

Presenting Eve Eichenholtz as Rabbi and Teacher in Israel

In a recent PBS television documentary examining the history of Jews in America, the narrator in his closing comments noted: "When Jews first came to America, they joined a synagogue because they were Jewish. Now they affiliate with a congregation in order to be Jewish."

Yet this has never been the case for Eve Eichenholtz, who this year served our congregation in Glen Cove, New York as an intern.

For Eve, Judaism is not something you go to, rather it is something "within you." She is the epitome of Jewish enthusiasm and optimism who believes that every activity, every relationship can be imbued with the Jewish values of lovingkindness, compassion, respect and righteousness.

In a world where many Jewish traditions are eroding or being compromised, Eve possesses the capacity to capture the values of Judaism and apply them to a rapidly changing world.

She believes in the Sabbath as a complete day of rest. She carries her combined love of Judaism and of life from the sanctuary of the synagogue, to her role as classroom teacher, through her participation as one of the "Rockin' Rabbis" on television's American Bible Challenge, to even her passion for sports, in particular the New York Islanders.

I have observed her in action this year. Her students adore her for the way she inspires. Our seasoned congregants respect her for the way she brings Torah to life. And I have admired her for her dedication to maintaining the essence of Judaism, rather than compromising it. When she teaches, her eyes light up, and she floats on air.

She carries within the combined knowledge and wisdom of every teacher she has met, from her parents, to the rabbis of two New York seminaries, to her synagogue and school teachers, to camp counselors and even her soccer coach.

From her childhood years, through school, camp, university and beyond, becoming a rabbi has been part of Eve's destiny. Even at an early age, friends and relatives predicted that her career path would lead her through the rabbinate.

Yet, Eve's head is not in the stars (*Lo Ba'Shamayim Hi*). She understands that rabbinical leadership involves a delicate balance between spiritual and physical spheres. She is knowledgeable in Jewish text and law, but is sensitive to the intangible personal journey within each of us.

She views the role of rabbi with great respect, aware of its significant humanitarian and political responsibility. She aspires to be a rabbi who wants to be part of people's lives; their struggles, their joys and their challenges. She cherishes the story of every human being she meets, and believes that the core values of Judaism can enhance that person's life.

I asked her the other day how she would like to be remembered at the close of what everyone predicts will be a long and successful career. It was a difficult question for a young person who recently turned twenty nine.

After some thought she replied, "I want to be remembered as someone who practiced what she preached, and inspired others to do the same."

For Rabbi Eve Eichenholtz, Judaism and life are intertwined.

It is my honor to introduce her at AJR's ordination ceremonies with a blessing that she will forever succeed in raising the sparks of light around her.

We have already observed so much from Eve Eichenholtz. The light of Judaism has always been and will continue to be an integral part of her life mission.

May that eternal light continue to shine even brighter into the future.



Eve Eichenholtz

ואפילו כלנו חכמים, כלנו נבונים, כלנו זקנים,
כלנו יודעים את התורה, מצוה עלינו לספר.

Even if all of us were sages, scholars, or elders; even if all of us knew the entirety of the Torah, it would still be our sacred obligation to tell the story.
Haggadah

In 10th grade, Eve went on the March of the Living, and upon the plane home from Israel, Rabbi Arnold Samlan, her group's advisor remarked that she was going to be a wonderful rabbi someday. Eve had heard this refrain before, but it never connected. Upon hearing her response, that she planned to go into politics, an arena in which she would hear people's stories, play the mental games and strategize, all while helping people make good decisions, he responded with the most influential thing anyone had said on the topic. He asked "What's the difference?" and Eve's future changed forever.

