

Short Bios for 2022 Candidates for Tabernacle Officers and Board Members

OFFICERS – 1-year term



Todd Rubinstein, Board: I am seeking to serve on the Board of Directors of Hebrew Tabernacle as Treasurer. I believe I bring a wide range of experience to the Board. I am familiar with many of the issues confronting the Congregation in the last year, having served on the Licensing Committee as the liaison with the Finance Committee. The committee deals with Covid preparedness and is working on our return to the sanctuary and the restoration of the gas service to the kitchen as well as financing the new air conditioning system.

I also currently serve as a Board member of the Community League of the Heights, CLOTH. CLOTH has served Washington Heights since 1952 with Housing, Education, Computer Literacy and other Social Service programs. I recently helped set up a 401(k) for the staff of CLOTH including the supers, porters and other staff working for CLOTH. I hope I can assist volunteers from Tabernacle with opportunities to work on some of CLOTH's projects to make our entire community better.

I have served as the President and Treasurer of another congregation prior to joining Hebrew Tabernacle. I am retired as the Counsel and Grievance Coordinator for Teamsters Local 237. I am hoping that I can use my skill set to assist the Board in leading us forward. I joined Hebrew Tabernacle shortly after moving into the neighborhood seven years ago. There are many challenges in the upcoming year. We must move forward, keeping our congregation growing, safe and financially stable.



Associate Treasurer - Sara Silver: A Trustee since 2017, Sara has worked to help our synagogue evolve to meet the needs of our fast-growing community in Washington Heights, to offer families the resources to bring up kids loving Judaism.

Sara shepherded our finances for four years, upgrading our financial reporting to give the board a better view of our finances and building consensus on matching spending to program goals. She helped to bring in major funding to make our building more secure and two forgivable loans to endure the pandemic. Through careful financial management, the synagogue undertook major building repairs without taking on debt. She loves working with bookkeeper Jesse and our terrific office staff to support multi-generational programming. She co-coordinates our blood drives, doing postering and Spanish-language outreach for this and other events, fundraisers and children's activities.

When not working on synagogue finance, Sara is Abelson professor of business journalism at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut, an adjunct at Columbia Journalism School and trains newsrooms to analyze numbers to hold power to account. She has two decades' reporting experience in New York, Mexico City, and London for The Wall Street Journal, the Financial Times and The Associated Press. Sara has edited books on Holocaust restitution and financial crises. She earned an M.B.A. from Columbia Business School.

BOARD - 3-year term



Dr. Denny Kelk - Denny Chern Kelk is a former Hebrew School parent who ran the Purim Carnival, volunteered in the kitchen, ushered whenever needed and donated countless hours to health fairs and other community events held in our social hall. When the building was open (in those lovely pre-pandemic days) Denny and her husband John, prepared the family service dinners, several onegs and parties and of course, the ice cream social. Since becoming elected Vice President, Denny has co-chaired the Ritual Committee, helping to implement many changes, such as moving to the Mishkhan Tefillah and the Mishkhan Hanefesh. She chaired the rabbinical search committee and together with the other members, painstakingly searched until (true Beshert) finding Rabbi Paula Feldstein.

Denny has been working tirelessly with the building committee on replacing the air conditioning and the gas lines, as well as dozens of other projects in the building. She helped spearhead the beautification of the building project, twisting arms to trim bushes and asking nicely for plants and cleaned steps. Denny hopes to continue to serve on the Executive Committee of officers to help Hebrew Tabernacle keep its doors open to embrace the community.



Joan Laufer: I am honored to be nominated for another term as president of the Hebrew Tabernacle. A life-long resident of Washington Heights, I went to Hebrew School at Beth Hillel. I have been active in the Hebrew Tabernacle for the past 30 years. Initially I joined when my sons went to Hebrew School and my Dad attended services. I served as co-president of the Hebrew School with Emily Helen Strauss Watson. Together we ran the Purim Carnival, Simchat Torah celebration, and represented the Hebrew School on the Board of Trustees. Soon I served on the Board in my own right.

As vice president, I created the agendas and chaired most Board meetings. Among the accomplishments of that time were the Licensing Committee's outreach which resulted in our many long- and short-term licensees and the growth of Tot Shabbat and the Hebrew School. These projects and others have continued during my years as president. None of this happened in a vacuum and I will continue to encourage all our Hebrew Tabernacle participants to become as active as possible to overcome Covid-19 setbacks and continue our growth. I hope that many of our religious services and other programs are available in person and on zoom.

I believe in inclusiveness, group decision making, and that an organization is more than the sum of its parts. I am ready to continue as president of the Hebrew Tabernacle and humbly request your support today, and throughout my term.



Justin Shames: Justin M. Shames grew up in Queens, New York in a Conservative Synagogue, Bellerose Jewish Center, where he celebrated his Bar Mitzvah 38 years ago this past January. He graduated from the State University of New York at Stony Brook in 1991 with a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts. Since then, he has built a career in the marketing and advertising field with stints at some of the largest and well renowned such as TBWA\Chiat Day and DDB. He is currently a Senior Strategist at Formerly Known As working on a variety of communications programs. Justin is married to his wife Yocasta and together they have two boys, Aidan-16 and Gavin-10 years of age. Their family joined the membership of the Hebrew Tabernacle congregation in 2016 and have been active members of the community. Aidan had his Bar Mitzvah 3 years ago and Gavin is attending the Hebrew school and

will celebrate his Bar Mitzvah in 2024. Justin has contributed articles to the bulletin and is a member of the Ritual Committee as well as working on maintaining Hebrew Tabernacle's website and social media presence.

Justin is an avid sports fan and loves to spend time watching the Yankees. He loves cooking, reading, photography, watching movies and listening to podcasts.

Sara Silver (see above)



Kate Sussman, Board: I have lived in NYC all of my life, and in Washington Heights for the past 21 years. We joined the Hebrew Tabernacle about 7 years ago, and three years ago I joined the Board, initially as a parent representative from the Hebrew School. For the last two years as a member of the Board I have participated in search committees and co-chaired the HT Social Action Committee. My son Charlie has been an avid member of the Hebrew School for the past seven years, and we will celebrate his bar mitzvah this spring.

I appreciate the community and spiritual ties that being a member of HT provide for me and my family. I appreciate how much I have learned from other members about being a part of a Jewish

community.

I have worked in education for my entire career. I am trained in special education, and have worked with district, charter, independent and Jewish Day schools on teacher training, school culture and leadership, and organizational change. I hope to bring to the board my experience working with groups and teams on refining their vision, their goals, and their ways of working productively together.



Hilary Zatz: I have been a Washington Heights resident for most of my life, and a proud member of Hebrew Tabernacle Congregation for the past four years. One of the most rewarding aspects of my Hebrew Tabernacle experience, in addition to Yad b'Yad: Legacy of the Sisterhood membership, has been my activities as Chair of our Chesed Committee. Whether it is visiting a beloved congregant who is homebound or in a hospital or nursing home, making a friendly phone call, or sending a special card for a life-cycle event, I grow with each experience. My deepest gratitude goes to our congregants who have guided me in these endeavors, and who have accompanied me on many of my visits. I look forward to experiences ahead.

I live in the community with my husband, Robert, and my son, Eliot. I attended school in New York City and am a graduate of Hunter College with a degree in English (Phi Beta Kappa, summa cum laude). I have edited books and a variety of publications for many years, and also enjoy cartooning—which has added an extra touch of enjoyment during my Chesed visits!