



# Confirmation

*12 May*

**2023 - 5783**

*21 Iyar*



# TYLIE FRIEDLAND



Tylie attended B'nai Shalom Day School from pre-school to middle school and is graduating from Grimsley High School. She has spent her summers at Camp Judaea for the last 10 years and visited Israel this past summer to connect with Israeli teenagers. She participated in Keshet at Temple Emanuel where she was also a Madricha. She will be attending Duke University in the fall where she plans to continue her participation in the Jewish community through the Jewish Life at Duke.



# טבלה אטל



Judaism has always meant community and connection to me. I started at B'nai Shalom Day School when I was around two years old. As I grew up there, I believed everyone in the world was Jewish and that going to a Jewish Day School was common. In our small community, I became best friends with my classmates and stayed in touch with them, even after most moved away. My teachers were my friends, motivators, and confidants. In bigger schools, getting to know your teachers can be more difficult. Then, I attended a Charter middle school where I was the only Jewish person in my entire grade and it was an interesting awakening. I even had my dad bring in dreidels so everyone could spin them when trying to explain Hanukkah. For high school, I went to Grimsley, a much bigger public high school. I learned that even if I was one of very few Jewish people at my schools, I would always be connected to my Jewish roots. In fact, funny enough, I'm back at B'nai sixteen years later, helping with the two years olds. Sometimes, life comes full circle.

Now, it wasn't only B'nai that set the stage for me. I went to Camp Judaea for eight summers and looked forward each year to returning to my second home. I especially loved Havdalah and *Rikkud*, dancing, to close out each week. We would all wear neon clothing and dance and dance on the basketball court. Camp was our safe place to have fun. The energy was through the roof and we would all ask for one more song at the end of the night. I still speak to my bunkmates and laugh about our camp memories. I was lucky enough to spend last summer in Israel with Camp Judaea. Everything came together for me there, spending time on a kibbutz with other Jewish teenagers was a community experience like no other.

The Temple's community also impacted me greatly. During my Bat Mitzvah, Rabbi Andy helped me prepare, and when the big day came I felt proud to share all of my knowledge. Being a Madricha at Temple gave me the chance to experience all of the activities I once participated in going to Sunday school from a different perspective. I was grateful for my responsibility of passing on my love for Judaism.

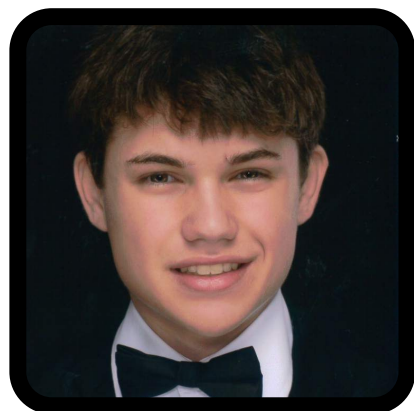
When it comes to Judaism, community comes in different sizes. One example of this is Shabbat dinner. Shabbat dinner can be intimate, a way to connect with your family after a busy week, or it can be a bigger event to meet new people and forge friendships. I think of the Shabbat dinners at home and candle lighting with my mom, and having a chance to review our week. Shabbat dinners at camp were different – surrounded by friends, campers, and counselors in a festive environment. Then there were Shabbat dinners with Maskit, one of our Israeli *Shinshinyot* who stayed with us this fall, sharing a piece of Israel with us. There were Shabbat dinners on the road, including with my brother at Chapel Hill's Hillel and my great grandmother, Mathilda, living in Cleveland, Ohio, who just turned 109 and knows more about Jewish tradition than I ever will.

Moving onto a new chapter of life will have its challenges, but it is nice to know that I am a part of a several thousand year-old tradition shared with people all over the world. As I head to college, I hope to carry my Jewish community with me and build connections. I now look forward to new Shabbat dinners where I will meet new people.





# COLE HARPER



Cole Harper has been attending Temple Emanuel since Kindergarten and has been a Madrich at Keshet throughout high school. He's recently been on March of the Living and will be going to Appalachian State University in the fall.







# יהודה



I've always considered myself Jewish, however, I've never considered myself connected with the religion. I don't know many prayers, I've only been to a few services, and I've never had my Bar Mitzvah. I've always felt like I was on the outside. Which made writing a speech about confirming my commitment to Judaism, a faith I felt like I knew nothing about, beyond difficult.