Born and raised on Long Island, Eve's introduction to formal Jewish education began at Shelter Rock Jewish Center when she attended their Sunday program for kindergarteners. Her informal education had begun even earlier with regular Friday night dinners at her grandparents. Throughout elementary school, Eve attended public school and continued her Jewish education first at Shelter Rock Jewish Center and then at Temple Beth Shalom in Roslyn. Most formative in development of her Jewish identity was her attendance at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires from age 9. On *Shavuot* when she was in fifth grade, looking for a more intense Jewish learning experience, Eve announced her intention to transfer to the Solomon Schechter School of Nassau County, much to the surprise of her parents. Successfully making the switch, Eve continued at Schechter through her high school graduation. Attending Camp Ramah every summer and with her participation in USY, Eve certainly looked like a poster child for Conservative Judaism.

Being a rabbi was a combination of all the different aspects of how she wanted to touch people's lives and have them touch her. The rabbinate would provide a place for teaching, study, public speaking, advocacy, counseling and affecting peoples' lives, all while in an immersive Jewish life. Her 11th grade math teacher once remarked, "She's going to go to List College and rabbinical school; what does she need calculus for?" The answer to this question would be her degree in Economics from Barnard College in the Double Degree program and subsequent classes in non-profit management.

Eve began rabbinical school at the Jewish Theological Seminary, but in keeping with her propensity for dual curricula, thriving on the balance and interplay between religious studies and secular subjects, she began a Masters in Public Administration at Baruch College. Throughout her rabbinical education Eve has served pulpits in Connecticut, Virginia, Jerusalem, Georgia, central New York and Long Island.

Upon her return from a year of study in Israel, JTS was no longer a good fit and Eve found a new rabbinical school home at AJR. AJR's pluralistic environment enabled her to become more articulate as to her vision of Judaism and the world at large. Her vision is that being Jewish is not a sometime thing. Being Jewish informs all parts of one's life; one only has to open one's heart and mind to finding the Jewish content in everyday actions and thought, and suddenly the whole world is seen through Jewish colored glasses.

Presenting Eliana Falk as Rabbi and Teacher in Israel

Believe it or not, there's a place in the world where AJR-trained clergy nearly constitute a majority. A gaggle of AJR *Iantzman* in central Connecticut have a major impact in synagogues, chaplaincy and Jewish communal organizations. And nobody better exemplifies this motley gang of *machers* than Eliana Falk, my friend and colleague whom I am so honored to present today as Rabbi Eliana Falk.

I first met Eliana when we both had other primary professions as communications specialists. She was the conduit for all of the community organizations at our local Federation in New Haven, always doing her best to show the community to itself, to make sure everybody was respected and included and represented in the newspaper and on the website. Pluralism was, and is, part of Eliana's world view.

Soon, Eliana began pursuing her dream to be a rabbi. Shortly after I started my cantorial training at AJR, Eliana joined me as a student, making that crazy 180-mile commute and balancing her rabbinic studies with her demanding work.

Over the years, Eliana would continue to impress all of those who knew her with her incredible energy, balancing first one job and her studies, then two jobs and her studies (adding Hebrew School director, and/or part-time spiritual leader). At the same time she was also raising her son and supporting her parents, becoming a caregiver when her father became ill and eventually passed away. Hers was a path she walked thoughtfully and at her own pace, keeping her commitments to all in her life.

Eliana has continued to grow in stature in central Connecticut as she has taken on the spiritual leadership of Congregation Beth El in Southbury and has grown both its numbers and vitality. Her new model of intergenerational Jewish learning, the basis of her rabbinical thesis, is taking root there right now.

Starting today, she can serve the Jewish people as a Rabbi – a dream that has come to fruition after a long, satisfying, challenging and often arduous journey. How fortunate for her congregation that she combines her past professional experience in communications with her passion for Judaism, the Jewish people and outreach in her rabbinic.

Through her warmth, her intelligence, and her boundless energy, Eliana will fully inhabit her hard-earned title of Rabbi, and we in the Central Connecticut AJR clergy clique will continue to admire and support her with pride and love. *Kol ha-kavod*, my friend!

