



**RECONSTRUCTIONIST
RABBINICAL COLLEGE**

המדרשה ליהדות מתחדשת

Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

Graduation Ceremony

June 2, 2019 • 28 Iyar 5779

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Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

Graduation Ceremony

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Mission Statement

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College cultivates and supports Jewish living, learning and leadership for a changing world.

Order of Ceremony

ACADEMIC PROCESSION

Music performed by the Ken Ulansey Ensemble

OPENING PRAYER

Rabbi Mira Wasserman, Ph.D.

Director, Levin-Lieber Center for Jewish Ethics;
Assistant Professor of Rabbinic Literature

WELCOME

Seth Rosen

Chair, Board of Governors

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

Rabbi Deborah Waxman, Ph.D., '99

PRIZES AND AWARDS

Elsie Stern, Ph.D.

Vice President for Academic Affairs

Rabbi Linda Holtzman, '79

Acting Director of Student Life and
Rabbinic Formation Specialist

Rachel Davidson

President, Reconstructionist Student Association

HONORARY AWARDS AND DEGREES

Rabbi Deborah Waxman, Ph.D.

Seth Rosen

TEKES HATARAT HORA'AH

CONFERRING THE TITLE OF RABBI AND THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN HEBREW LETTERS

Rabbi Deborah Waxman, Ph.D.

Elsie Stern, Ph.D.

Members of the Regular Faculty

KABBALAT HATARAT HORA'AH

RABBIS' RESPONSE

and MISHEBERAKH, A BLESSING

Rabbinical Class of 2019/5779

and Rabbi Deborah Waxman, Ph.D.

CLOSING PRAYER

Rabbi Mordechai Liebling, '85

Director, Social Justice Organizing Program;
Instructor of Practical Rabbinics

RECESSIONAL

Music performed by the Ken Ulansey Ensemble

Please stand during the processional and recessional. Following the ceremony, please join us for the president's reception.



Prizes and Awards

We bestow these prizes on the following students, faculty, staff and members of our community. We thank them for their service to the ideals of studentship and scholarship, social justice, the building of community and the growth of the movement.

THE RABBI DEVORA BARTNOFF MEMORIAL PRIZE FOR SPIRITUALLY MOTIVATED SOCIAL ACTION

Through the generosity of the members of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, the Rabbi Devora Bartnoff Memorial Prize for Spiritually Motivated Social Action is awarded annually to a third-, fourth- or fifth-year student whose rabbinic work best demonstrates how *ru'akh hakodesh* (sacred spirit) inspires *tikkun olam* (social action).

The 2019 recipient is Micah Geurin Weiss.

THE RABBI KENNETH BERGER AND AVIVA BERGER MEMORIAL PRIZE IN PRACTICAL RABBINICS

Through the generosity of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, the Rabbi Kenneth Berger

and Aviva Berger Memorial Prize in Practical Rabbinics is awarded annually at graduation exercises to a fourth- or fifth-year student who exemplifies those qualities of rabbinic service that enhance the quality of congregational life.

The 2019 recipient is Miriam Levia Grossman.

THE YEHUDA BERGER PRIZE FOR EXCELLENCE IN BIBLICAL STUDIES

The Yehuda Berger Prize for Excellence in Biblical Studies is awarded from time to time to a student who demonstrates significant scholarly mastery of, and insight into, biblical civilization and biblical texts. This prize is named in memory of Yehuda Berger, z"l —an intellectual, a scholar of Jewish contributions to civilization, a dedicated teacher himself and a mentor to teachers, who was deeply committed to the Jewish people. He helped

found, lead and shape Congregation Beit Simchat Torah of New York City, where he was highly respected and widely loved, and where he is still fondly remembered.

The 2019 recipient is Nora Woods.

THE EMPLOYEE OF DISTINCTION AWARD

The Employee of Distinction Award is awarded annually to a member of the administrative staff who excels at work and contributes significantly to the life and mission of the organization. The recipient exhibits a sense of community, justice, dedication, integrity and ongoing cooperation with co-workers.

The 2019 recipient is Susan Berman.

THE DAVID FERN MEMORIAL AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE RRC COMMUNITY

The David Fern Memorial Award for Outstanding Contributions to the RRC Community is awarded annually at the graduation ceremony to a member of the RRC faculty, administration or staff who has

made a positive difference in the life of the RRC community, enabling its scholars and leaders to achieve more effectively their goals of Torah study, creating Jewish community, service to the Jewish people and professional service.

The 2019 recipient is Sharon Gershoni, Ph.D.

THE LILLIAN FERN MEMORIAL AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE RRC COMMUNITY

The Lillian Fern Memorial Award for Outstanding Student Contributions to the RRC Community is awarded annually at the graduation ceremony to a matriculated student who has made a positive difference in the life of the RRC's community, enabling its scholars and leaders to more effectively achieve their goals of Torah study, creating Jewish community, service to the Jewish people and professional service.

