

# Temple Emanuel Confirmation Service 2009



**Elle Basile  
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Ricki Draper  
Kate Feller  
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*Front Cover Artwork by Hannah Silverstein*

## “What Being Jewish Means to Me”

Elle Basile

When asked to write this essay for Confirmation my mind went directly to an event that occurred this past summer. It was the last Shabbat dinner we would have at the Alexander Muss High School in Israel. We lit candles, ate good food, and sang songs. As we were celebrating I couldn't help but think that my ancestors were doing this exact same thing hundreds of years before me. My classmates and I were carrying out traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation, and we were following in their footsteps as another link in the chain. At this dinner I realized that to me, being Jewish means being part of a community and passing traditions down from one generation to the next.

As a Jew I know that wherever I go, there will be at least one person who somehow knows my cousin, that one friend from camp I used to hang out with or either of my Rabbis. Because we are all part of such a tight knit community, it is easy to turn meeting new people into a game of six degrees of separation, or what others like to call: Jewish geography. This can turn out to be a good thing because before even getting to know someone, there is already so much to talk about because that person went to Israel with a girl who goes to temple with another girl who went to the same Jewish camp as you in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

Aside from being a part of the Jewish congregation, I also feel like I am part of a Jewish community when I am with my family every Sunday for Sunday dinner. Although we may not be saying Jewish prayers or singing Jewish songs, we are still in each other's company eating and having good conversation. To me, it doesn't get more Jewish than being surrounded by a bunch of people who are screaming at each other while trying to simultaneously eat all of the food on their plate.

As I get older, I realize the importance of keeping the Jewish faith in my family. If we all decided that it wasn't important to teach our children the traditions of our faith, then our religion would slowly but surely have less and less people and a smaller place in society. I hope to pass down not only written traditions from the Torah, but also the ones that cannot be learned by reading a text alone. As Jews we are taught to be good people and give back to those in need. We should never try to push our beliefs on others who may not be as receptive as we want them to be. We should also treat others with the kindness and respect that we would want to receive in return. By teaching these things to our children, we not only make them better people, but we also make them better Jews. In conclusion, I chose to end my speech with a quote from Elie Weisel who once said: “The mission of the Jewish people has never been to make the world more Jewish, but to make it more human.” ~ Thank you.

*Elle Basile is the daughter of Vito and Carol Basile. Elle moved from Cleveland, Ohio to Greensboro in the fifth grade. She currently attends Greensboro Day School and is a member of the National Honor Society. Last summer Elle attended the Alexander Muss High School in Israel. Additionally she has worked as a madrichah at Temple Emanuel's Religious School. She looks forward to attending Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina this fall.*

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## **“What Being Jewish Means to Me”**

Jonathan Davis

I had a choice between my dad’s religion and my mom’s religion. My dad and step-dad are devout Catholics. My mom, on the other hand, was raised Jewish in Greensboro. Because I am so close to my mom and her family, I chose to be Jewish.

Since that time, I have done a lot with my religion. Starting with Sunday school, my involvement also included being active in Temple Emanuel’s NFTY group, and participating in one of the most important experiences offered by Temple - the March of the Living.

Going to Poland and Israel was a good way to sum up a wonderful childhood of being Jewish. Being in Poland helped me personalize the experience of our people who endured the horrors of the Holocaust. The March had its difficult moments, but it made me realize how important it is to be Jewish. One of the most memorable moments in Israel was going to the *Kotel* where some friends and I had a conversation with a Chassidic Jew. He said that even though different Jewish movements hold different beliefs, we all are one soul. He made an analogy, comparing the Jewish people to a power strip. We all come from the same power source even though we run along different cords. That is to say, all Jews draw inspiration from God, no matter the differences in our beliefs and practices.

Most importantly, over the years I have come to understand that to me being Jewish was never really a choice. It has always felt right. I felt that it was my responsibility to be Jewish. I have seen the best of all worlds that are part of my family and am proud to say I am Jewish. Without the love and support of my mom and my grandparents I would have never been able to get so involved. I love them so much and I’d like to say ‘thank you’ to them for all that they have given me.