Presented by Cantor Dorothy Goldberg, AJR '05



Eliana Falk

ה' עזי ומעוזי...
ברוך הגבר אשר יבטח בה' והיה ה' מבטחו...
והיה כעץ שתול על מים ועל יובל ישלה שרשיו...
*Adonai is my strength and my stronghold...
Blessed is the one whose trust is in Adonai...
[S]he is like a tree planted by waters, sending forth its roots by a stream...*
Jeremiah 16:19...17:7-8

Many years ago, at a time Eliana felt a longing, an ever-increasing awareness that 'something' was missing in her life. She wandered into a bookstore and felt herself drawn to pull a Bible off the shelf. She opened it and read the words of Jeremiah, "Adonai is my strength and my stronghold, my refuge in times of trouble." She purchased the book, copied several verses from Jeremiah and carried them with her. Several years later, after she and her husband, Alan, married, they joined a *shul* and, little by little, the words of the Shabbat prayers revealed their meaning, and the warmth of the community filled her heart. She felt she had come home.

Later, she attended a morning *minyan* at synagogue next to their younger son's Schechter school and soon learned to lead the service. When she decided to pursue her adult Bat Mitzvah, she opened the *Tanakh* at random, and there read from the verses of Jeremiah that had captured her heart so many years before.

In time, she asked Rabbi Richard Eisenberg, the *rav* of that synagogue, to teach her about *mitzvot*. After a year of weekly lessons, she felt called to a rabbinic path. Though she felt she was walking off the edge of a cliff, she knew she could not turn back. When she found AJR, she realized that while she was, indeed, stepping off a cliff, she was stepping onto solid ground. She found not only the learning for which she craved, but also a loving community in which colleagues understand one another, where there is always a kind hand, an encouraging word, an inspiration.

Her long path to the rabbinate has wound through joys, sorrows, growth and challenges enough to cultivate her patience and determination. She seeks to transmit Judaism's wisdom and treasures to those who have forgotten or never knew them, has a deep respect for Jewish tradition, innovation, and the unity to be gained through pluralism, and is passionate about sustaining strong Jewish communal life by fanning the God-spark of each individual soul.

Eliana feels blessed to have served congregations who have afforded her many opportunities to learn and grow. She also feels very honored to be a Center for Jewish Christian Relations Fellow, and a Student Fellow in the CLAL Rabbi's Without Borders program where she further developed her skills and confidence to break through traditional borders to bring Jewish wisdom to an aching world. She is also glad to have acquired a great deal of experience in Jewish communal life, serving as a communications professional for the ADL and in the Federation world.

Eliana is thankful for the glistening joys, troubling obstacles, demanding teachers, inspiring role models and supportive colleagues who have been blessings as she has learned to be true to Jewish tradition and to trust the Holy One of Blessing to lead her. She is profoundly grateful to her husband, Alan, and their son, Adam, who have been wholly selfless in their support, patience and love, and to their daughter, Zoe, and their son, Marc, who have been equally loving and supportive (though they didn't have to live through it on a daily basis!), to her mother and sister, and to her friends who have by now alerted Ripley's that she is finally being ordained. She dedicates this day to her father, Anthony, of blessed memory, whose wisdom continues to guide her. They have all encouraged her to take the path less travelled – and that has made all the difference.

Presenting Jill Hackell as Rabbi and Teacher in Israel

It is not terribly difficult to identify a person who has experienced success in his or her chosen profession. One even might know some who have experienced success in more than one endeavor. And then there is that rare individual, who not only has been successful at virtually any endeavor in which she has become engaged, but whose efforts have made a significant and lasting impact on the lives of others. Jill Hackell is one of those rare individuals.

Jill grew up at a time when young women were just beginning to pursue professional opportunities that few women previously had been able to achieve. Moreover, as a young Jewish woman, the educational, religious and professional opportunities available to men were not as yet open to her. So, Jill attended Tufts University and the Johns Hopkins University Medical School and following graduation and residency, became a board certified pediatrician.

After the birth of her two children, Matthew and Rebecca, Jill opted for the more stable hours of one engaged in clinical vaccine research. Jill is the author of numerous scientific papers and book chapters and her name is on several patents, but those are merely statistics. Jill's principal area of research was childhood vaccines and at a retirement party hosted by her boss just prior to her entering AJR, he told the gathering that through her work, Jill "had saved more children's lives than had her entire medical school class."