The 2019 recipient is Rory Schonning.

THE YAAKOV GLADSTONE AWARD FOR FINE TEACHING

The Yaakov Gladstone Award for Fine Teaching is presented annually at the graduation ceremony to a member of the faculty, nominated by students and chosen by student ballot, who exemplifies fine teaching. This prize is named in memory of Yaakov Gladstone, z”l, whose life exemplified fine teaching in the fullest sense.

The Gladstone Award winner is announced at graduation.

THE EVELYN R. MEHLMAN JEWISH MUSIC AWARD

In memory of Evelyn R. Mehlman, z”l, whose dedication to Judaism and to Jewish music was unparalleled, and who brought light to everyone she befriended, a prize is awarded annually to a full-time RRC student who advances the study or performance of cantorial or seriously intentioned music addressed to Jewish themes.

The 2019 recipient is Solomon Hoffman.

THE JOSEPH L. AND ANN W. PINKENSON PRIZE IN RABBINICS

Through the beneficence of the Pinkenson family, the Joseph L. and Ann W. Pinkenson Prize in Rabbinics is awarded at graduation to a student who has excelled in the study of rabbinic literature and civilization.

The 2019 recipient is Nora Woods.

THE A. WALTER SOCOLOW WRITING PRIZE

Through the beneficence of the children of A. Walter Socolow, z”l, the annual Socolow Writing Prize is awarded to a student for a paper, essay or monograph. The work must have been written expressly as part of the RRC course of study during the previous 12 months on a theme of interest to the Jewish people, with special attention to American Jewry, Reconstructionism and family life. It must be an articulate work, excellent in its conception, method, content and style.

The 2019 recipient is Solomon Hoffman for “A Closer Look at the Ger in the Holiness Code and Its Implications for Immigrant Justice.”

THE FRED LOUIS STAMM MEMORIAL PRIZE

Through the generosity of the family of Fred Louis Stamm, z”l, the Stamm Memorial Prize is awarded annually at the RRC’s graduation exercises to a student who writes an essay that most contributes to the field of Jewish history and culture. The essay must consist of original research written during the previous year, focusing on any period of Jewish history and culture.

The 2019 recipient is Rebecca Ilana Richman for “The Return of the Beit Midrash Outside of Orthodoxy.”

THE ALICE STEIN PRIZE IN CONTEMPORARY JEWISH CIVILIZATION

Through the generosity of the Joseph F. Stein Foundation, the Alice Stein Prize is awarded annually at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College’s graduation exercises to a student who creates an innovative project that explores relevant cultural and social issues, including but not limited to issues of gender, race, class and identity. A variety of formats will be considered

as long as the project includes a clearly stated application to the reconstruction of contemporary Jewish life.

The 2019 recipient is Mackenzie Zev Reynolds for “Moral Injury and Soul Repair.”

Reconstructionist Student Association Prizes

RU’AKH AKHERET AND TIKKUN OLAM AWARDS

Each year the Reconstructionist Student Association honors students for their contributions to *tikkun olam* at RRC and in the wider community. In addition, the RSA gives the *Ru’akh Akheret* Award for a student contribution to the spiritual well-being of the RRC community.

The 2019 Tikkun Olam Award recipient (college) is Sarah Brammer-Shlay.

The 2019 Tikkun Olam Award recipient (community) is Donna Cephas.

The 2019 Ru’akh Akheret Award recipient is Lizzie Horne.

Honorary Awards and Degrees

Each year at graduation, we bestow awards upon individuals whose work nurtures and engages Jewish communities, and we honor our graduates from 25 years ago or more, whose rabbinical work and commitment to Reconstructionist Jewish values have been exemplary and inspirational.

KETER SHEM TOV, THE CROWN OF A GOOD NAME

The Keter Shem Tov Award recognizes distinction in scholarship or community service in the pursuit of Reconstructionist ideals, and is offered to an individual of the highest regard. The honor takes its name from Pirkei Avot 4:17: “Rabbi Shimon says there are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood and the crown of kingship, but the crown of a good name [*keter shem tov*] rises above them all.”

The 2019 Keter Shem Tov Award is presented to Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg.



Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg

Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg, '86, is a pioneer of Jewish meditation and mindfulness practice who has served as a congregational rabbi, Hillel director and community relations leader.

Weinberg's rabbinate has been shaped by the belief that “the inner work we do cannot be separated from the outer work of changing the

world. We all need to have the strength and courage to look inside our own faith to discover the possibility of transformation.”

Weinberg has studied mindfulness for 28 years, initially approaching meditation in Buddhist settings before adapting it and infusing it with Jewish purpose. She has introduced meditation into the Jewish world as a form that can illuminate Jewish practice, ideas and community.

