

## President's Report – Annual Meeting

Wow! Welcome to the Jewish Historical Society's Annual Meeting in March – oh, no! it's June! Our educational mission is to tell the story and increase awareness of Jewish lives & stories (oh, that's history!) in Fairfield County and beyond.

We have seen many ups and downs over the last year. Programs galore! Our last annual meeting featured Terri Lowenthal, explain issues around “The 2020 Census: We enjoyed Israeli music (Yoffi!) with Gil Harel and laughed at “the Mishegas of Yiddish theater with Jeff Kaplan (Oy veh!) The Annual Norma and Milton Mann lecture with Roya Hakakian – seemed so theoretical . Iranian/ Hamas murder squads? Really! Stay tuned for our reschedule Mann lecture celebrating 100 years of Women's suffrage.

Book talks flew off the page! Jonathan Fass explained the biography of the Talmud, Ruth Bader Ginsburg's double visited us to tell us her story (thanks, Judy Katz!), and we flew over the Ukraine, transformed into geese and swans with Rhonda Ginsberg.

Want to hear Yiddish?” Thanks to the two Judys – Judy Altman and Judy Liebeskind who are bringing our mam loschen (mother tongue) back to life. We even ate our way through Bubbie's recipes last summer. Delicious!

Over the past two years, we have received grants from all the Fairfield County Federations, allowing us to create tangible exhibits and fly off into the cloud! We have almost gone paperless – have you noticed our new and improved email newsletters – thanks, Sandy Golove and Sima Broza!

We also received our second grant from the city of Stamford to produce a documentary. You will get a small taste soon – it's a WOW!

Our greatest achievement was honoring Judy Altmann and Agnes Vertes at our Heritage Award Celebration in November. We are indeed fortunate to have these two amazing and important women in our midst. Thanks to Peter Lilienthal and Marcie Schoenfeld and entire Board for making this day a huge success!

People are showing up for programs, volunteers are showing up to offer help, and the books, papers, and photographs that are showing up at the Archives make us burst at the scenes.

And then, like Julius Caesar, we had the ides of March! The pandemic seemed to hit us hard and fast. Overnight, everything changed. We cried over the loss of

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family at Passover – however, many of us managed to drink four cups of wine anyway! We cried over loved ones and friends who went to the hospital but did not return. However, we celebrated with those who did make it through Covid 19. WE found new and sometimes weird for us ways to celebrate every life cycle event from welcoming newborns to saying farewell at funerals.

We cried over Pittsburgh in 2018, however we learned how to increase security and worked harder to stop the hate and fight anti-Semitism. We cry over Minneapolis, but we support the work of the Interfaith Council of Southwestern Connecticut and the City of Stamford with the actions of Mayor and the Police Chief.

The Jewish Historical Society has leaped into virtual reality – you are with us tonight. We plan to continue virtually as long as necessary and in person when it is safe to do so. What a great opportunity – we can bring speakers from all over the US and Israel for programs, performances, lectures, book talks, and more!

Behind the scenes, we are rebuilding our organizational structure on all levels. When faced with a pandemic or upheavals in society, we, as Jews, do what we have always done – we adapt and move forward! When we finish reading a book of the Torah, we say the traditional words –“Chazak, Chazak, v'nitzhazek!” "Be strong, be strong, and we will get stronger!" Even before we finish this chapter of our current history, JHSFC says for ourselves and for the Society –“Chazak, Chazak, v'nitzhazek!” "Be strong, be strong, and we will get stronger!"