*Jonathan Davis is the son of Lisa Davis Grieco and the brother of Hannah and Joseph Grieco. He attended Guilford Primary from K-2 and Guilford Middle Elementary from grades 3-5. During middle school, Jonathan went to New Garden Friends, was home schooled, and attended Guilford Middle. He has been at Western Guilford High School since his freshman year and has been a Temple Emanuel madrich since 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Jonathan has been involved in NFTY on the local and regional levels, went to New Orleans this past fall, and participated in the March of the Living this spring.*



## **“What Being Jewish Means to Me”**

Jessica Donnelly

As I try to explain what being Jewish means to me, I just can’t think of how to pour my heart out, because with all my heart I am Jewish. So I’m going to try to fearlessly stand here today and explain what being Jewish means to me. I take a look around and notice that I’m in the most beautiful temple. And I’ve grown up with the two best rabbis anyone could ask for and they lead this congregation better than any one could. They teach us to teach, “from generation to generation”. And as I participated in the madrichim program for two years I think I learned more from my students than they did from me. When kids look up to you it makes you feel good about yourself, that you are making an impact on the lives of others, that you are making a difference for the Jewish community.

Being Jewish is about giving back to the community. And I believe we have one of the strongest Jewish communities with one of the biggest commitments to reaching out. Personally helping out at our community’s soup kitchen, Greensboro Urban Ministry, by volunteering to give someone in need a nice

warm meal, makes my heart warm. And it's always nice to do this with friends and classmates from here.

Being Jewish is about celebrating; celebrating life, and living it to the fullest with every ounce of energy we have and, on occasion, pulling out a bottle of Manischewitz with the family. Being Jewish is also about family and love. And as I look at my parents, I think how lucky I am; I was born to a Jewish mother, who at this moment is probably trying not to cry. My parents stand side by side; they've taught me a lot in life that I know will take me far. And I know they would do anything for me.

There are many things in my life that I have accomplished which make me proud. One is when I became Bat Mitzvah about five years ago. That same year I traveled with the Temple to the US Holocaust Museum which was quite an experience. As Jewish people, we know how important it is to travel to Israel to connect personally to the Promised Land. Sometimes I feel at a loss because I have yet to experience this. But I know that I will go there sometime soon. As I take this next step in my life, I don't know what I've got in store, but I move forth with everything I've got. I will always carry my Judaism with me as I find hope and comfort in it. Because being Jewish to me is about being me and believing in myself and God.

*Jessica Donnelly is the daughter of Kimberly and James Donnelly. She is originally from St. Petersburg, Florida and attended Religious School at Temple Emanuel for ten years. Jessica is graduating from Grimsley High School, where she is DECA president and a cricket ambassador. She has been involved with the Girl Scouts for ten years and is still an active Girl Scout. Jessica will be attending Guilford Technical Community College Jamestown Campus on full scholarship in the fall.*



## **“What Being Jewish Means to Me”**

Ricki Draper

In the summer before my sophomore year, I learned that I love to live outdoors. I love every aspect of life without walls: the constant need to detail and plan the most mundane of actions, surviving with hardly anything. I love to wake up every morning by the sun, put on work boots, and hike to work. I love the moment right after lunch when, resting my head on a backpack and closing my eyes, I can appreciate the sunlight on my dirt strewn face.

I spent my summers volunteering with the Student Conservation Association in such varied places as New Hampshire and Alaska. I set out on my first crew with five other Jewish teenagers to work hard, experience living outdoors and to celebrate Shabbat together in the woods.

While davening outdoors next to a beautiful lake and making homemade challot on the fire were some of the most enriching experiences I had on the trip, the hiking became a more spiritual outlet. Our bodies were tired from the five days of hard labor before Shabbat, but on Sundays we always decided to spend our days off hiking the trails of New Hampshire.

The most valuable lesson I learned was how to hike up a mountain without looking at the trail. After practicing this skill, hiking became a whole new experience for me.

One hike in New Hampshire was especially challenging. We carried our lunch with us as we climbed the rough terrain. I had difficulty enjoying the hike because I was constantly out of breath and was not able

to see beyond the forest of trees that blocked our view. As we finally reached the summit, the boy in front of me sat down in the middle of the mountain. Tears ran down his face and his breathing was haggard.

The boy was overcome with sentiment for the stunning scene atop the summit. He marveled at God's creation and was not able to comprehend the magnitude of God's design. It is amazing that nature is unprecedented, unrivaled. No human construction could ever be compared to the untouched force of God's creation. In any setting there is beauty that surrounds us; you simply have to move your eyes from the ground to the sky.