Jill raised her children in a Jewish home and in a synagogue where the rabbi, Rabbi Jeff Hoffman, would become one of her teachers. Jill was interested in enhancing her own Jewish education and Rabbi Hoffman encouraged her to seek graduate level work. It was at that synagogue where I first met Jill, who had heard that I was attending rabbinical school at AJR and sought me out to ask about it. After several conversations, I brought Jill to an Open House and she decided to enroll.

Jill is a very modest individual and makes light of her talents and accomplishments. I knew from the beginning that she would make a good rabbi; she told me, "You can't know that". When she submitted her final paper in Bioethics class, her professor, Rabbi Leonard Sharzer, MD, suggested she expand it and present it at a meeting of the Coalition for Jewish Bioethics. That work has since found its way into a Conservative responsum written by Rabbi Sharzer. Jill didn't think she would be a good congregational rabbi; yet, she has formed close and lasting relationships with the congregation she has served as a student for the past three years and looks forward to her weekends and holidays as their rabbi.

Jill has touched innumerable lives in her career to date and she will continue to affect many more lives as she moves on to this next phase of her life. I am honored to present Jill G. Hackell as *rabbah u'morah lik'hal yisrael* – Rabbi and Teacher for the people Israel.

Presented by Rabbi Michael G. Kohn, AJR '09



Jill Hackell

זה היום עשה ה' נגילה ונשמחה בו.
This is the day the Lord has made; let us exult and rejoice in it.
Psalm 118:24

Jill grew up in Brooklyn. Although her family wasn't very observant, they were very Jewish, and Judaism has been part and parcel of Jill's identity for as long as she can remember. The family's synagogue did not have a Bat Mitzvah class for girls, so Jill attended another synagogue a few blocks away. There, Rabbi Feinstein (z"l) and his wife (z"l) taught her the Hebrew school basics, how to chant *haftarah* for her Friday evening celebration for becoming Bat Mitzvah, and they warmly welcomed her into their synagogue family.

Fast forward to college. Tufts University was just down the block from the Somerville *havurah*, and Rabbi Art Green and colleagues brought classes on Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah to Tufts; innovation and informality to Rosh Hashanah services. Jill's interest in Judaism was rekindled and she decorated her dorm room with quotes from Abraham Heschel – like "the wonder of facts is that there are facts at all" – an excellent quote for a science major with an interest in molecular biology.

Jill remained in science, attending medical school at Johns Hopkins and became a pediatrician. After a few years in practice, she spent the major part of her career doing clinical research in the pharmaceutical industry, working on new vaccines for children including vaccines against whooping cough, meningitis and pneumonia. During this time, living in Rockland County, New York, she spent lots of time at Congregation Sons of Israel in Nyack, a warm supportive community that quickly became her home away from home. She became a regular at the Sunday morning *minyan*, and took any adult education courses that were available. Here, another rabbi family pair was influential. Jeff Hoffman was her rabbi for 20 years (before AJR!), and his wife Laurie was the first woman Jill had ever heard read Torah. Jeff was always suggesting new learning experiences, Laurie was inspiring by example, and before long, Jill was reading Torah and *haftarah*, leading prayers at Sunday *minyan*, and growing in Jewish knowledge. She wanted more, but could not carve out a sufficient block of time for more intense learning and the study of Hebrew that was a necessary pre-requisite.

In 2007, after 22 years, Jill retired from the pharmaceutical industry and began her studies at AJR. Here she discovered the joys of pluralistic Judaism in a caring, spiritual community that makes beautiful music together. During her time at AJR, she has had the privilege of serving first as a rabbinic intern at CSI in Nyack, and then at another very special CSI – Congregation Sons of Israel in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania – where she has been the rabbi for the last three years. She also taught Jewish bioethics at the JCC-Y in Rockland County, New York.