She continues to teach mindfulness meditation and yoga in a Jewish idiom to lay people, rabbis, cantors and other Jewish professionals. She was a founder and senior teacher for the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, a retreat-based program for Jewish leaders (jewishspirituality.org) that, through its many participants, has had a widespread impact on North American Jewry. She serves as a spiritual director to a variety of clergy, including students and faculty at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City. She is also the creator and co-leader of the Jewish Mindfulness teacher training program.

A prolific writer, she has published widely on such topics as feminism, spiritual direction, parenting, social justice and mindfulness from a Jewish perspective and has contributed commentaries to *Kol Haneshamah*, the Reconstructionist prayerbook series. Her first book, *Surprisingly Happy: An Atypical Religious Memoir*, was published in 2010. Her second book, *God Loves the Stranger: Stories, Poems, Prayers*, was published in 2017. Additionally, Weinberg’s students have published a tribute to her called *Good Noticing: 100 Teachings in Jewish Mindfulness Inspired by Sheila Peltz Weinberg*. Her CD, *Preparing the Heart: Meditation for Jewish Spiritual Practice*, integrates Jewish sacred text and guided meditation.

Weinberg served in the pulpits of Beth Am Israel, a Conservative synagogue in Pennsylvania, and, for 13 years, the Jewish Community of Amherst, a Reconstructionist congregation in Massachusetts. Previously, she worked with college students, serving as the director of Hillel at Bryn Mawr College and Haverford College outside

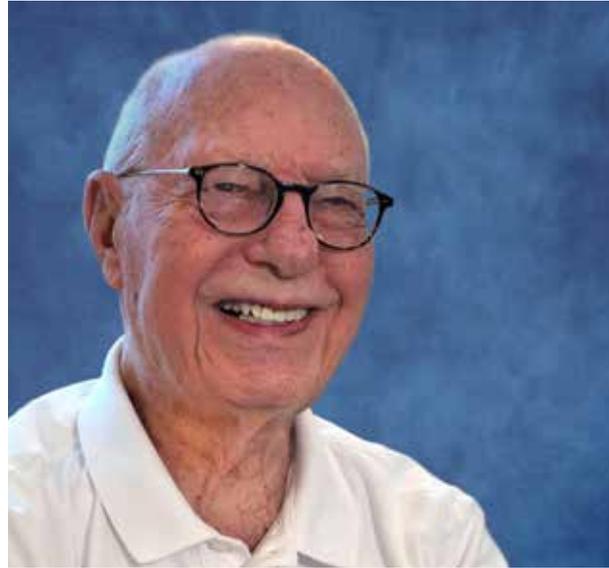
Philadelphia, and assistant director of Hillel at Temple University in Philadelphia. Weinberg spent several years living in Scranton, Pa., where she taught at the Scranton Hebrew Day School and served as director of community relations for what is now known as the Jewish Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

She is married to Maynard Seider, and they have three married children and six grandchildren.

THE PRESIDENTIAL RECOGNITION AWARD

The Presidential Recognition Award is presented to an individual who has devoted his or her life to advancing Reconstructionist Judaism in both institution and practice, a person who has sown the seeds that nurture rabbinical training and movement leadership. This award honors an individual whose life's work has been to advance Reconstructionist Judaism profoundly, making an inclusive, vibrant, open and thoughtful Jewish practice available to countless individuals, and thereby transforming the landscape of Judaism in our day.

The 2019 Presidential Recognition Award is presented to Herbert Krasnow, member of the Board of Governors.



Herbert Krasnow

Hebrew Krasnow has risen from humble origins to become a leader in business, real estate and venture capital, as well as a philanthropist deeply concerned with the future of Jewish communities. For more than 35 years, he has served as a leader in the Reconstructionist movement.

Raised in the Bronx, N.Y., Krasnow is the child of immigrants from Romania and Poland. (Many members of both his parents' extended families were murdered in the Holocaust.) He got his first job at age 6, a paper route, and never stopped working. A gifted student, he graduated from New York's elite Townsend Harris High School. In 1942, at just 19, he earned his bachelor's degree in accounting from the City College of New York, where he was trained in the burgeoning field of punch-card accounting, a predecessor to the personal computing field. This exposure sparked his lifelong fascination with innovation, technology and data.

After graduation, he moved to Washington, D.C., and became a supervisor with the U.S. War Department before being sent overseas. He served first with a financial group. After raising corruption charges with the Inspector General, he was sent to a combat artillery unit instead of being commended. He served three years in England, Wales, France, Austria and Germany. During that time, an officer in that artillery unit, whom Krasnow believes was motivated by anti-Semitism,

attempted to have him and other Jewish soldiers transferred to a front-line infantry unit, despite their lack of infantry training. A rabbi serving in the military intervened. Krasnow credits that rabbi, whom he had never met, with saving his life, and, as it so happened, deepening his bond with Judaism. Krasnow considers himself incredibly fortunate to have returned from the war unharmed and has treated every day since as a blessing.