However, a few weeks ago, I had an incredible opportunity to go on a trip called the March of the Living. For those who don't know what it is, it's a two-week trip, one week in Poland, and one week in Israel, honoring the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the 75th anniversary of the State of Israel. Our time in Poland was informative; we walked through concentration camps and learned about the horrific violence against the Jewish people throughout European history. Although somber, the Jewish community in Poland was still strong, and the synagogues were beautiful.

Israel was much more upbeat. We traveled everywhere from Haifa, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem; we sang prayers, danced, and explored. I tucked notes into the Kotel including those collected during this year's Jewish Festival, danced with Hasidic Jews, and got an Aliyah at an Israeli Reform Synagogue, which was especially meaningful to me. Before this trip, I was used to keeping my Jewish Identity on the down low. But as I walked around Israel, I saw people from all walks of life embracing that Identity that I had kept played down, for so long. I felt a sense of belonging, a connection to this land and to this community.

Nonetheless, the experience that stood out to me the most wasn't visiting the Kotel or walking around Jerusalem; it was after we had hiked Masada. We were sitting down while our guide was talking to us, and Rabbi Andy said "Hey Cole, get up and move." I turned and there was an elderly woman exhausted standing near us. I gave up my seat. This leads me to my point: I believe Judaism is more than just about the tradition you follow, but showing compassion and going out of your way to help those around you, and that is absolutely a tradition I proudly embrace.





# SOPHIA KAPLAN



Sophia has been involved in Temple Emanuel since kindergarten and has participated in many trips, including L'Taken Social Justice Seminars, while working as a Madricha. She is graduating from Greensboro College Middle College and heading off to NC State in the fall as a first-year engineering major.





# צפורה



Shabbat Shalom! I am so excited that you are all here today to celebrate the fantastic confirmation class of 2023. My Jewish upbringing has been heavily influenced by my time at Temple Emanuel. So I am delighted to share my experience with you today.

My time here began in an era before Phineas. It was filled with all the school assemblies and dancing to Hinei Ma Tov with my family. I read books like Rabbi Rocketpower and participated in class plays like Adam and Eve. I hope we can all recall the felt horse costume that my Oma made me because it is so funny to look back on.

In later elementary school, I volunteered with my class at the food pantry and began to learn Hebrew. I thought learning Hebrew was the coolest thing ever. In 5th grade, I also learned to read Hebrew prayers. Our teacher spent much time teaching us to read and interpret the T'Filah. I have connected with these prayers ever since; they hold a special place in my heart. Then, Phineas was born. The rabbis came to celebrate his coming into this world. AND THEN, as Phineas would say, I went into middle school. Middle School is characterized by 2 main things: Rosh Chodesh and trips. In 6th grade, Dr. Dresser began to implement Rosh Chodesh when we could celebrate the beauty in Jewish femininity. The activity that sticks out to me the most was drawing our profiles and writing our traits. I wrote that I was a bibliophile, a word I had just learned, creative and hardworking. All of those traits still feel true today, and I am grateful that I have documentation of how I viewed myself in 6th grade. It was a reflective experience and helped me connect with my Jewish identity in a way I had never before.

At the beginning of 7th grade, I was Bat Mitzvahed. My portion was Jacob wrestling with the angel. I spent an incredible amount of time and energy preparing for that moment. I am still so proud of myself. Also, while preparing for my Bat Mitzvah, I volunteered at Dancing Above the Barre. I worked with Ms. Emily to teach Abe's Hebrew class.

In 7th grade and 8th grade, we went on a river rafting trip, to Charlottesville, VA, and to Washington, DC. The river rafting trip was so much fun and a fantastic opportunity to connect with the class above us and with each other. Later, we went to Charlottesville, VA, about a year after the violent alt-right protest. This was an opportunity to learn about antisemitism. It was a wake-up call to realize how severe it is in America. Also, in 8th grade, we went to DC with Hank. I cannot put into words how impactful hearing his story was and being in the museum with him. I wish my brothers would have had that experience, and I am incredibly grateful that I did.

Before 9th grade, I participated in 6 Points Sports Academy. It was a really eye-opening experience, and I learned a lot about the different types of Judaism. I made lifelong friends there, who I am still in contact with today, and I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to go.

9th grade was my first year as a Madricha. I worked with the 4th grade and had so much fun getting to know the kids and my fellow Madrichim. I also had the opportunity to go to L'Taken for the first time. I lobbied with our group for mental health funding in schools. It was precious to have this experience while taking civics. This was pivotal in my Jewish identity, becoming my motive for activism.

My sophomore year was COVID, and I remember how devastating it was to not see all my friends and have high holiday services online. So I was very excited to return to a sense of normal in junior year. I worked with the 2nd grade both those years and loved relearning the Torah's stories and helping the kids with the crafts.