Jill is very grateful to all those who have supported her throughout her journey. To her mother, who is always there for her, no matter what turns her path takes, to her father (z"l) whose delicious sense of humor and love of people have so inspired her. To her all-grown-up children and their spouses – Matt and Karen, Becca and Josh, and to her granddaughter, Juniper, who will call her Savta just as soon as she gets old enough to say it. To her sister, Cara, and to all of her friends who have put up with her crazy schedule over these last 6-plus years. To Michael Kohn, who introduced her to AJR, and is always ready with a book to lend, a listening ear, and endless encouragement. To Shimmy, for everything. To both of her CSI communities, who have supported her and taught her so much. To all the people who have so enriched her life – who have made her feel so very blessed – Jill says, *Todah rabbah!*

Presenting Haniel Levenson as Rabbi and Teacher in Israel

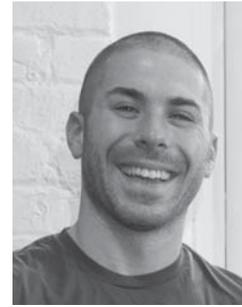
Initially I learned about Haniel through snippets of conversation with his father, dentist Jeff, while he worked on my teeth. It was this liberal rabbi's dream come true to hear about Haniel's academic career at the Abraham Joshua Heschel School followed by Schechter High School, especially since I prayed for the same track for my own son. How pleased I was for him and his family when he went to Bard and then earned a Master's degree!

At some point during those years, Haniel and I would spot each other in a crowd, and, within moments, we'd delve into intense and meaningful conversation - as if no one else were around us. This might take place at a celebratory kiddush at Town and Village Synagogue or during *s'machot*, holidays or *shiva* at his parents' home. At these special, although somewhat infrequent, occasions, I always eagerly anticipated seeing Haniel and would be disappointed when he was not present; never mind the 30 odd years difference in our ages. In fact, I enjoyed talking to him more than to many of the adults. And as he has matured, the pleasure in our sharing has multiplied geometrically.

Who would have thought that this felicity would result in my having the *kavod* of presenting him as a rabbi? What a gift he has given me, and I, basking in his accomplishment, in turn, offer him as a gift to you here this evening and to the larger world. For there is no doubt in the hearts and minds of all who know Haniel that he will make his mark on the Jewish and larger community.

I say this because since his youth, Haniel, as well as being an expert gymnast and yoga practitioner, has been a mountain climber and discoverer of precious finds, intellectually and spiritually. Additionally, in his short span on earth, he has pursued and mastered a variety of vocations, each one of them enormously challenging, requiring great dedication as well as discipline. As soon as this contemplative and enthusiastic seeker comprehends one area he scrambles to the next, his path wending its way up Mt. Sinai. My hope for Haniel is that the *mitzvot* consistently and continually remain before him, as frontlets between his eyes. If this is true, he will be able explore the world ceaselessly, as is his nature, yet always be at home. May you be blessed as you go on your way... and you will be a blessing.

Presented by Rabbi Judith B. Edelstein, AJR '97



Haniel Levenson

לית אתר פנוי מינה

There is no void devoid of Divinity Tikkunei Zohar (57)

Born in the throes of the Lebanon war at Rambam Hospital in Haifa, Israel, Haniel Levenson tumbled out into the world interrupting his father's residency in maxillofacial surgery, and his mother's viewing of reruns of Dallas. Mom, dad and nine-month-old Haniel returned to New York City where he grew up. By two, Haniel was flipping off any surface he could find, by five he was enrolled in gymnastics classes to harness his energy and mold his talent. Haniel first attended The Abraham Joshua Heschel School, and then Solomon Schechter High School of Manhattan, attending classes from 8 am to 4 pm and then training as a competitive gymnast from 5 pm to 9 pm. A temporary hiatus from this schedule in 1995 found Haniel studying in Israel during his sophomore year of high school, allowing his spirit to flourish and fostering a deep connection to the land. Celebrating Shavuot in Jerusalem that semester, praying in an egalitarian prayer group in the Plaza of the Western Wall, forever changed Haniel's path, instilling in him the crucial desire to promote a pluralistic Jewish practice, which unbeknownst to him, would lead him to the rabbinate.