After the war, he formed, managed and resigned from a certified public accounting firm in New York City. Krasnow co-founded Sirius LLC, a real estate development and investment company. Sirius has facilitated the development of major high-rise commercial and residential properties. The firm, which has become a multi-generational family enterprise, has redeveloped New York City properties such as the Ansonia, the Nevada and the Alden.

Krasnow considers his involvement in the venture-capital sector to be the most rewarding aspect of his business career. Among the companies in which he was an early investor were NAPCO

Industries, which specialized in military equipment, and ECC International Corp., which pioneered the use of computer simulation for the maintenance of military equipment.

Krasnow was twice married for a total of 70 years — first to Frances Litwer, who died in 1982, and to Dr. Deborah Kligler Krasnow, who died in 2018. He grew up in a household with strong Jewish identification, but where little emphasis was placed on observance or synagogue attendance. He did celebrate his bar mitzvah at 13. As an adult, he was introduced to Reconstructionist Judaism by his second wife, Deborah. He has been a longtime member of Bet Am Shalom in White Plains, N.Y., and, for more than 35 years, has served on the board of what is now Reconstructing Judaism. He has sat on the organization's building, executive, finance and investment committees. He is motivated by the belief that Reconstructing Judaism will continue to play a vital role in shaping a vibrant Jewish future.

He had five children with his first wife. Their three surviving children are Marilyn Tawfik, Jesse Krasnow and Harriet Krasnow Ainetchi. Their daughter Riva died as an infant, and son Marc passed away in his 40s. Krasnow has three stepchildren through his second marriage: Daniel Kligler; Rabbi Jonathan Kligler, '89; and Dr. Ben Kligler. He has 17 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS

RRC awards the Doctor of Humane Letters to a communal leader or scholar who is distinguished in the pursuit of Reconstructionist ideals, and has made an outstanding contribution to the Jewish community and/or to Jewish life in North America or Israel.

The 2019 honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters is awarded to Rabbi Sid Schwarz, Ph.D.



Rabbi Sid Schwarz, Ph.D.

Few figures in Jewish life today have contributed to the community in as many capacities as Rabbi Sid Schwarz, '80: social entrepreneur, activist, organizational leader, author and congregational rabbi. Schwarz has been the recipient of numerous awards, including being named in 2007 by *Newsweek* magazine as one of the 50 most influential rabbis in the United States. No award

is more representative of Schwarz's pioneering spirit than his receipt of the prestigious Covenant Award in 2002 for his entrepreneurship in the field of Jewish education.

Raised in a traditional Jewish household on the South Shore of Long Island by parents who were survivors of the Holocaust, Schwarz was sent to an Orthodox *yeshivah* in elementary school and later was enrolled in the Prozdor program at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York City. He graduated from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia in 1980. His first rabbinic position was at Congregation Beth Israel, the Reconstructionist community in Media, Pa., where he served for eight years, the first four years while he was still a student at RRC. After graduation, Schwarz was hired as an adjunct instructor at RRC where he taught several courses, including "Creating Alternative Spiritual Communities."

While completing his Ph.D. in Jewish history at Temple University, Schwarz founded *Raayanot* (Ideas), the journal of thought and opinion of

the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association. In 1984, he became the executive director of the Jewish Community Council in Washington, D.C. (now the JCRC). He focused on advocacy for the state of Israel, endangered Jewish communities around the world and issues of social justice. In 1985, Schwarz helped to organize a major demonstration at Arlington National Cemetery to protest President Ronald Reagan's visit to a military cemetery in Bitburg, Germany which contained the graves of Waffen-SS officers. In 1987 he was one of the organizers of the historic Summit Rally for Soviet Jewry which led to a change in the Soviet Union's policies, resulting in the immigration of nearly one million Soviet Jews to Israel and the West.

In 1988, at age 34, Schwarz founded PANIM: The Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values, serving as the organization's president for 21 years. He had a simple idea with huge implications. Observing how many young Jews were alienated from their Jewish identity and drifting away from Jewish affiliations, he developed an array of educational programs that proved transformative for Jewish

teens, including the highly touted Panim el Panim program. PANIM brought more than 20,000 Jewish youth through its various programs, training them for a life of leadership, activism and service to the Jewish people and the world at large.

In the same year that Schwarz founded PANIM, he also founded Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda, Md., now a congregation of close to 500 households. He led both institutions concurrently for eight years. Schwarz continues to teach and lead services at Adat Shalom as its founding rabbi.

Through his books, Schwarz's ideas have reached a wide audience. His groundbreaking work, *Finding a Spiritual Home: How a New Generation of Jews Can Transform the American Synagogue*, was one of the seminal books of the synagogue transformation movement. Schwarz is also the author of *Judaism and Justice: The Jewish Passion to Repair the World* and *Jewish Megatrends: Charting the Course of the American Jewish Community*.

