



STEPHEN WISE TEMPLE

2020-21 INCLUSIVITY REPORT

ENGAGING THE WISE COMMUNITY





Rabbi Yoshi Zweiback, Jacqueline Hantgan, and their daughters Ariela, Naomi, Isa.



Janine and Rick Kolodny with granddaughter Chloe Eden.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO OUR WISE COMMUNITY

Almost 2,000 years ago, in the wake of the greatest upheaval the Jewish community had known to date, a group of leaders set out to define Judaism's primary tasks. "The world," taught Shimon HaTzadik, "stands on three things: on Torah, on Divine worship, and on acts of loving-kindness." For millennia, Jewish communities have dedicated themselves to precisely this work—to Jewish education and learning, to worship and sacred connection, and to work in service of improving the world in which we live. Stephen Wise Temple is no exception; we are, however, exceptional at this work.

Last year, as we faced the greatest upheaval our generation has seen in almost a century, we came to you asking you to stand with us. "Hazak v'amatz," we said, in the words of our Torah—"let us be strong and of good courage."

With your continued commitment to our community, we pivoted. In a new reality, we reimagined Jewish education and learning throughout our community, providing incredible educational experiences for students of all ages: from our youngest in parenting and early childhood to our seasoned Wise Melton School and Wise Years lifelong learners.

With your continued support, we utilized modern technology to create opportunities for worship and sacred connection for the High Holy Days, Shabbat, and holidays. We heard from so many of you that our online services were a pivotal part of your weekly family Shabbat experiences and holiday observances.

And, with your generosity, we were able to support our larger Los Angeles community: we provided meals to vulnerable seniors, we helped feed frontline workers, we worked with our Wise Readers to Leaders scholars and families to support them during this challenging year of distance learning, and so much more.

One year later, we stand strong. We are so proud of this community, of the work we have done together, and the community we have continued to foster even through masks and via screens.

Now as we look together to a brighter future, we turn to you, asking again for your support and commitment. If your connection to Torah and Jewish wisdom has deepened this year because you joined us for a class, or read our Daily Kavannot, or shared our Passover supplement at your seder table, *your support* made all that possible. If our Friday night services were the soundtrack to your Shabbat, if you heard the *shofar* from your car on Rosh Hashanah, if the Wise community helped you welcome a new baby or mourn the loss of a loved one, *your support* made that possible. If you worried about food insecurity in Los Angeles, or wanted to honor our frontline workers, or fretted over the fate of students in underserved schools—and wanted your synagogue community to address these concerns—*your support* made our efforts possible.

Thank you so much for your commitment to our community. We know that not every member of our community participates in the same ways; perhaps you did not join us for Shabbat services, or attend one of our many classes or webinars. Maybe this was not the year that your family celebrated a *simcha*, or mourned deep loss. But even if you did not experience these things, your membership and generosity makes it possible for others to do so. Our staff, our programs, our impact are all—and only—made possible *by you and your generous support*.

Together, we will continue to stand strong and continue to create and innovate *Torah, avodah, and gemilut hasadim*.

Rabbi Yoshi Zweiback
Senior Rabbi

Janine Kolodny
President

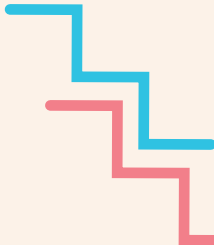
WELCOME TO WISE'S NEWEST MEMBERS

We are delighted to welcome so many new families to our community this year:

Stephanie & Whitney Ackerman
 Brandon Bayer & Michelle Haloossim
 Susan Casamassima
 Maxx Cohen & Ashley Holt
 Casey & Maren Cohen
 Nancy Cohen & Richard Light
 Loren & Caroline Davis
 Beth Drake
 Michael & Natalie Elist
 Jessica Enayati
 Roxana & Robert Farzam
 Eran & Rachel Fields
 Jilber Fouladian & Shervin Morim
 William Frankel & Taryn Jensen
 Laurence Freedman & Constance Baker
 Lindsay Glousman & Adam Rapaport