Haniel graduated a year early from high school and began his Hebrew and Judaic studies at New York University. That year, he was the 2000 New York State champion on the rings, and qualified to compete in the Junior Olympic National Gymnastics competition. Haniel parlayed his penchant for being upside down into being a mascot for NYU, as well as an acrobat in various operas at the Metropolitan Opera.

Haniel graduated from NYU and went on to study at the Bard Center for Environmental Policy, earning his Masters of Science in 2005. His thesis, entitled *Garden The Sky*, was an exploration in developing Green Roof Healing Gardens in hospitals in an urban context. An injury while in graduate school introduced him to the therapeutic benefits of yoga, which led him to become a yoga teacher in 2008.

While writing his thesis in graduate school Haniel began working at the Continuum Center for Health and Healing as a Research Associate in Integrative Medicine, and studying at the Academy for Jewish Religion, where in the Summer of 2004 he took his first class in Isaiah, with his father, taught by Rabbi Zlotowitz. It is here at the Academy that Haniel found his spiritual center, exploring his connection to God and sharing it with others. AJR became his axis, around which he could draw in all his talents and interests in the infinite dance of spiritual play.

Interfaith dialogue, ritual architecture, sacred arts, mysticism, environmentalism, dreamwork, yoga and play are paths that intersect on Haniel's journey as a Rabbi. Yes, play! As Haniel explores the sacred dimension that permeates all of existence, an open heart and a playful spirit are the pillars through which he will share and develop a strong, flexible, and balanced connection to God, the Jewish people, and the community of the world.

Presenting Julius Rabinowitz as Rabbi and Teacher in Israel

Two and a half years ago I noticed a visitor in our sanctuary, one who was clearly comfortable with the service. He introduced himself as Julius Rabinowitz, a student at the Academy for Jewish Religion. Having been on the faculty of AJR a few years before, I was thrilled to have a student visiting and “checking us (and little did I know, me) out”. After attending our Scholar in Residence Shabbat that featured one of Julius’s teachers, the great scholar of Jewish Mysticism and translator of the Zohar, Daniel Matt, Julius asked if I would mind if he became my intern. Little did I realize how fortunate I and my community would be when I accepted.

Julius and I had actually met years earlier, on another “holy ground”, as I stood on third base at what may very well be the last time I “legged out” a triple. He was impressed that the rabbi of the synagogue played on the softball team, and could actually hit the ball occasionally! More than that, I think Julius recognized a bit of himself, and perhaps even then he may have subconsciously thought, “if a rabbi can play baseball, then maybe I can actually become a rabbi after all”! Of course it was years later that Julius finally put that thought into action, and today it becomes a reality.

Julius is a model for the kind of student that AJR trains and enables to pursue a second career as a rabbi. Julius had been an involved and committed Jew all his life, even when that commitment may have seemed to him to recede a bit into the background. As his career as a lawyer progressed, Julius became active in synagogue life. His commitment included both ritual and administrative aspects, becoming a *בעל קורא* (Torah reader) while being a member and eventual vice-president at the Greenburgh Hebrew Center. Later he would become a teacher and participant at Woodlands Community Temple. I have no doubt that it is the combination of all of these experiences, lay leader and Torah reader, teacher and congregant, that will enable Julius to become a successful rabbi on the deepest level.

As his mentor, I have seen Julius grow over these past two years from a committed and involved Jew, into a person ready for the rabbinate. Our conversations about Judaism in theory and practice, about *הלכה* (Jewish Law), and what it means to be a rabbi today have not only been instructive for him, they have been incredibly meaningful to me. His love and knowledge of Rabbinic texts, especially Talmud, will undoubtedly serve him well in the coming years. Recently Julius mentioned to me that he thought he had finally crossed a boundary and now truly understands what it means to be a rabbi. I think that understanding began a long time ago, and was nurtured through those many years that have lead up to exactly this moment.