Spirituality is easily found in the wind on the trees, the flowers budding forth, and the warm water lapping at the shore. Judaism is found through incredible conversations, watching a sunset with a friend and helping a person in need. Life is made of the awe we experience for nature, the gift of humankind, and the responsibility to repair the world.

***Ricki Draper** is the daughter of David and Rhonda Draper and the sister of Shaina and Zachary. She will be graduating from the American Hebrew Academy. Next year Ricki will be volunteering with the Student Conservation Association and Americorps. She has been active in the Jewish community since she was in preschool, including being a part of the first congregational trip to Israel, the New Orleans Relief effort, and L'Taken.*



## **“What Being Jewish Means to Me”**

Kate Feller

For me, being Jewish is one of the things that define me as a person, along with community, family and music, and for me all those things have always been intertwined with Judaism.

Judaism introduced me to music from hearing beautiful songs at services over at Greene Street when I was little. In fact, one of the things I remember is straining my eyes and neck around the tall person in front of me so that I could find the source of the music during services. It was Judaism that introduced me to music and I am forever grateful because it has become a passion of mine that I will continue practicing along with Judaism.

I have especially enjoyed my time at Temple Emanuel this past year as a madricha on Sundays and working with the children in music class. I feel that one of the best ways to tell a story, explain a concept, express a feeling, or pray is through music. Being able to help pass music onto children this past year has been an amazing experience. I cannot thank Rabbi Guttman and Rabbi Koren enough for getting me involved.

I want to also thank my family for their continual support. For me being Jewish has defined me as a person through family, music, God and this community. As a final note, I am so happy that I live in Greensboro and have had the opportunity to live in this amazing Jewish community that we have here.

***Kate Feller** is the daughter of Howard and Anna Feller. She was born and raised in Greensboro and has been a part of Temple Emanuel's congregation her whole life along with her two brothers, Marc and Michael Feller. She joined BBYO her junior year and has become more active at Temple Emanuel as a*

*madricha at Temple Emanuel Religious School music class in high school. She is attending Appalachian University in the fall and will join Hillel. The following summer she plans on visiting Israel on a Birthright trip.*



## **“What Being Jewish Means to Me”**

Lindsey Gedaly

I never thought anything of my Judaism when I was growing up in Massachusetts. My classes always had a handful of Jewish students, and my teachers always found ways to make us feel included, whether it was by playing dreidle in class or reading stories about Hanukkah. Being Jewish wasn't something that I thought about every day, and I never really thought of it as something that defined me. That was, until I moved to North Carolina. I was now in a school with twice the amount of students, and only two Jews. For the first time in my life, being Jewish made me different.

Throughout the next six months, I was constantly asked questions and was forced to defend my religion. It wasn't until then that I realized how little I knew about Judaism. Why did we have Bar and Bat Mitzvahs? Why didn't we believe in Jesus? And why did I hold so steadfast to never wanting to convert, if I didn't even know what was so special about my own religion? I realized that I was never going to find these answers at my public school, and when I heard about the American Hebrew Academy, I jumped at the chance to attend.

At AHA, I took classes in Bible and Comparative Religions, but it was Jewish History that showed me what was so unique about Judaism. Yes, we have ethics and dietary laws, and we have Shabbat, but there was something that really stood out to me. It wasn't something religious; it was cultural. I realized that we, as Jews, are incredibly strong. There are so many times that our religion has come close to being destroyed, and yet we always prevail. In 132 BCE, we dug the Bar Kochba tunnels in order to defeat the Romans. We were outnumbered, but we used our knowledge and wit to force them to fight us one-on-one, leveling the playing field. We weren't lucky; we were skilled and worked together as a people. As I learned this, I couldn't help but to feel honored to be a Jew, to be a part of a strong people that worked to do the right thing.

Even now we still have that connection as a people. In the streets of Jerusalem during Yom Ha Atzma'ut, I couldn't help but feel the joy as everyone sang and danced in celebration. We were all there together, celebrating the creation of a Jewish State, thanks to the strength and determination of the Haluzim, or the Jewish Pioneers. They understood that Judaism was not just a religion, but a way of life. They wanted to be free, to be able to express themselves, and to celebrate together. Thanks to them, there will always be a place for Jews to return to.

To me, Judaism is a group of people who are there to celebrate together and to support each other. Whether we are praying in a minyan or running an 8k to raise money for homelessness, we are working together to make the world a better place for everyone to live in. And that is why I believe that Judaism is more than just a religion, but a culture as well.