Schwarz now serves as a senior fellow at Hazon, the Jewish Lab for Sustainability, where he runs several national programs of his own creation. The Clergy Leadership Incubator is a two-year fellowship program for rabbis, training them in the areas of visionary leadership and change management. He also directs Kenissa: Communities of Meaning Network which identifies, convenes and builds capacity among emerging new models of Jewish identity and community in North America.

Schwarz's volunteer efforts have included interfaith work, human rights and Middle East peace. He was the founding chair of the Greater Washington Forum on Israeli-Arab Issues, and serves on the boards of T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights and Yahel: Israel Service Learning. He also launched Adat Shalom's Haiti Project, which has sent five service missions to Haiti since 2010, each of which he organized and led.

2019 DOCTOR OF DIVINITY DEGREES

RRC awards the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity to rabbis who have completed at least 25 years of commendable service as Reconstructionist rabbis. The following rabbis have devoted their lives to rabbinical service in keeping with Reconstructionist ideals and core values.



Rabbi Howard A. Cohen
Bennington, Vt.



Rabbi Ruth Ehrenstein Smith
Baltimore, Md.



Rabbi Shoshana Beth Kaminsky
Adelaide, Australia



Rabbi Noah Kitty
Wilton Manors, Fla.



Rabbi Steven P. Nathan
Bethlehem, Pa.



Rabbi Brian Danny Field
Denver, Colo.



Rabbi Hanoch Fields
Manitou Springs, Colo.



Rabbi Brian J. Nevins-Goldman
Voorhees, N.J.



Rabbi Sonya Starr
Columbia, Md.

*Even as we celebrate these rabbis' long and distinguished service, we acknowledge the absence of a colleague from RRC's Class of 1994: **Rabbi Sheryl Lewart, z"l**, who died in 2012. In recognition of her contributions as movement leader, congregational rabbi, author and spiritual teacher, Rabbi Lewart received the posthumous Levav Hokhmah Award in 2014.*



Welcoming New Rabbis



Into the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

On behalf of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association and your new colleagues, we congratulate this year's exceptional class of graduates! The new rabbis who stand before us today represent the best and brightest of our aspirations and dreams for the Jewish future.

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, in building relationships among colleagues and supporting each other in our rabbinic work, seeks to be a source of strength, nurturance, leadership and collegiality for all of its members, and we are proud to welcome Rabbi Miriam Levia Grossman, Rabbi Mackenzie Zev Reynolds, Rabbi Rebecca Ilana Richman, Rabbi Micah Geurin Weiss and Rabbi Ari Juran Witkin.

We look forward to working together to strengthen all of our rabbinate, the Reconstructionist movement and the communities we serve. As these graduates have so eloquently and passionately demonstrated, Jewish teaching is a source of inspiration to help all of us work towards manifesting our collective vision of a world redeemed. We are delighted to join hands with you and continue the journey.

As we read in Pirkei Avot: "Make for yourself a teacher, acquire for yourself a friend." At the RRA, we look forward to you joining us as teachers and becoming our friends.

Hazak hazak v'nitkhazek! May we go from strength to strength.

Rabbi Seth Goldstein, '03
President

Rabbi Elyse Wechterman, '00
Executive Director

Tekes Hatarat Hora'ah

טקס התרת הוראה

CONFERRING THE TITLE OF RABBI AND
THE DEGREE OF MASTER
OF ARTS IN HEBREW LETTERS

With this ceremony, we proclaim that these individuals are *mukhanim*—prepared and ready—to fulfill the sacred functions of a rabbi. May their work multiply and amplify Torah, *kedushah* (holiness) and *tzedek* (justice) in the world.

Kabbalat Hatarat Hora'ah

קבלת התרת הוראה

RABBIS' RESPONSE

For our closing ritual, we offer the Priestly Blessing, one of the oldest blessings in our tradition (Numbers 6:24-26, *Parashat Naso*). Our president, Rabbi Deborah Waxman, Ph.D., will lead the community in blessing us with these words in order to envelop us in the tradition in which we are now leaders.

May God bless and keep you.

Kein y'hi ratzon

יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ

כִּן יְהִי רָצוֹן

May God's face shine on you and be gracious to you.

Kein y'hi ratzon

יָאֵר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחַנֶּךָ

כִּן יְהִי רָצוֹן

May God's face lift up to you and give you peace.

Kein y'hi ratzon

יִשָּׂא ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשְׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם

כִּן יְהִי רָצוֹן

Life Stories and Wisdom Statements of the 2019 Graduating Class

Our students arrive with many gifts and life experiences. During their time at the College, they build on those gifts through study, reflection and practice. We gain strength and guidance from their life stories and the wisdom they offer.