Michael & Maria Golomb
 Peter & Ruth Goodstein
 Audrey Greenberg
 Catherine Haggett
 Ross Hinkle & Noa Tishby
 Jason Honigberg & Jessica Weiss
 Brittney Hopper & Adam Bloch
 Todd & Kaori Jacobs
 Brooke & Dean Kampel
 Karen & Martin Laufer
 David & Jennifer Lerner
 Devra & Bruce Lerner
 Jennifer Malvin
 Hilary Markus & Ryan Kelly
 Susan Miller & Karen Stutenroth
 Asal & Ash Naimian

Kailee & Nicky Nielsen
 Isaac & Ashley Nuriani
 Abigail Plotkin Kleiman & Evan Kleiman
 Susan Rosenson
 Jacqueline Rowe
 Mariana Schechter
 James & Danielle Schneiderman
 Lilac & Samuel Simpson
 Michelle & David Soomekh
 Wendy & Harlan Spinner
 Allison & Josh Stepakoff
 Noah Stern & Melody Khorsandi
 Samuel & Sofia Sultan
 Shahrooz Cyrus Tabibnia & Tina Behnam
 Daniel & Negin Tauberg
 Ali & Alex Weinberger



WISE SCHOOL Class of 2032

This year, the Wise community welcomed many new babies and grandbabies!



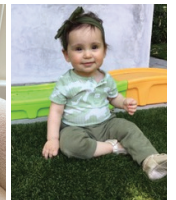
Asher



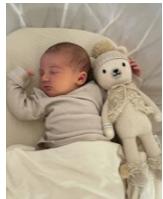
Avraham



Chloe



Eden



Emmy



Ezra



James



Jax



Jay



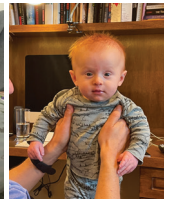
Jesse



Jordan



Jude



Julian



Justin



Lane



Leo & Max



Nathan



Noah



Nora



Scarlett

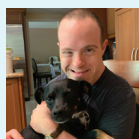


Sloane



Sophie

Don't forget all those
New Pups...



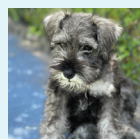
Lyla Michel (with Adam)



Princess Zoe Salzman (with David)



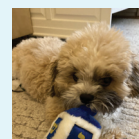
Mabel DuBow



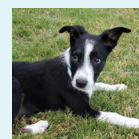
Lenny Kirkbride



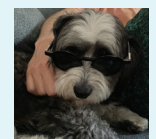
Ziggy Pouldar (with Ivy, Jade, Jax and Shane)



Sasha Goldberg



Storm Harel



Theo Ze-ev Zweiback

CREATIVELY ENGAGING OUR CHILDREN



New parents Emily and Brian Soloway with baby Sadelle.

In a year when our children were mostly under county stay-at-home orders, Wise created ways to engage our children and families. Cantor Emma Lutz and her baby Ruby, with the support of Parenting Center Coordinator Jenna Pitson, started a new moms group to create a supportive space for new parents.

"Brian and I welcomed our first child, Sadelle Isabel, at the beginning of the pandemic in April 2020. Cantor Emma invited me to join the Parenting Center's **Mommy and Me** group. Through weekly Zoom sessions, I connected with other Wise moms to share parenting success (and failure) stories. It was so nice feeling connected to the synagogue and to these other moms who were going through the same experience. I can't wait until we can all get together with our little ones sometime soon."

— *Emily Soloway*



Wise was also able to welcome our Early Childhood students back to campus at the end of the summer. Teachers and students alike showed their flexibility and creativity in bringing joy into the classrooms each day. Preschool families, whether on campus this year or not, loved safely coming up to campus for **Tailgate Tot Shabbats, Hatchback Hanukkah**, and more, and Rabbi Sari Laufer and Director of Early Childhood Jen Shankman

were in regular contact with parents through monthly emails—sharing familiar faces and maintaining connections.

Wise Religious School students developed meaningful bonds—with their teachers, with one another, and with their Jewish heritage—via online classes, in-person family gatherings, drive-in services, movie nights, our **Purim CAR-nival** and more.



Religious School students Elijah and Owen Drobnick participating in projects remotely.

"Even while staying with family in New Hampshire during the pandemic, attending Religious School allowed our boys to remain part of the Wise community. With weekly *t'filot*, music, Hebrew through movement, and arts and crafts activities, our sons truly experienced *kehillah* and the rhythm of the holidays".