***Lindsey Gedaly*** is the daughter of Rochelle and Jerry Gedaly and the sister of Melissa. She moved to Greensboro in the eighth grade. She has attended the American Hebrew Academy for the past four years and graduated this month. Lindsey attended the Alexander Muss High School in Israel during her junior

year, and is a *madricha* for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Temple. In October of 2008, Lindsey traveled to New Orleans with a group from Temple to do volunteer work. She plans to attend Clark University next fall.



## “What Being Jewish Means to Me”

Stephen Gerber

Hello, my name is Stephen Gerber, and I am very proud to be Jewish. People have different ideas of what being Jewish means to them. In my case it has several meanings.

One of the meanings of being Jewish is that in our history we have been victims of many horrible events, such as when we were all slaves in Egypt. During that time Moses was sent by God to lead us out of Egypt and away from Egyptian tyranny. Another example is the Holocaust. Germans scapegoated Jews for many of their problems and, to make matters worse, the Germans were slaughtering us as if we were less than human. Because of those events, I try to remember how we Jews were victims in history and I do not want to be a victim. This is important because it teaches me to remember that the Jewish community has been in need of help many times. Today there are many people around the world, Jews and non-Jews, who are victims of such activities and I think it is important for us to help.

Another fact which is important to me, is we are all descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob’s name was changed to Israel after he wrestles with an angel from God. What does the word Israel mean? This word means “He who wrestled with God.” To me Israel can also mean that we can question the Bible, Talmud and God to help us better understand God’s intentions. This has taught me to look beyond the surface to better understand the deeper implications of a circumstance or an issue.

The Torah shows different examples of one of the most important lessons, “do unto others as you have them do unto you” and *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world). I find this meaningful because this talks about equal treatment for others and doing good in the world. If the Torah gives many examples like this, then they must be important lessons.

The very fact that my grandfather is a Rabbi is also very important to me. Many people have looked up to him, and I sometimes go to him for advice. He helps me get a greater understanding of the meanings of the stories in the Torah and how they can apply to my life. I also attended many of my grandfather’s services before he retired and he always tried his best to help teach people to have a peaceful life. It is hard to imagine that when he was young he was actually a professional boxer. Among the important things my grandfather taught me is to always keep my mind open to understand other cultures.

There is a lot of meaning of being Jewish to me, such as being a part of a fun group like BBYO, or some of our holidays like Hanukah or Passover. I also enjoy knowing that we value volunteering to help out people like at the Urban Ministry.

As I said before, I am proud to be a Jew and what we stand for.

**Stephen Gerber** is the son of Wayne and Debra Gerber and is an older brother of Nathan Gerber. He participated in the Winter Walk for Aids. He has also been a *madrich* in Temple Emanuel’s Religious School for four years.



## “What Being Jewish Means to Me”

Allison Isaacson

I have grown up as a child of this Temple. As a younger member of this congregation, I spent countless Sundays learning about the history of my people, and customs the Jewish people still practice today. I also learned that it is impossible to leave this temple without learning the hand motions to Haveinu Shalom Alechem. During middle school, my Tuesdays and Wednesdays were spent with Karen Dresser at Hebrew school, where she refused to let us make fools of ourselves on the day when we would finally become Jewish adults. After three years of Hebrew school, Andy Brod tutored me for months on my Torah portion, Ki Tavo, which I still remember the majority of thanks to his persistence.

After middle school, I started a whole new chapter in my Jewish life. NFTY, or the North American Federation of Temple Youth, is a youth group for high-school students that is made up of nineteen regions spread across the United States and Canada. Greensboro belongs in a region called NFTY-MAR, or the Mid-Atlantic region. At the beginning of my freshman year, Adam Wassell and my father teamed up to trick me into going to my first NFTY event. I have been going back faithfully ever since. Through NFTY I have made some of my closest friends.

This youth-led program has given me several opportunities to develop my leadership skills. This past December I served as a Winter Kallah Co-chair with my good friend Chelsea Hill from Virginia Beach. We worked tirelessly to put together interesting programs, fun and meaningful services, and workshops that allowed participants to make edible dreidels. Although sleep was the last priority during those four days, the memories are endless and the experience was unforgettable. As of April 27th, I am a NFTY graduate, but I will never forget the incredible memories I have created with everybody involved.