Miriam Levia Grossman

Before rabbinical school, Miriam Levia Grossman worked as an educator, organizer and ritual leader. Miriam has worked for AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps, the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs and Mishkan Chicago. Miriam was also the inaugural Talmud fellow for SVARA: A Traditionally Radical Yeshiva. She studied liberation theology at the Chicago Theological Seminary and creative writing at Oberlin College.

During rabbinical school, Miriam organized on issues of indigenous sovereignty and Palestinian human rights. She worked with elders as a chaplain intern through the Jewish Theological Seminary and also became an alumna of the Wexner Graduate Fellowship.

For the last three years, Miriam has served Congregation Kolot Chayeinu as a student rabbi and rabbinic fellow, respectively. She is inspired by Kolot's vibrant and progressive vision of Jewish life in Brooklyn, N.Y., and beyond. Miriam has partnered with Kolotniks in creating meaningful life-cycle rituals, seeding new learning spaces, organizing in solidarity with Standing Rock and much more.

Miriam will be Kolot Chayeinu's next rabbi! She is thrilled to partner with Kolot's incredible staff and community, and to continue the legacy of her mentor, Rabbi Ellen Lippmann. She is honored to do this holy work, helping people find comfort and connection in times of grief, collective courage in times of fear and communal joy throughout it all. She believes that through collective action and ritual, we honor our ancestors and fight for a better world on behalf of the generations that are yet to come.

She thanks her incredible friends and loved ones who have sustained her on this journey. Miriam is endlessly grateful for the love and support of her partner, Jeremy, whose insight, compassion and laughter nourish her just as much as his cooking.

The power of worship is song. First we sing, then we understand ... Praise and song open our eyes to the grandeur of reality that transcends the self. Song restores the soul ...

— Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Pray for the dead, and fight like hell for the living.

— Mother Jones

וְהָיָה הַסֵּנֶה בְּעֵר בָּאֵשׁ וְהַסֵּנֶה אֵינּוֹן אֶכָּל:

... and there was the bush aflame, yet the bush was not consumed.

Exodus 3:2



Mackenzie Zev Reynolds

Originally from the Pacific Northwest, Mackenzie Zev Reynolds earned a bachelor's degree in theology and religious studies at Seattle University. There they found Mordecai Kaplan's writings, which led them to Reconstructionist Judaism. Mackenzie moved to New York City for a master's degree in philosophy of religion from Union Theological Seminary and put down roots in Brooklyn. Prior to RRC, they were a case manager in queer and trans, and HIV-impacted communities. Their rabbinic work has cohered in hospital chaplaincy, where attending to grief, trauma and loss allows them to do healing and transformative work.

Mackenzie is grateful for the training they received through RRC in the classroom and in the field; for the love and insight

of their *mussar va'ad*; the wisdom and encouragement of their mentors and teachers; and the support of their home congregation, Kolot Chayeinu. They've served in many internships and are grateful for them all, especially Mishkan Ha'Am; Jews for Racial and Economic Justice; Jewish Voice for Peace; Avodah; and clinical pastoral education at Albert Einstein Medical Center and the Prison/Re-Entry Services unit at the JTS Center for Pastoral Education. Mackenzie thanks each of these communities and organizations for the impact they have had in Mackenzie's formation as a rabbi, teacher, organizer and pastoral caregiver.

Many thanks to Mackenzie's beloveds, who have supported them in making it to this moment. Mackenzie thanks you for teaching them about love, dreaming big, making family and home, and for their trust.

'Cause love's such an old-fashioned word,
and love dares you to
care for the people on the
edge of the night, and love
dares you to change our way of
caring about ourselves.
This is our last dance
this is ourselves,
under pressure.

— Freddie Mercury

God said to Ezekiel: Say to these bones: "I am going to
open your graves and lift you out from them, My people
... I will put My breath into you and you will be enlivened."
Ezekiel 37:12, 14

Equanimity: Be like seaweed.

— Rabbi Alissa Wise



Rebecca Ilana Richman

Rebecca Ilana Richman was raised in Bethesda, Md., by bicycling, art-making, environment-protecting parents and with the help of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation. She is an alumna of Camp Havaya, where she was a camper, counselor and *rosh teva* (nature director). Rebecca graduated summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Brandeis University.

During rabbinical school, Rebecca worked as student rabbi for the Brandeis Reconstructionist Organization, completed a unit of clinical pastoral education at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, and served as rabbinic intern for Germantown Jewish Centre. Rebecca also completed training as a *soferet* (scribe), Hebrew calligrapher, ceramicist and *mikveh shomeret* (guide).

Rebecca is the founding director of Koleinu Beit Midrash and will begin serving as assistant rabbi and Beit Midrash director at Germantown Jewish Centre this summer. Rebecca lives in sunny West Philadelphia with her incredible partner, Josh, and their sweet baby son, Netta Nissim.

