

The Jewish Student Connection

VOL. 2, April 2021

Hebrew Word of the Month

By Aliza Strear

Chesed: loving-kindness

חסד

He-sed

Since Chesed is mentioned more than 190 times throughout the Torah, it is considered one of the most important Jewish values. It does not have an exact translation in English, but many people also interpret it as courage or imagination, as well as giving oneself fully, with love and compassion. As JSCers, we try to embody Chesed within our clubs, schools, and communities.

Yom Haatzmaut: from Israel to the US

By: Adi Gorbman (Shinshinite in Denver)



This year, I celebrated the birth of Israel for the first time on the other side of the world, and it felt very strange. How could I celebrate a country's birth without being physically there? Then I stopped and thought: this is what Americans do every year.

In Israel, there are a wide variety of celebrations for Yom Haatzmaut. The whole country knows and hears about the celebrations, the fireworks, and the performances on the lighted streets. And here, Independence Day is a normal day, not a special day. Everything goes

on as usual, going to bed on time, waking up on time, and going to work.

In Israel, the celebrations continue until the morning - everyone is dancing and happy and celebrating the fact that we have a country and a Jewish state.

The celebrations here were different for me, but it is an experience of its own just like all of this year was. I celebrated at every institution I worked at, starting with celebrations at the Jewish school in Denver with stations related to Israel. We also celebrated at the JCC with the kindergarten kids, military games and an obstacle course.

In Jewish club, every day we did a different activity related to Independence Day. After that, I celebrated with the Hillel at CU - we even celebrated twice. On Friday, graffiti artists came in and made a beautiful work in honor of Independence Day. And, of course, we celebrated with music and good food.

On Sunday, we screened the IAC show and celebrated the country's real birthday. I felt proud to be an Israeli. I will not lie. I am thankful for every opportunity I have been given here and for every moment I have here. I am proud to be an Israeli and part of the amazing country! And finally, Israel, I wish you a happy birthday!

“Yom Haatzmaut” Art

By Nalia Santiago (GW '21)



Yom Hashoah

By: Yoni Manor (East '21)

Jewish Student Connection came together to observe Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, on April 8th. Adi Gorbman, our Shinshin, along with JSC student leaders, planned a powerful Zikaron BaSalon program that touched on the themes of loneliness and isolation during the Holocaust and present day.

This year's Yom HaShoah was unlike any other, as we weren't able to physically come together in solidarity to remember and mourn those we lost during the Holocaust. Despite these hurdles, JSC's student leaders and staff found a way to connect teens from across Colorado to commemorate the struggles of Holocaust survivors, remember those who perished, and reflect on how we can act today to make the world a better place.

Students heard the inspirational stories of two Holocaust survivors who were interviewed by news organizations and listened to a powerful poem that was recited from the novel by Wladyslaw Szpilman, *The Pianist: The Extraordinary True Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw*.

Modern-day anti-Semitism was a focal point of discussions throughout the night, as students reflected on what those who survived the Holocaust experienced and what they themselves have experienced in America. Students also talked about their experience with isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic in contrast to the extreme isolation and loneliness that Holocaust survivors experienced while in hiding and in concentration camps.

JSC had student representation from many public schools across Denver and Colorado, showing the strength of the Denver Jewish community during such difficult times. Our Zikaron BaSalon program also exemplified the resilience and perseverance of the Jewish people; we stand here today, a community of vibrant Jewish youth, after enduring centuries of

persecution and hatred. We remember those who perished during the Holocaust not only on Yom HaShoah, but everyday. We will continue to tell their stories from generation to generation, so that we will Never Forget.

JSC's Climate Heroes

By Ariella Brown

Pictured: Kendall Ogin



Gen-Z is a group of more than just 72 million people characterized by their date of birth. They are also a generation of climate heroes. With the weight of the climate crisis on their shoulders, Gen-Z has risen to the occasion with vigor and courage. From Greta Thunberg to your very backyard, young people everywhere are saving the world.

In the JSC community alone, we have dozens of climate heroes. Kendall Ogin, a senior at East High School and member of JSC, is on the Denver Youth Sustainability Board and is President of the Environmental Club at East. For the past few months, Kendall has been working with an environmental organization called Tree-Plenish to organize a massive tree-planting event. In April, "about 50 East students signed up as volunteers to deliver the saplings to residents across Denver...", according to Kendall. At the end of the day, the students had planted over 315 saplings, offsetting the approximately 12,000 reams of paper that East wastes every year.

It's times like these, where we see people come together so profoundly to fight for the same cause, that the Jewish value, Chesed, becomes clear. Beyond the simple translation to kindness, "Chesed" means to fully give yourself with compassion and love.

Kendall hopes that, "people will realize that our duty as people is to protect the Earth and everything it has given us."