Each step in my Jewish journey has provided a sense of comfort for me. I am comfortable at Sunday school teaching first graders the knowledge I have acquired over the years. I was comfortable at Hebrew school with all of my peers as we got ready to take the big step into our Jewish adulthood. As surprising as it is, I was comfortable at my Bat Mitzvah as I stood in front of the congregation and became a Jewish woman. NFTY has provided a place of comfort where I can relax with my friends while we participate in Jewish learning. As I stand here at my confirmation, I am comfortable with my Jewish identity as I begin the next chapter in my life as a college student at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. As a Jew, I am at ease, I am content and I owe that to the congregation at Temple Emanuel.

*Allison Isaacson is the daughter of Marc Isaacson and Jill Wilson Isaacson and the sister of Sarah Isaacson. Allie was born in Greensboro, had her baby naming service at Temple Emanuel, and has attended Temple Emanuel ever since. She is graduating from Page High School and will attend UNC-Chapel Hill this fall. Allie has been a madricha and has been active with NFTY throughout her high school years, serving as its President during this past year. After attending summer camps at Coleman and Kutz, she served as Programming Chair for the NFTY-MAR Winter Kallah.*



## “What Being Jewish Means to Me”

Rebecca Kabatchnick

Whenever I can, I love to glance to the east and witness the birth of light, day after day, as red hues are scattered throughout the sky. However, the sun and sky in Israel were not the same as those that I view

from my backyard in Greensboro. There seemed to be more stars, and the sunrise and sunset appeared more remarkable and breathtaking than I had ever seen before.

I remember when, following our third eight-hour hike on Yam Le Yam, we arrived at our final campsite, where thorns covered every inch of earth. However, after spreading a large, thick blanket next to the campfire, we could not feel the thorns, and we rested on our backs to gaze up at the myriad of stars in the otherwise pitch-black sky. Never before had I seen as many stars as I did that night.

That night I realized that being Jewish was not just learning Hebrew or receiving a Jewish education, it means scintillating as one of those stars. It means following a path laid down so many years ago for us and letting it guide us to something meaningful—something great. It would be impossible to define Judaism's role in my life, but I'm certain of its role in shaping who I am today and the choices I make. Judaism is not merely a religion to me, it's a family and nation I'm blessed to have an opportunity to be a part of. Judaism is a community that I will never let go of and that will always be there for me when I need it.

There is no doubt that I will continue to incessantly wrestle with Judaism and question it. As I met more and more Jews from different denominations and backgrounds throughout my four years at the American Hebrew Academy and in Israel for two and a half months, I realized just how vast the spectrum of Jews really is and how many aspects of Judaism existed that I had never been exposed to before. But even as I stepped into the Great Synagogue in Jerusalem with its grand stained glass windows and large community on Yom Kippur, I could not help but feel that my "Jewish home" was truly here in Greensboro at Temple with the music and friends I hold dear.

I've realized throughout these past few years of my life that the ones who make it through hard times never become paralyzed in uncertainty or vulnerability, instead they find something to hold onto and never let go—they never let it die. Though I cannot define Judaism or know exactly how it has changed my life, it is something I will forever hold on to.

*Rebecca Kabatchnick is the daughter of Craig and Ruth Kabatchnick and the sister of Ryan Kabatchnick. She has attended the American Hebrew Academy for high school and studied at the Alexander Muss High School in Israel for ten weeks during her senior year. Rebecca has been a guest soloist and madricha at Temple Emanuel and attended the 2008 L'Taken seminar. She has been very involved in the musicals and singing groups at the American Hebrew Academy. During the summer before her senior year, she was an Editorial Intern at the Greensboro News & Record and wrote numerous articles, including a column regarding Israel. Rebecca will be attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the fall and plans to pursue a degree in Nursing.*



## **“What Being Jewish Means to Me”**

Maxwell Miller

This whole thesis thing really isn't me. If you ask my mother, she'll tell you that I'd much rather fix something to eat than do my homework (which was due the day before.) So, for my speech, I decided to write a recipe for my Jewish soul. It's called, "What Being Jewish Means to Me and Matzah Balls"

You see, my Jewishness, which I will call it because I make up words, is very much like a matzah ball's existence. I started out just like every other matzah ball, with love. My parents somehow found the ingredients that one day became me. A little bit of warmth, a pinch of some fat, add some height, a big grin, and, most importantly, the matzah meal or, my special brand of Jewishness. This matzah meal was slowly crafted with my parents' undying love and commitment to the Jewish faith. They gave my matzah meal a special place to start becoming a matzah ball: Temple Emanuel and the existing Jewish community of Greensboro. Alongside my peers, we have learned so much from the community I do not think it is possible to thank everybody enough.