Rebecca is honored to have received the Ziegelman Merit Scholarship and to be a Wexner Graduate Fellow. She thanks her family, her West Philly *chevre* and her *chevrutah*, Nora, for sharing abundant love and support along this journey.

דאית היכלא דדמעה, דלית לה רשו למפתח אלא בדמעה
There is a palace of tears ... nobody can enter
except through crying.

Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 11, 26b

וכיון שבא לאויר העולם בא מלאך וסטרן על פיו ומשכחו
כל התורה כולה

And when it [the fetus] comes to the light of the world,
an angel comes and strikes it on the mouth and makes
it forget the whole Torah.

Talmud Bavli, Niddah 30b

תנו רבנן לעולם יהא אדם רך כקנה ואל יהא קשה כארז...
ולפיכך זכה קנה ליטול הימנה קולמוס לכתוב בו ספר תורה
תפילין ומזוזות

Our rabbis taught: A person should always be soft like
a reed and not hard like a cedar ... Therefore, the reed
merited that of it should be made a quill for the writing
of the Torah scroll, *tefillin* and *mezuzot*.

Talmud Bavli, Tannit 20a



Micah Geurin Weiss

Micah Geurin Weiss was born and raised in Atlanta, where he grew up Reconstructionist at Congregation Bet Haverim. Micah earned a bachelor's degree in religious studies and African-American studies from Wesleyan University, and was a fellow at Yeshivat Hadar for two years.

Micah was blessed to spend time serving a wide variety of communities during his time at RRC. He was the student rabbi at Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation, Drexel Hillel and Congregation Kol Ami. Micah did a unit of clinical pastoral education at Lankenau Medical Center; taught Torah school, adult education and founded a weekly Thursday-morning *minyan* at Kol Tzedek; and designed the social-justice *beit midrash* curriculum for Repair the World.

Micah is grateful for the generous scholarships he received during his time at RRC from Marjorie Ziegelman, z"l, and Aaron Ziegelman, general chair of the board of governors; and board of governors member William H. Fern, Ph.D., and John Bliss.

Micah lives in West Philadelphia with his best friend and *bashert*, Nomi Teutsch, and their (*b'ezrat hashem*, by the time of graduation) twin sons. Micah wakes up each day in awe of what an amazing person and partner Nomi is, and wishes to express endless gratitude for all her support on his path to become a rabbi and a father. Micah is thrilled to have recently stepped into a new professional role as the assistant director for thriving communities and *tikkun olam* specialist at Reconstructing Judaism. Micah and Nomi are also co-creating a home-based Jewish communal space with their friends and community, the West Philly Shtiebel.

Micah wishes to thank his friends, families and communities who have loved him to this moment of becoming a rabbi, and who inspired and sustained him to pursue this calling of service.

הַגִּיד לָךְ אָדָם, מִה טוֹב; וּמָה ה' דּוֹרֵשׁ מִמֶּךָ, כִּי אִם עֲשׂוֹת
מִשְׁפָּט וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד, וְהִצַּנֵּעַ לְכַת, עִם אֱלֹהֶיךָ.

Beloved human, you have been told what is good, and what the Holy Blessed One seeks from you—only doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8



Ari Juran Witkin

Originally from Minneapolis, Ari Juran Witkin is a graduate of Goucher College, where he earned a bachelor's degree with honors in both religious and peace studies. Following his undergraduate studies, Ari began his professional career in Baltimore as a faith-based community organizer, first at AmeriCorps*VISTA and subsequently as the program director for the Baltimore Interfaith Coalition.

Ari spent six months living and learning with the Abayudaya Jewish community in Uganda before returning to Baltimore and joining the staff of the Pearlstone Center. At Pearlstone, he spearheaded the establishment of the Sustainability Apprenticeship, a seven-month program that integrates farm work, Jewish education and leadership development.

As a student at RRC, Ari has been a Wexner Graduate Fellow and has had the privilege to teach and serve in a number of local and national settings, including the Repair the World Fellowship, Hillel at Drexel University, Kol Ami Congregation, the Jewish Farm School and Germantown Jewish Centre. He spent a year studying in Jerusalem, where he was a fellow with T'ruah; and completed a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education at Jefferson University and a master's degree in nonprofit leadership at the University of Pennsylvania.

In taking on the great privilege and responsibility of serving the Jewish people as a rabbi, Ari is overcome with gratitude for the many family, friends and communities who have encouraged him in this journey. He thanks his parents in particular, who first put the Torah in his hands, who are his greatest models of leadership and who have supported him every step along the way. And most especially, he thanks his

wife, Liz, who inspires him to dream big, but at the same time reminds him to stay grounded, and who dedicates her life to making the world a more just, healthy and delicious place.

Ari is excited to be joining the Jewish Federation of Metro Detroit as the director of leadership development.