The Rabbis taught:

בן בג בג אומר הפך בה והפך בה דכלא בה ובה תחזי וסיב ובלה בה
ומנה לא תזוע שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה

Ben Bag-Bag taught: Study it and review it; you will find everything in it. Scrutinize it, grow old and gray in it, do not depart from it. There is no better portion in life than this.
(Avot 5:26)

Julius, we rejoice with Ellen in this moment. Undoubtedly your parents would be very proud. Indeed, there IS no better portion in life than this! מזל טוב!

Presented by Rabbi Steve Kane



Julius Rabinowitz

שמאי אומר, עשה תורתך קבע. אמור מעט ועשה הרבה,
והוי מקבל את כל האדם בסבר פנים יפות.

Shammai says: Make your Torah study a fixed practice, say little and do much; and receive everyone with a cheerful face.

Mishnah Avot 1:15

Growing up in Paterson, New Jersey, to warm and loving Lazar and Cesia Rabinowitz, Holocaust Survivor-Heroes from Lodz, Poland, Julius was blessed with the joys of a Jewish home, and the Jewish world through the lens of the *yeshivah*. One day, Julius asked, “Dad, why did you send me to *yeshivah*?” His prescient answer was, “So you can feel comfortable davenning in any synagogue in the world.” Lazar was right. Thanks to him

and to AJR, he can.

There were the real-life experiences taught by Julius’s mother, Cesia – the consummate full-time working mother/stay-at-home Mom. With older brother Phil’s guidance to an American life, a strong foundation was in place.

Julius obtained a B.A. in history from Rutgers, a J.D. degree from Southwestern Law School, and an LL.M. from NYU. He practiced intellectual property law for more than 35 years and was involved with precedent-setting cases. One teaching by his longtime law firm mentor, Perla Kuhn, stands out: “When writing about an achievement, use the first person plural, ‘we,’ and not the first person singular, ‘I.’”

Concurrently with this success in secular life, Julius entered his own spiritual wilderness. Then, Julius met Ellen who re-introduced Judaism into his life (and a whole lot more!), re-igniting his Jewish spark. She has helped keep that spark alive, with her creativity, imagination, and excitement, and of course, love and warmth.

And there is Julius’s stepson Alex, who calls him Dad. Along with the family’s German Shepherd dogs, Alex has helped Julius retain his youthful spirit – whether it’s biking down Mt. Snow or exploring new “mountains” in China. Daughter-in-law Yan Zhang, from Beijing, brings a beautiful new set of cultural experiences. Together with the support from his extended families in the Bronx, New Jersey, Long Island, and Israel; lifelong friends, the adopted ‘sister’ and ‘brother’ from California, and their families – their everlasting love and friendship are constant reminders of the goodness within each person’s soul.

Then there was that life-changing moment when a highly respected friend asked, “Have you ever thought of becoming a Rabbi?” Although Julius’s answer was “no,” he immediately resolved to turn it to “yes.”

After these past seven years at AJR, “no” has become a very profound “Yes!”

Honor is to be extended to all the teachers, including the entire AJR faculty and special ones along the way, including Zohar scholar Danny Matt, and Rabbi Steven Kane, Julius’s mentor these past two years. And the congregants of Greenburgh Hebrew Center and Woodlands Community Temple provided a deep understanding of synagogue life; and with their longtime rabbis, Barry Kenter and William Dreskin, respectively, taught Julius that it is the teaching, not the teacher, that is paramount.

And finally, to the congregants of Julius’s current pulpit: Beth Jacob Synagogue, Norwich, Connecticut. They have afforded Julius the opportunity to adhere to Shammai’s words above.

Julius is daily strengthened by the words pinned in the center of his bulletin board: “I will support Julius in his rabbinical endeavors, and experience the growth and spirituality it engenders in me, also.” Written by Ellen, the words also approximate Julius’s relationship with his God.

Thank you, all.