Senior year has been a whirlwind. It started off with the bang that was the high holidays. I was allowed to speak during Congregants' Hour and share my excitement for all the goodness that has come and will continue this year. Phin was consecrated, and I was lucky enough to help his class prepare. It meant everything to be there for him. Abe was Bar Mitzvahed a few months later, and I cried through the whole thing and am so proud of him. I also got to participate in L'Taken again and advocate for a 15-dollar minimum wage. We are just a few days away from graduation. I am thrilled about all the new memories that will help create my Jewish identity.

In college, I hope to get established with the NC State Hillel and use my Jewish values as continued motivation for service to the community.

Thank you, Temple Emanuel, for helping to make me the person I am today. My Jewish values formed within this building are fundamental to who I am today and who I will be tomorrow. This space has brought my family together for so many joyous occasions. I cannot wait to return and continue making these lifelong memories here. Being here has allowed me to learn about myself and my identity. I am forever grateful to everyone who helped make this possible.





# AIDEN KRANZ



Aiden will be graduating from Weaver Academy in June. Next year, he will be majoring in computer science at NC State University. He has been to Israel three times, most recently last summer with Alexander Muss High School in Israel. Aiden has been a Madrich at Keshar throughout his time in high school.





# דוד חביב



Shabbat Shalom,

As someone who isn't very spiritual I believe the essence of Judaism is not just a set of beliefs or rituals, but a community of people coming together to share in our common values and heritage. Today, I want to share with you my personal journey with Judaism and how it has shaped my identity and values.

As a child, being Jewish meant going to Sunday school and learning about holidays and doing mitzvot. It was a time when I learned about the values that were important to my family and my community. I remember the warm glow of the menorah at Hanukkah, the smell of fresh latkes sizzling on the stove, and the singing of traditional holiday songs. I also remember doing tzedakah with my family and learning about the importance of helping others in need.

As a thirteen-year-old, being Jewish meant studying for my bar mitzvah and learning how to lead services. This was a time when I was able to take ownership of my Jewish identity and become a part of the community in a more meaningful way. I was able to learn about the history and traditions of Judaism and how they are still relevant today.

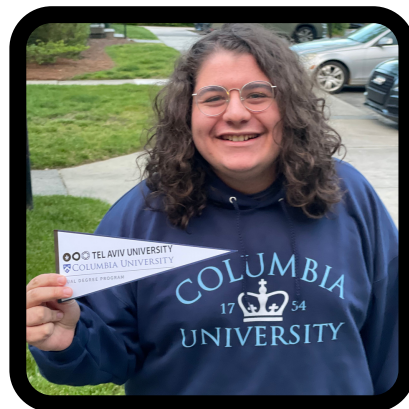
As a young adult, being Jewish means COMMUNITY. Today I am speaking alongside my Sunday school class community, whom I've known since pre-k. My Sunday school class has not only provided me with a sense of belonging and connection, but also opportunities to develop leadership skills and give back to the community, ultimately helping me grow as a person. Now that I am an adult, I am giving back to my community by being a Madrich at Temple and a counselor this summer at URJ Six Points Sci-Tech academy. I am able to share my knowledge of Judaism with the next generation and help them find THEIR place within the community.

I have had the privilege of visiting Israel three times, and each time I have learned something new and gained a deeper understanding of the country's history and culture. My most recent trip to Israel was through Alexander Muss High School in Israel, where I spent six weeks studying the Holocaust and the history and politics of Israel and the Middle East at the college level. In all my trips to Israel, I've learned that my Jewish community is much, much larger than the small reform temple that I thought it was. Israel was very welcoming and that taught me that my community extends across the world.

In conclusion, Judaism means "community". It is a source of support and belonging that has shaped my identity and values. I am proud to be a part of the Jewish community and proud to continue learning, growing, and teaching the next generation. Thank you.



# GAVIN RUBIN



Gavin Rubin has been a member of Temple Emanuel since moving to Greensboro from Plainview, NY. He has been a Madrich at Keshet where he participated in L'taken Seminars. He went to Israel on BBYO Passport in his rising junior summer. He is going to the Columbia University International Dual Degree Program with Tel Aviv University and will be double majoring in Philosophy and Sustainable Development.