— *Ryan and Andi Drobnick, Wise Religious School Parents*



Early Childhood parents Chantal and Simon Soomekh with children Coby, Maya, Aiden, Asher.

"One of the highlights we experienced this year was the Purim CARnival drive through event. It was such a creative way to celebrate given the pandemic restrictions and get the whole family involved. It was especially a much-needed emotional lift for our children to connect with the holidays and with Wise.

Over the past year, we found ourselves with more time on our hands. We found that reading Wise's daily emails and weekly newsletters helped us connect to the synagogue and community, helped get to know our clergy and school leaders more personally, and taught us something we didn't know or a good moral to help manage our daily lives".

— *Chantal and Simon Soomekh, Early Childhood Parents*



Wise School Nassim Bayanfar welcoming elementary students Hailey Nissani and Oliver Salamati back to campus.

"It is so nice to be back learning out in the sun with our amazing students. We are having such a great time and feel so fortunate!"

— *Nassim Bayanfar, Grade 2 teacher, Wise School*

"We are having such a great time and feel so fortunate!"

CREATIVELY ENGAGING OUR CHILDREN

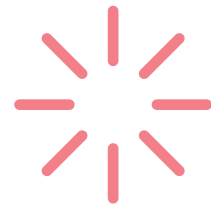


Head of Wise School Tami Weiser celebrating Simchat Torah with students.

Wise School demonstrated the theme of “Chazak V’Ematz – Be Strong and Resilient” with creativity throughout this year. Whether during online instruction or on campus, Wise’s amazing teachers and students jumped into their learning. Each week began with a Monday morning assembly, on video when necessary, to give all students important updates. Each holiday was celebrated with outstanding video services created by Maestro David Kates the Wise School communications

team, many of which featured different grade levels by having students record music and prayers from home. Wise students became even more adept at using technology and it wasn’t unusual to see children navigating breakout rooms and Google classrooms, along with masks and temperature checks. We are so proud of our entire school community for their hard work and triumphs during this challenging year.

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Wise School family Sharlene, Peyman, Aiden and Shohreh Saadat.



Michael Lew, with his grandsons, Wise School students Roman and Rocky Lew.

“I’m so grateful to be a Wise member and to have this opportunity to participate in amazing programs, classes, Shabbats, High Holy Days services, and virtual gatherings. Although it was a very challenging year, I’m feeling so blessed to be part of the Wise community. Our daughter Sharlene participated in the Megillah reading online and that moment brought so much joy and happiness for us to see her have this great honor. Also, when Aiden was Klei Kodesh and read the blessings, it was truly a great honor and we felt that our kids are in the perfect school.”

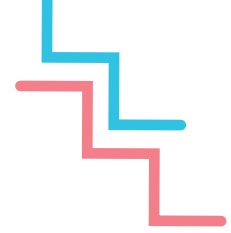
— Shohreh Saadat

“Everyone in the Wise community has been so helpful to our boys and our family. You have wrapped your arms around us and are making a big impact on our boys’ lives. Hopefully, the COVID-19 crisis will be a distant memory when we celebrate their bar mitzvahs in 2023.”

— Michael Lew



CREATIVELY CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY



Jack, Samantha, Beth and Bryan Behar celebrating Sammy's graduation at UC Berkeley.

The Wise community embraced Zoom and participation in our adult learning classes saw record numbers—from Wise Melton School to weekly Talmud, Bible, and Torah study classes with Rabbi Yoshi Zweiback, Rabbi David Woznica, and Rabbi Ron Stern; from Wise Women book clubs and online workshops to Center for Jewish Life webinars with thought leaders and scholars.

"As a member of Stephen Wise Temple since 1968, as an alum of the preschool, the day camp, and the religious school, as the husband of the elementary school Director of Admissions and the father of two Wise School grads, this synagogue has been central to my Jewish life for as long as I can remember. It's a place where four generations of my family have marked life's major milestones, both *simchas* and sorrows, for over half a century. And that was as true this past year, even from a safe, social distance, as any year prior."

— *Bryan Behar*



"This year I felt I was fortunate to have access to weekly Shabbat services, the Wise Years programs, and new Zoom classes and meetings. I always felt I was connected to my Stephen Wise Temple community even though we were apart."