With all matzah balls, there comes a time when one must sculpt the raw mixture into big balls. My mother molded me pretty pretty good ya. Dad helped too! But what's a matzah ball without its companion; its dish mate, its brother in a bowl, my brother. My brother is not the most devout sibling ever, but his advice has helped me with so much in life. I greatly appreciate my family and I feel that they are a big part of my recipe.

Taking a step back from the lighter side of my recipe, I would like to tell everybody about the stove where my matzah ball was cooked: The March of the Living. The March was a wonderful experience and I cannot say enough about the new people I met, places I visited, and feelings I felt whilst on the trip of a lifetime. Going to Poland and places more specific such as Auschwitz, Plasov, Birkenau, Majdanek and Treblinka, let me know that you can't overcook a matzah ball. Jews, just like matzah balls, need tenderness and care, nutrition and nurture to become the greatest they can be. Seeing the pain and anguish written on the walls and walkways of all these places let me know that Jews have sustained life beyond the spite of Nazism and Anti-Semitism so we can live and thrive. The world's largest population of Jewish people is in the United States, but the true homeland is Israel. Israel became a beacon of hope for so many Jews after WWII and it continues to be an advocate for peace.

The recipe I just told you isn't written in a cookbook or the Talmud; rather it is a syndicate of items that have made my life. To me, being Jewish is more than managing money or eating great food. It's a culmination of family, friends, community, experience and expression.

Love your family, listen to your friends, embrace your experiences and portray your expressions. So, I know this Matzah ball is looking pretty tasty... so come try me and take a bite out of Jewish life.

*Maxwell Miller is the son of Lanny and Renee Miller and brother of Ben Miller. A native of Greensboro, Max has been a member of Temple Emanuel all of his life. He attended Grimsley High School for four years, where he played basketball as a Grimsley Whirlie. He has also been actively involved in BBYO during his high school career and held local board positions his sophomore and junior year. Max also attended the March of the Living in 2009.*



## “What Being Jewish Means to Me”

Adam Shore

Being Jewish to me explains my belief in God. It is a name given to a group of people who were created by God in His image and chosen by God to be His people, of which I am proud and honored to be part of. As a Jew, we have our own traditions, customs, and language, which all serve as symbols for us to identify ourselves with. To me, being Jewish means that I am part of something much bigger and greater than myself.

Growing up at B'nai Shalom, going to Sunday school here at Temple Emanuel, and attending Camp Judaea in the summers, I want Judaism to be a part of my life. I have continued my studies at the American Hebrew Academy and have even just become a part of the recent graduating class. Having Judaism as a part of my daily life is something that I cherish greatly and have promised myself to uphold. Through all my travels to Israel, especially in the three months I spent attending the Alexander Muss High School in Israel, I have experienced experiences that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. The feeling of being in our homeland and the unity I felt with people who I didn't even know, is something words cannot describe. Spending Shabbas at the Western Wall or with a host family in Carmel Yosef, are all cherished memories that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

When I attend UNCG in the fall, being Jewish will undoubtedly come up and be something I will not hide. Being Jewish is so deeply integrated into who I am and into who I will be years down the road, that no matter where I am, I will always carry Jewish values like tikkun olam, remembering, commemorating, learning from our past, and celebrating life, wherever I am.

I would like to thank all of those who have helped me reach the point at which I am now, giving me the tools to apply all that I have learned to my adult life down the road. I would like to especially thank both Rabbi Fred Guttman and Rabbi Andy Koren who have helped me grow judiciously both here at the Temple as well as in life.

*Adam Shore is the son of Brian and Carol Shore. Adam attended B'nai Shalom since Kindergarten and went to High School at the American Hebrew Academy. His junior year at the Academy, Adam and his classmates spent three months in Israel learning and experiencing the culture. He is a dedicated soccer player, playing for fifteen years, and is even active at the Hebrew Academy as a soccer, basketball, golf, and track player. Adam will be attending UNC Greensboro in the fall and will be playing on their division one soccer team.*



## **“What Being Jewish Means to Me”**

Hannah Silverstein

When I look back on the past 18 years of my life, and pin point some of the most formidable and changing experiences that have made me who I am today, I find that a common thread in my life has been my involvement with different types of communities. Ever since I can remember, I have been a part of this Greensboro Jewish community. Superficially that may not seem so special. But on the contrary, it is the people in this community that create such a special place to have grown up in.