# גדעון ישראל



Judaism has been an interesting presence in my life. I was born in Great Neck, NY and moved soon after to a town called Plainview. In Plainview, I attended the local JCC's Pre-K and Kindergarten programs and essentially only had Jewish friends until I got to elementary school. Even then, I lived in a very Jewish neighborhood. Most kids were my friends from the JCC or other Jewish communities around town, and I had one Christian friend. The first time I went over to his house I found it very odd that his family only had one set of cutlery and plates. What did they eat their milk dishes off of? That day I experienced the culture shock that I imagine many Christians felt when they met me years later in Greensboro.

My mother's job took us down here. The move was pitched to me as "getting out of the cold" following the Nor'easter after Hurricane Sandy in 2012, but I was getting out of something a little less visible to me: the Jewish bubble of Long Island. At Claxton elementary I was one of very few Jewish students, and I was often the first Jew that a lot of people met. I'll admit that it felt cool to be Jewish - my once ubiquitous culture now a rarity - but I didn't really know that much about what I actually meant when I called myself Jewish. At my new Hebrew school at Temple I met new Jewish friends, but these people were very unlike the Jews in Plainview. Most didn't keep kosher (as my family soon wouldn't). Some had only one Jewish parent, something I struggled to understand as most Jewish families in Plainview had two Jewish parents. Why were these Jews different from all other Jews? I didn't know what to make of my new community.

These questions led me to the prompt we got for these speeches "What does being Jewish mean to me?" My experience at Temple Emanuel consisted more of volunteering in the Religious School and singing in the Temple Choir than actual services. I felt that if I wasn't in Temple regularly then I wasn't really very Jewish, especially after transitioning from Conservative to Reform and giving up *kashrut* and learning to speak Hebrew. Just as I felt that I should become more involved in our religious traditions, the opportunity to attend in person was taken from me by COVID. I could no longer sing in a choir that wasn't meeting and online Religious School did not feel as meaningful as in person. With my two connections to the community temporarily severed, I felt incredibly lost. Until one night when my father asked me to go down the street to make a Minyan. A family friend had just lost his son and they needed a 9th and 10th Jew to properly say the Mourners' Kaddish. It didn't matter to them that I didn't feel very Jewish, that I was reform. I was Jewish enough to fulfill the mitzvah, and I continued attending almost every night for several months. I realized that there were far more ways to connect with my Jewish Identity than I had previously thought. I wanted to learn even more.

This realization motivated me to travel to Israel in the summer of my sophomore year, to this day one of the most valuable experiences I've ever had. I'm still friends with my bus mates, and every one of them gave me a new perspective on Judaism. Especially those who challenged and still challenge long standing beliefs and power structures within the Jewish community. I'll always remember the experience of helping "smuggle" my friend across the gender line at the Kotel, how she explained that it was her version of talmudic thought and questioning to defy the inequality at our holiest site. She inspired me to go on L'taken and speak truth to power from a Jewish perspective, one of my favorite Jewish experiences to date.

This process of learning from those around me was my primary motivation in my choice to attend the dual degree program between Columbia University and Tel Aviv University. No doubt I will meet more people whose Judaism differs than mine in one of our country's densest Jewish populations, the Upper West Side of Manhattan. I've found that Judaism gives me an endless string of questions, all with more answers than I could ever hope to count. But in every Jew, especially those around me today, I find just one more possible answer.



# JACLYN RUSSO



Jaclyn attends Western Guilford High School and will be going to college at Tufts University next year. She enjoys swimming and spending time with her friends. She also went on the March of the Living a few weeks ago and has been a Madricha at Keshet throughout high school.





# פנינה



When Rabbi Libby joined our community one of the changes she instituted was renaming Sunday School to Keshet which means connection. As someone who doesn't like change I did not like this at first, why would we call Sunday School "connection"?

After visiting Poland and Israel I finally understand this change.

While there, I prayed with people from Israel, Poland, Virginia, Chicago, San Diego, and many other places. While we all had different tunes and rhythms of saying our prayers, we all knew the same words. It was beautiful to see how others connected with their faith and to blend my traditions with theirs.

While on the March of the Living I felt most connected to my faith while dancing in a restored Temple in Tykocin and seeing an Israeli boy become Bar Mitzvah at Kol HaNeshama Temple in Jerusalem. At the Temple in Tykocin I felt like I was connecting with my Polish ancestors. We were dancing and having fun feeling pure Jewish joy. The energy in the room was electric and we were linked arm in arm with complete strangers celebrating our Jewish pride. At the Bar Mitzvah in Israel I felt honored to be able to witness and be a part of this young boy's Bar Mitzvah. Being called up for an aliyah was such an amazing thing to be a part of and it was beautiful to join the Jewish communities from the Mid Atlantic Region and a Reform community in Jerusalem.