טבא חדא פלפלתא חריפתא ממלי צנא דקררי
One spicy pepper is better than a basket full of squash.
Talmud Bavli, Yoma 85b

True prayer is liberation. It releases the imaginings and yearnings of the soul; it relieves, even if only for a moment, the fear of being alone.
— Rabbi David Wolpe

In Memoriam

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|-----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Lee Dushoff | Riva Krasnow | Manny Shore |
| Gilbert Morgan Geurin | Rabbi Sheryl Lewart | Dorothy Belle Smith Geurin |
| Yaakov Gladstone | Frances Litwer Krasnow | Emet Faye Tauber |
| Jackie Grossman | Harry F. Reynolds | Adele Weiss |
| Murray Grossman | Shirley A. Reynolds | Walter Weiss |
| Sam Kelman | Seymour Richman | Harold "Heelo" Witkin |
| Dr. Deborah Kligler Krasnow | Julius "Bud" Rivkin | |
| Marc Krasnow | Hilda Shore | |

BARUCH DAYAN HAEMET

Emet Faye Tauber

On Monday, March 25, 2019, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College lost 24-year-old student Emet Faye Tauber. May his memory be a blessing.

Emet, who was transgender and disabled, sought to shatter stereotypes and encourage people to see the image of God in all individuals. Due to his declining health stemming from a rare genetic condition, he was unable to complete the rabbinic program at RRC, though he made a deep impression on the community during his time here. Rabbi Linda Holtzman, Emet's academic advisor, said that he "taught people what it means to love Judaism, to incorporate it into your life, to live proudly as somebody who is queer and to face disability with courage."

Emet was a committed activist on issues ranging from disability rights to LGBTQ issues and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and served as a board member of the National Council on Independent

Living, which has created the Emet Tauber Youth Scholarship. Emet was also active in GLSEN, an LGBTQ advocacy organization, as well as IfNotNow. He was a member of Kol Tzedek in West Philadelphia.

Emet and his family made a gift of nearly \$70,000 to RRC to create a new need-based scholarship fund for rabbinical students, the Emet Faye Tauber, z"l, Memorial Scholarship Fund. Emet requested that each scholarship recipient deepen their knowledge of the community of people with disabilities through study or volunteer work. Rabbi Holtzman said that "this gift shows what was important in his life."



2019/5779

Class Gift

The graduating class offers new *shtenders* (study lecterns) to enhance the learning energy in the *beit midrash* for students for years to come.

אלו דברים שאין להם שעור:
הפאה, והבכורים, והראיון, וגמילות חסדים, ותלמוד תורה.

אלו דברים שאדם אוכל פרותיהן בעולם הזה והקרן קימת לו לעולם הבא: כבוד אב ואם, וגמילות חסדים, והבאת שלום בין אדם לחברו, ותלמוד תורה כנגד כלם.

These are the things that have no measure: *peah* (leaving the corners of a field for the poor when harvesting), *bikurim* (first-fruit offering), the *ra'ayon* offering, *g'milut hasadim* (acts of loving kindness) and Torah study.

A person enjoys the fruits of these things in this world while the principal remains for one in the World to Come: honoring one's parents, acts of kindness and bringing peace between people—and the study of Torah is equal to them all.

Mishnah Peah 1:1

The First 50 Years

Visit the multimedia showcase at www.rrc.edu/50th



Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan affixing a mezuzah to the doorpost of the first RRC building on Broad Street in Philadelphia during the dedication ceremony of the College, Oct. 13, 1968.

In the scope of Jewish history, a half-century is a blip. Yet viewed through our contemporary lens, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College's impact has been incalculable, eclipsing our size and resources, and reflecting an enduring and bold vision. We've created a center of Torah-learning like no other, enabling ever-increasing numbers of people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and interests to fully experience Judaism. RRC is a hub of innovation, an academic institution, a professional training ground, a think tank and more.

We're overjoyed to present a 50th-anniversary multimedia showcase as a way for you to experience (or relive) the RRC experiment as it has unfolded so far.

Please visit the showcase at www.rrc.edu/50th

The showcase has several parts:

- A four-part alumni audio series offers a harmony of voices of graduates from across the decades, sharing cherished memories and lessons learned.

- A slide show, a yearbook of sorts, exhibits photos of faculty and staff through different eras and both campuses.
- A historical timeline highlights major events that led to the College's founding and key developments since 1968.
- A reflective article explores the historical factors and processes that led to RRC's founding. (The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association commissioned this article and published a version of it in the summer 2018 edition of *Connection*, the association's newsletter.)

Over the next 50 years, through the College's expanding academic offerings, the rich programming, and resources of Reconstructing Judaism and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, coupled with nurturing communities and imaginative experiments, may we continue to produce inspiring leaders who empower people from all walks of life to live more meaningful lives.