By being involved in religious school since I was four years old, or by going to the Urban Ministry with the brotherhood from second grade until the end of middle school, I have always felt that not only has my involvement with such a warm and nurturing group of people helped create who I am today, but the community's involvement with my life has made an even greater impact on me. This incredible sense of community was very contagious, and by the time I was in eighth grade, I wanted more.

So when I was 14 I decided that I would join the community of the American Hebrew Academy. AHA is not just a school; it is a microcosm of the Jewish world. Each person has his or her own story about their communities which they came from, whether it was orthodox, conservative, reform, or none of the above. I loved being able to learn about the different places that they lived. Being exposed to such a

wide spectrum of Jews made me realize that one people can have so many different opinions and all are acceptable. As a result of this insight that is not unique to only my experience, I went through a process of questioning in my daily classes and in my trip to Israel that only fortified my Jewish identity.

At the end of my sophomore year I decided that it was not enough to be involved in two very active Jewish communities: I wanted even more. I wanted to use my knowledge to help recreate one. For me, this community was the city of Beltsy. Two summers ago, I joined a group from the Greensboro Jewish Federation for their annual trip. I fell in love with the people of this community and felt such a special connection to them that I went the next year and will go again this summer.

About a month ago I embarked on a different type of journey to study communities. I went on the March of the Living to learn how the lives of many people were destroyed, and how the lives of some people were rebuilt. This trip showed me that the community of the Jewish people as a whole is hard to break, but not hard to devastate. All Jews, from Eastern Europe to Israel to the United States are connected. They care for each other, and want to help each other. This connection is what makes us as a people able to survive even through the hardest times. This connection also has made me as a person become aware of the obligation that I have as a Jew to help others to try to create a stronger community so that we all can work together to lessen the amount of devastation in the world.

*Hannah Silverstein is the daughter of Gary and Betsy Silverstein. For high school, Hannah attended the American Hebrew Academy. Throughout her years in high school, she has been very involved in the Greensboro Beltsy Partnership and worked as a madricha at Temple. Hannah studied at the Alexander Muss High School in Israel and also traveled on the March of the Living this past spring. In the fall Hannah plans to attend Haverford College in Pennsylvania.*



## **“What Being Jewish Means to Me”**

Sam Steinberg

Being Jewish means understanding and learning from the past. Like several of my fellow confirmands, I recently went with Rabbi Guttman to Poland on the March of the Living. I had the incredible honor to spend that week with four amazing survivors of the Holocaust. I learned from them that being Jewish means strength and endurance under the most unbearable circumstances. I learned from them that being Jewish means standing up for what you believe in, no matter what the circumstances. I learned from them that being Jewish means not being a victim, but being a survivor.

Being Jewish also means knowing and appreciating Israel. After our week in Poland, we experienced the incredible joy of going to Israel. We traveled across the beautiful country from Haifa to Jerusalem, from the Golan Heights to an air force base, from the top of Masada down to the Dead Sea. We walked through a tunnel deep under Jerusalem, rode a zip-line down a mountain and swam in the Sea of Galilee. I learned that being Jewish means eating falafel, hummus, salad and *schwarma* in the Jerusalem Market. I learned that being Jewish means praying at the *Kotel* on Shabbat. I learned that being Jewish means spending the day at the cemetery on Yom HaZikaron mourning the courageous men and women who gave their lives for Israel and then, just a few hours later, wildly celebrating Israel's independence on the streets of Jerusalem.

Being Jewish means helping and caring about other people. Last October I had the opportunity to go with a group led by Rabbi Koren to New Orleans where they are still rebuilding to this day from the

damaging effects of Hurricane Katrina. We worked at a food bank sorting donations, painted the home of a family who was still rebuilding three years later and helped rebuild and restock an elementary school library with books donated by our congregation. Being Jewish to me also means not forgetting those in need in our own community, like helping the Brotherhood feed the homeless at Urban Ministry.

Being Jewish means forming lifelong friendships that I will always treasure at Camp Judaea and T.Y., at Religious School and on trips like the March of the Living.