Now, Kendall is not the only young climate activist making waves in Denver. At George Washington High School, over 20 students participated in an event called Go Green Day on April 24th. From 9 am to 12 pm, student volunteers worked to place mulch around existing trees on school grounds and plant five new fruit trees in the orchard.

One tree in the orchard, a montmorency cherry tree, was dedicated to George's JSC for a late Tu B'Shevat celebration. Students of all backgrounds, religions, and cultures gathered together in a beautiful and inspiring display of Chesed to honor their Jewish friends and bring life back to the GW campus.

Although Earth Day has passed, it is important to keep Chesed in mind every day to



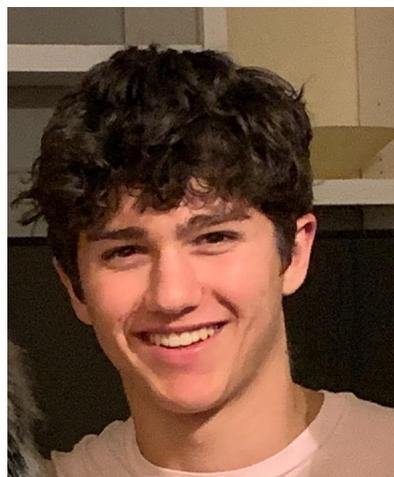
Pictured: Leah Schulman (East '22) and Lexi Lawrenz (East '22)

protect and respect the place that we call home. More importantly, everyone is capable of being a climate hero. As Dr. Seuss writes in *Horton Hears a Who*, "We've GOT to make noises in greater amounts! So, open your mouth, lad! For every voice counts!"

Mensch of the Month

By: Ben Ginsberg

Pictured: Gavi Fox (TJ '22)



Gavi Fox, a junior at Thomas Jefferson High School, is the JSCer of the month for April.

Gavi is the President of TJ's JSC Club, which he has been involved in for the past three years. He says he joined for the pizza as a freshman and stayed for the community. During the pandemic, Gavi has contributed a strong sense of leadership to the club and helped to make it as engaging as possible in a virtual environment. The best virtual club that he has been a part of this year was when the entire club did yoga, led by Ben Sanders. Gavi said that it was hilarious and is now looking to implement yoga into his daily lifestyle!

After switching to a public school for high school, Gavi decided to further his Jewish education by learning with a Rabbi once a week. When he was younger, Gavi went to a Jewish school and synagogue often, and missed many aspects of the community once in high school.

Learning with a Rabbi helps him stay connected to his Jewish identity and community.

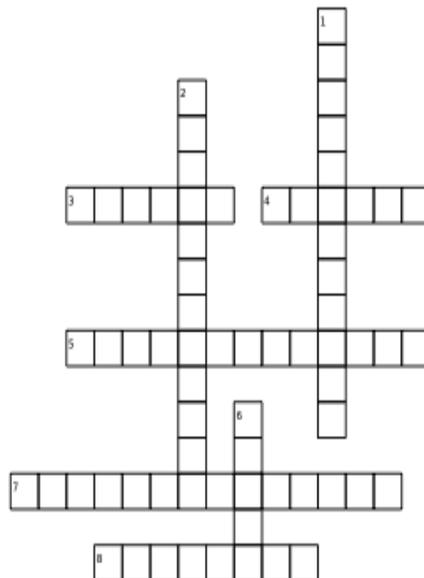
Gavi is taking an amazing opportunity over the next year by making the decision to put his time in high school on hold and pursue an internship in entrepreneurship or engineering in Israel. Starting in January of 2022, Gavi will be living in Israel and completing this internship, while having the opportunity to connect with his Jewish identity, both religiously and culturally. He plans on taking Hebrew classes, volunteering, and enjoying the beautiful country in his free time. He is very grateful for the mentorship of Ben Sanders throughout this process.

Outside of JSC, Gavi is the captain of the boys track and field team and runs the 200

meter and 400 meter dash. He was previously a member of the ping pong club, before it shut down during the pandemic. He likes to hang out with his friends, play video games like Rocket League, and spend time with his girlfriend. He also used to be a professional model.

When asked what being Jewish means to him, Gavi responded that, "Being a part of a Jewish community in general means to hold myself and others to a higher value and standard than most people are held to. I am able to learn the meaning of success through community and contentment instead of financially or other markers of success. I enjoy being able to teach other people about the substantial heritage and history of the Jewish religion and culture."

Crossword Puzzle



Down:

1. English Translation of the word atzmaut
2. Number of years Israel has been independent
6. small desert in Israel

Across:

3. The capital of this country is Jerusalem
4. Israel's current currency
5. Israel lies along the _____ sea
7. Israel's first prime minister
8. Israel's national anthem