

Linda Yarden and her husband, Chris Smith, came to Park Avenue Synagogue in 1999, after searching for a shul that felt right for them. While she grew up Modern Orthodox, as an adult with a successful career, Yarden wanted to feel that she truly had a seat at the table not only at work, but also at her synagogue. They looked for an egalitarian place of worship in which they both would feel welcome. PAS's values and sense of community spoke to both of them, and it wasn't long before Yarden became more involved in its activities.

How did she become such a hallmark of PAS's communities and committees? It all started with her children, Callie and Eric's, assignment for the Penn Family ECC mock seder: nut free haroset. Puzzling over how to create this recipe, Yarden spoke with the haroset maker at a big-name caterer. The nut-free haroset was a hit, and she will happily provide anyone who asks with the recipe.

Soon she wasn't just making sweet treats, but chairing trips (both within the U.S. and to Israel), and she and her family were helping with events from Purim spiels to Mitzvah Day and co-chairing committees such as Interfaith Families (now part of Membership and Inclusion), where Yarden continues her involvement. Her work with Membership and Inclusion — especially Interfaith Families — has helped her affirm the belief that we are all *b'tzelem Elohim* (made in the image of God) and put into action her commitment to the ideals of Abraham: Not only did Abraham keep his tent open at four sides, but he actively sought people out in order to make them feel welcome.

And while Yarden had always felt a connection to the PAS community, she views her recent three-year term chairing the Kol Nidrei Appeal as an eye-opening experience. During her term, she got to see first-hand how congregants rallied in support of each other and the synagogue during the height of the pandemic, just as much as the synagogue supported them. "I have profound respect for the embrace and generosity of the PAS community," Yarden says.

You can still find Yarden on the Board of Trustees, helping to further the values of Abraham's open tent at PAS: meeting people where they are, welcoming them into the community, creating a sense of belonging, and cultivating and appreciating the diversity that surrounds us. "I truly want everyone to feel like they belong at PAS," she says. "Not just people who look like you ... love like you ... walk like you ... Everyone."