Being Jewish means learning new things about my religion every day, whether from a book, a class or my parents. Being Jewish is being a madrich or a camp counselor so I can pass on what I have learned to the next generation. Being Jewish is taking with me to college what I have experienced, and sharing it with those I meet who do not know what being Jewish is all about.

Being Jewish to me is about trying to make the right choices every day and being the best person I can be. Being Jewish to me is like philosophy, there is no wrong answer.

***Sam Steinberg** is the son of Laura Bonasia and Mark Steinberg and the brother of Jesse Steinberg. Sam grew up in Greensboro and kicked off his Jewish education at Temple Emanuel Preschool. He has been a madrich for Temple Emanuel's Religious School for the past three years. He participated in the Temple's community service trip to New Orleans last year and went on this spring's March of the Living. He is graduating from Grimsley High School next week and plans to attend the University of North Carolina in Charlotte this fall.*



## **“What Being Jewish Means to Me”**

Gilad Stern

When I was asked to write a speech about what being Jewish means to me, I thought I could write about many different subjects. I could write about my life in Israel and the new dimension Greensboro added to my Judaism or maybe about the moral and ethical meaning Judaism has infused in my life. However, I chose to speak about a very important event and a very important decision in my life which have both shaped my Jewish identity and been shaped by it.

The first story relates to my past and the past of my family and the Jewish people. The most terrible event in Jewish history is the Holocaust. The Holocaust has changed the nature of Judaism forever and the nature of the world forever. This April, I went with Rabbi Guttman and the Greensboro delegation on the March of the Living. During the March we went to Poland and saw Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, and Majdanek, three of the six Nazi death camps, as well as many other sites relating to the Holocaust. These experiences had a great impact on me and right as I started processing them, we all went to Israel to experience a new part of Jewish history (and future). We toured around Israel and had the opportunity to see the great things that the Zionist groups had managed to accomplish and the great country that was born.

Finally, before having Shabbat in Israel and going back to the states, we went to visit Har Hertzal (Israel's national cemetery), and Yad Vashem (Israel's museum and memorial for the Holocaust and its victims). At Yad Vashem I remembered that my mother told me that she once went to visit a tree dedicated to the man who saved my grandmother's life in Poland. I asked Rabbi Guttman if I could go find the tree and he told me that he would love for me to go and even helped me search for the tree. I called my

mother who was in Israel at the time and asked her about the tree. After a few minutes we saw a tree and a plaque with the man's name on it, "Eberhard Helmrich."

I was very overwhelmed with emotion and with the simple realization that because of this man, my grandmother survived, and both my mother and I were born because of his amazing deeds. Helmrich was a ranking official of the Economic Department of the German Occupying Forces in East Galicia. He helped saved Jews in many different ways. First of all, when my great grandfather approached Helmrich and asked him to help feed starving Jews in a hospital, he obliged. Helmrich also ran a work camp in which he treated the Jews as well as he could (which was much better than most people), and, together with his wife, forged papers for Jewish women to go work in Polish and Ukrainian homes as Christian maids.

My great grandparents and grandmother lived in a compound made for Jewish engineers. When there were rumors circulating that the compound was about to be liquidated, my grandmother's parents chose to send her away to another town. Helmrich sent his own chauffeur to take my grandmother to that other city. This was the safest means of transportation because it was a German government car. My grandmother was discovered, and then Helmrich hid her in his own house for two weeks, after which he sent her back to her parents. Thanks to him my grandmother survived. This is only one part of my family's history and of the collective Jewish history which is important to me.

A very important part of the Jewish people is its future, not only its past. Earlier this year I applied to UNC and was offered admission next fall. However, I never really intended on going to UNC and it was the only university I applied to in order to have the option if my original plans were to change. I knew that it is very important for me to go back to Israel and join the Israeli Defense Forces for several reasons. First of all, I think Israel is a very important place and a country that truly tries to do good things in the world. In addition, I think that it is very important to have a Jewish state to serve and protect Jews and right now Israel serves this purpose. Because of these two reasons, I chose to go back to Israel, and join the Israeli Defense Forces even though I would probably enjoy college much more and would be able to start my life earlier.

***Gilad Stern*** is the son of Eitan and Susan Stern. He was born in Israel and moved to Greensboro with his family when he was thirteen. Gilad attended B'nai Shalom for one year and the American Hebrew Academy for four years. Gilad went on the March of the Living this year. After high school Gilad will complete a year of volunteer national service in Israel before joining the IDF.