

Temple Israel Will Honor Three Couples At Simhat Torah Observances This Sunday

by Marc Katz, Editor

Temple Israel's highest religious recognition will be presented to six members of the congregation on Sunday, October 8, when they are called to the *bimah* to participate in the congregation's observance of Simhat Torah.

To be honored at the service and a luncheon to follow will be Mahvash and Daniel Abitbol, *Kallat v'Hattan Torah* (bride and bridegroom of the Torah), who will be called to the reading of the concluding verses of the Book of Deuteronomy, Mara and Ezra Kassin, *Kallat v'Hattan Beresheet* (bride and bridegroom of Genesis), who will be called to the reading of the opening verses of the Book of Genesis, and Linda and Brent Greenspan, *Kallat v'Hattan Maftir* (bride and bridegroom of the Maftir reading), who will be called upon to chant the Haftarah from the Book of Joshua.

"I am so grateful for the opportunity to celebrate with all of our honorees," said Rabbi Howard Stecker. "In their own unique ways they have all richly contributed to the strength and well-being of our congregation."

Temple Israel's celebration of Simhat Torah will begin on Saturday, October 7, at 7:15 P.M., when the congregation will celebrate the cycle of the reading of the Torah by joyously carrying the Torahs outside for dancing in front of the synagogue on Old Mill Road, weather permitting. Minhah and Ma'ariv will be said in

the Sanctuary at 6:30 P.M. A Tot Shabbat Simhat Torah service will be held at 6:30 P.M.

Bringing the celebration to Old Mill Road "provides an opportunity for us to celebrate Simhat Torah with both the Temple Israel community and the Great Neck community at large," Rabbi Stecker said. "I'm excited at the chance to share our joyful inclusive approach to Judaism with the wider community."

Rabbi Stecker explained that Simhat Torah has a tradition of outdoor celebrations. "This is a widespread Jewish custom," he said. "I am glad that we are taking part in that longstanding custom this year and doing it in our own unique way."

The dancing will continue on Sunday, October 8, when a Shahrarit Morning Service will be held in the Sanctuary, including dancing and the calling of the Simhat Torah honorees, beginning at 9:15 A.M. Immediately following the service the congregation is invited to greet the honorees at a *kiddush* luncheon in their honor, to be held in the Grand Ballroom.

• MAHVASH AND DANIEL ABITBOL •

For more than 37 years, Mahvash and Daniel Abitbol have celebrated family lifecycle events at Temple Israel, including the *b'not mitzvah* of their daughters, and regularly attending *Shabbat* and holiday services. Mahvash Abitbol was part of the 2020 adult *b'nai mitzvah* class, which she said was very informative and congenial. She also regularly attends Sisterhood programs.

Mr. Abitbol, who is now retired, had been in the



Simhat Torah Honorees (pictured right, top to bottom): Daniel and Mahvash Abitbol; Ezra and Mara Kassin; and Linda and Brent Greenspan.

real estate management and computer business. Dr. Abitbol, who earned her medical degree in Tehran, did her residency in radiology and was on the faculty of the NYU Medical Center. She then went into private practice and was active in a number of professional societies, attending international meetings and lectures.

The Abitbols have three daughters. Their eldest, Monique, the director of design management at Tiffany & Co., is married to Richard Siminou, the principal of Siminou Wealth Management. The couple has three children, Julia, Ava and Jack. The Abitbols' daughter Roxanne, a dermatologist, is married to Richard Feldstein, who is a gastroenterologist. The Feldsteins have three sons, Jordan, Justin and Jacob. The youngest Abitbol daughter, Valerie, and her husband, Noah Bilenker, are both attorneys. Their children are Jillan and Eli. All of the Abitbol daughters attended the Temple Israel Religious School and Waxman High School.