— *Barbara Sampson*

Barbara Sampson has embraced online classes and events this year.



"We are thrilled to be part of Stephen Wise Temple and are looking forward to the campus reopening and meeting our fellow congregants and Clergy, and being active members. A highlight of this year was the outreach calls Peter made to check in with our senior members. As Los Angeles becomes more a part of our lives (we are bi-coastal), our Wise community gives us a feeling of belonging and connection".

— *Peter and Ruth Goodstein*

New members Peter and Ruth Goodstein are based in New York but as they spend more and more time in Los Angeles, they are excited to become part of Wise.



"Wise has been an unbelievable place during the pandemic. This community has nourished everyone that has wanted to partake in studies of Torah and Talmud, to learn with Wise Melton School and to connect with Wise Guys, to be part of Wise Women and to enjoy a variety of lectures and services. Wise community members have not been alone during this pandemic. There has been something for everyone. This could not have been done without the fabulous clergy and our hard working staff—and of course the tireless efforts of our volunteers. We could not imagine being any other place besides Wise."

— *Karl and DeeDee Sussman*

"Wise community members have not been alone during this pandemic."

RITUALS DURING THE PANDEMIC

Marking **lifecycle moments** during this year was anything but normal, and yet together we found moments of deep connection, sweetness, and true joy. While there may not have been warm embraces and physical comfort for mourners, and celebrating a *simcha* without family and friends may have felt incomplete, we also learned the power of intimate gatherings, of being together with those closest to us. Throughout the pandemic, through shifting guidelines and changing dates, our clergy and our community allowed us to celebrate, mourn, or honor special moments—at home, on Zoom, and safely on the Wise campus.



Jodi Kruger lighting Shabbat candles during Friday night services online, with son Ethan Rosen and husband Jeremy Rosen, a Wise Board Member.

“Stephen Wise Temple has been a bright spot this year, offering a sense of community and reinforcing how blessed we are to be part of the Wise family. When the world was feeling broken, online Shabbat services were there to remind us that our People would persevere and that we all have a role to play in repairing the world. When we woke up in the morning sad about facing another day apart from family and friends, the Daily Kavanah was there with words of hope and wisdom. This time has proven that Wise is so much more than its buildings.”

— *Jeremy Rosen and Jodi Kruger*



Arielle Dan becoming Bat Mitzvah at Stephen Wise Temple, pictured with parents Eliav and Adit and brother Davin.



Rabbi Sari Laufer visiting the home of the Schwartzman family for Hagigat Torah.



Cantor Emma Lutz officiating Baby Scarlett's Simchat Bat (baby naming ceremony) with parents Allison and Josh Stepakoff.



Rabbi Yoshi Zweiback witnessed Sivan and Richard Barkhordarian's Ketubah signing.



LET'S CONNECT

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WiseLA.org | Wise-School.org
AaronMilkenCenter.org

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Wise School: Tami Weiser

Early Childhood and K-6
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Center for Youth Engagement:

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SAVE THE DATES:

High Holy Days 2021 | 5782 • September 6-16

Wise will continue to offer meaningful, uplifting, and reflective spiritual experiences as we welcome 5782 together. Some of our offerings will remain online to allow you to access your community from anywhere. At the same time, our clergy and staff are hard at work to develop our excellent on-site, in-person experiences **exclusively for Wise members.** **Stay tuned for more information!**



WE MAKE MEANING AND CHANGE THE WORLD

Stephen Wise Temple and Schools is an inclusive community that seeks to inspire its diverse constituency to engage ever more deeply and personally in ongoing, significant acts of loving kindness and Tikkun Olam (repairing the world); the mindful study of Torah and the pursuit of wisdom; and worship that inspires, uplifts, and connects us to God.

In all we do, and all we are, we strive to be inclusive, creative, and generous. Every aspect of Wise community life and work is informed by our unyielding commitment to these values, beginning with inclusivity. From its founding, Stephen Wise Temple was meant to be an open tent, welcoming and representing the many faces of Jewish life.

RENEW YOUR WISE MEMBERSHIP

Members have been sent membership information by email. If you did not receive it or if you have questions, please contact Lucy Harel, Director of Membership, or Karen Benyishay, Membership Assistant, at **Membership@WiseLA.org** or call us at **310.476.8561**.

Thank you for your commitment!