But Israel and Poland aren't the first times connection has been a huge part of my relationship with my faith. While most people become Bar or Bat Mitzvah at thirteen I waited till I felt most connected to my faith to become one myself. When I was ten years old and the conversation of a Bat Mitzvah started up, I felt conflicted; this was not something I understood or wanted at the time. Thankfully, my parents were very understanding and did not push me into a huge event I wasn't prepared or ready for. At that point I felt very disconnected from my Judaism. Over the next few years I got more and more involved in the community and was welcomed back with open arms. The connection I felt to the people and the religion when I returned was very strong. So, in my own time I was able to decide when it felt right for me to take the next step in my Jewish journey.

Since I became Bat Mitzvah just years ago at the age of sixteen, I have felt even more connected to my community. Before, when I sat in services I felt very alienated; it seemed everyone around me knew the prayers but me. But because I became Bat Mitzvah I learned the prayers and learned how to read Hebrew. This is a huge reason I now feel so comfortable in the community. I would like to give a huge thank you to everyone who helped me along this journey and allowed me to come to it in my own time and pace.



# T'filat HaDerech

## Upon Setting Forth On A Journey

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתּוֹלִיכֵנוּ  
לְשָׁלוֹם וְתַעֲזָרֵנוּ לְהִגִּיעַ לְמַחֲזֵז חֲפֻצָּנוּ לְחַיִּים וּלְשִׂמְחָה וּלְשָׁלוֹם.  
וְשִׁמּוֹר צִאתָנוּ וּבֹאֵנוּ וְתַצִּילֵנוּ מִכָּל צָרָה וְתִשְׁלַח בְּרָכָה בְּכָל  
מַעֲשֵׂי יָדֵינוּ, וּמַעֲשֵׂינוּ יַכְבְּדוּ אֶת שִׁמְךָ. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, שׁוֹמֵר עַמּוֹ  
יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַד

*Y'hi ratzon milfanecha Adonai Eloheinu  
v'Elohei avoteinu v'imoteinu,  
shetolicheinu l'shalom  
v'taazreinu l'hagia limchoz cheftzeinu  
l'chayim ul'simchah ul'shalom.  
Ushmor tzeiteinu uvo-einu  
v'tatzileinu mikol tzarah  
v'tishlach b'rachah b'chol maasei yadeinu,  
umaaseinu y'chabdu et sh'mecha.  
Baruch atah, Adonai, shomeir Yisrael laad.*

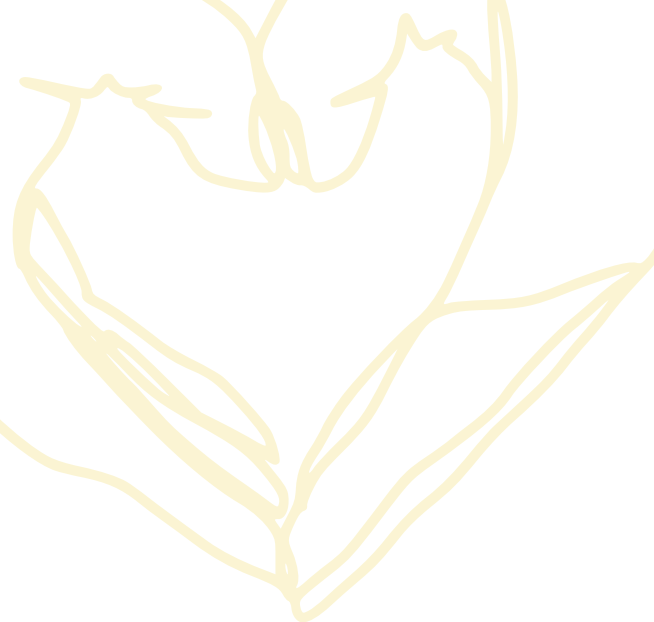
May it be Your will, our God and God of our ancestors,  
that You lead us in peace and help us reach our destination  
safely, joyfully and peacefully.

May You protect us on our leaving and on our return,  
and rescue us from any harm,  
and may You bless the work of our hands,  
and may our deeds merit honor for You.  
Praise to You, Adonai, Protector of Israel.

# WE WILL MISS YOU!

All of us here at Temple Emanuel are so proud of our graduating High School Seniors! No matter where you're heading, please keep in touch - let us know your address so we can send you gifts from time to time! We cannot wait to see all the amazing things you will all do on the next steps of your various journeys.

**From Rabbi Andy, Rabbi Libby, and the whole Temple Emanuel team, MAZAL TOV!**





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