• **MARA AND EZRA KASSIN** •

Mara and Ezra Kassin have both been active in congregational life. Mrs. Kassin, whose parents belonged to the congregation, grew up at Temple Israel. Dr. Kassin served as president of the Men's Club for four years, initiating a number of innovative programs during his time of leadership of the group. He now serves as the program chair of the club. He also served a term on the Temple Israel Board of Trustees and regularly attends *Shabbat* and holiday services. Mrs. Kassin, a board member of Golda, has also been active in school activities.

The couple has three sons, Elliott, 14, and Aaron, 12, both students in the Waxman High School, and Jacob, 8, who attends the Kulanu Religious school. The Kassins are the niece and nephew of Simhat Torah honorees Linda and Brent Greenspan.

Mrs. Kassin, an award-winning actress, producer and writer, produced the Oscar winning short film "Curfew" and has recently forayed into narrative podcasts, including "American Heritage" and "The Foxes of Hydesville." She also recently starred in "Law & Order."

Dr. Kassin, an anesthesiologist, is the medical director of

operating room services at Long Island Jewish Hospital. He is also the director of orthopedic and regional anesthesiology at the hospital.

• **LINDA AND BRENT GREENSPAN** •

Former Temple Israel Vice President Brent Greenspan and his wife, Linda, have long been deeply involved in the workings of the congregation. The couple joined Temple Israel 24 years ago when they moved to Great Neck, drawn to the congregation by Mrs. Greenspan's brother who was already a member. Later, their niece and nephew, fellow Simhat Torah honorees Mara and Ezra Kassin, also joined Temple Israel.

During their years of membership in Temple Israel, Mr. Greenspan served as a member of the Board of Trustees, followed by two terms as vice president. He has chaired the Finance Committee, Ritual Committee, Technology Committee, Nominating Committee, Memorial Concert for Cantor Sobel Committee, and, along with Mrs. Greenspan, chaired two dinner dance committees. He also heads the committee selecting clergy for the High Holy Days, is a member of the Waxman Memorial Committee, and currently serves as the co-chair of the congregation's Finance Committee.

In addition to co-chairing the gala committees, the Greenspans also participated in the Temple Israel retreat in Glen Cove.

Mr. Greenspan, a trustee in the Village of Kensington, is a retired Citibank executive, where he focused on project management, internal controls and risk management. During his 43-year professional career he specialized in information technology in various industries, including entertainment, consumer products and financial services. He now heads his own professional services firm. Mrs. Greenspan, a CPA, has held multiple administrative and support positions in cosmetic and medical dermatology for more than 25 years. She currently works as a medical receptionist at a dermatology practice and is the office manager at a medical spa. The couple met when they both worked at Paramount Pictures.

The couple's son, Brandon, and his wife, Leah, live in San Antonio. Brandon works as a data scientist for a major retailer. He participated in a Temple Israel Players production of "Fiddler on the Roof." Leah is a human resources business partner with a global healthcare communications firm. The Greenspans' daughter, Amanda, is a third-year medical student. She spent a year in Israel at the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design as part of her college fine arts program. The Greenspans' children both attended the Temple Israel Religious School and became *b'nai mitzvah* with the congregation. ■

<p>Saturday, October 7</p> <p>9:15 A.M. Shaharit service Yizkor and Dedication of Memorial Plaques in the Sanctuary*</p> <p>11:45 A.M. Kiddush in the Sukkah</p> <p><i>*All services in the Sanctuary are also on TIGN Zoom.</i></p>	<p><i>Leil Simhat Torah</i></p> <p>6:30 P.M. Minhah/Ma'ariv in the Sanctuary*</p> <p>6:30 P.M. Tot Shabbat Simhat Torah Service</p> <p>7:15 P.M. Hakafot and Dancing in the Streets with Torah in front of Temple Israel on Old Mill Road</p>	<p>Sunday, October 8</p> <p>9:15 A.M. Shaharit/Morning service Simhat Torah honorees in the Sanctuary* followed by a festive lunch in the Grand Ballroom</p> <p>6:20 P.M. Minhah/Ma'ariv/Havdalah in the Sanctuary*</p> <p>7:00 P.M. Holiday ends</p>
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