Shoah with her daughter to build a beautiful *bayit*
ne'eman b'yisrael. May her memory be for a blessing.
Judy and Robert Friedman

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Thank you for your continued leadership,
Rabbi Soloveichik!

Rebecca and Larry Grafstein

With thanks to
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for the awesome work he does

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In memory of
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Carla and Jonah Schein

In memory of the *nahala* of my mother
Henna bat Pinchas ha Levi

David Schimel

In honor of
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Frieda and Isaac Schlesinger

Remembering the Altneuschul and the
post-Shoah experience in Prague
of Lillie Steinberg a”h

Lu Steinberg and Michael Schulder

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In appreciation and with good wishes!

Maimon Schwarzschild

In gratitude to Rabbi Soloveichik
for his inspiring lectures

Sara and Warren Sherman

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Eden and Jeremy, Jessica, and Allie Sherman

In memory of our parents

Gail and Steven Siskind

In loving memory
of Barbara H. Smith

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With appreciation to Rabbi Soloveichik
for the extraordinary lecture series

Suchu and Meyer Solny

Kol hakovod to Rabbi Soloveichik
on this remarkable series!

Gale and Steven Spira

In memory of our son Steven

Linda and Howard Sterling

But can you get sushi in Venice??

Aviva and Marvin Sussman

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Talled di Seta
Made in Italy

Best wishes,

Paula and Leslie Walter

Thank you, Rabbi Soloveichik, for providing us with such insightful background information about the various synagogues. Even though we have visited and toured all, except the Ben Ezra, your in-depth historical and artistic knowledge gave us a different perspective.

Marion and Billy Weiss

In Loving Memory of our parents
Dewey and Betty White
and
Arthur and Mary McPeters
Elizabeth and Michael White

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In memory of Ilona Lieberman, survivor of the Shoah,
scion of the Rosh Hakahal in Preszov;
and in memory of Aharon Yaakov Weiss
whose *nahala* is 9 Iyar
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MANY THANKS TO OUR OTHER CONTRIBUTORS: Drs. Robert and Charlene Appleson; Viviane Bregman; Henry and Rose Edinger; Lauren and Samuel Flaks; Elana, Zachary, and Mendel Gorden; Lynnette Gruenhut; The Klaber Family; Ruth and Larry Kobrin; David and Elky Retter; Ruth and Robert Riemer; Rebecca and Israel Rivkin; Dr. Sandra Rose; Karen and Roy Simon



Our 2021 - 2022 Board of Trustees extends our appreciation to Rabbi Meir Soloveichik for his inspiring *Sanctuaries and Cities: Synagogues of the World and the Stories They Tell* lecture series, and a heartfelt *hazakim u'berukhim* to our community for its fortitude and ingenuity during this time.

Louis M. Solomon, Parnas

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