



Rabbi Jenn Mangold./COURTESY PHOTO

Marblehead rabbi sends a message: ‘We pray to God for courage and strength’

BY STEVE MARANTZ([HTTPS://JEWISHJOURNAL.ORG/AUTHOR/STEVE-MARANTZ/](https://jewishjournal.org/author/steve-marantz/))

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As Jenn Mangold, senior rabbi at Marblehead's Temple Emanu-El, prepares for her formal installation on March 28, she never loses sight – literally – of what inspired her. On her lectern is a book, “The Shofar That Lost Its Voice,” authored by her childhood rabbi, David Fass.

The book tells of a boy who is asked to blow a shofar for the High Holidays. The boy practices but can't get a sound out of it. He falls asleep and dreams that the shofar comes to life and tells him it's not making sound because there's too much evil in the world. But the boy convinces the shofar to make sound to remind people to be good. Then the boy awakens and blows the shofar.

Loud sound, happy ending.

“The lesson is that the sound of the shofar is to remind us not to do bad things and also not to waste opportunities to do good things,” says Fass, now retired from Temple Beth Sholom in New City, New York, where Mangold grew up.

Mangold recalls learning from Fass. “He had us go around the sanctuary and share what we pray for. There was a little boy who said, ‘I pray to get 100 on my math test.’ And the rabbi said, ‘That's not what you should pray for. You should pray for the motivation and courage to study hard and believe in yourself to get that good grade. Because God isn't going to give you the good grade. You're going to get it with those tools.’

“And that has always stuck with me. That we pray to God for courage and strength and resilience and love. Because I believe those are things God can give us. It’s not like God is making bad things happen to test us or to see how strong we are. That’s not what I believe in.

“I believe in a limited God. When bad things happen, I don’t think, ‘Why did God do this?’ Because I don’t think God did that. When I suffer a loss, I don’t blame God. I pray to God to help me through the pain. That’s why I go to God.”

Mangold started as Emanu-El’s senior rabbi last July. New rabbis tend to schedule their formal installation within their first month or two, but Mangold put hers off until this spring. “I wanted to wait, because I want to look out at the congregation and see people I know, people I’ve already built relationships with. I felt like by the end of March, ‘Oh, I’ve done your father’s funeral, I’ve been at your wedding, I know you from religious school.’ I want to know all my people.”

She wanted to wait. In October, she delivered her first Kol Nidre sermon. Her topic: patience. “In Hebrew, the word ‘patience’ is savlanut. It shares a linguistic root with sevel, which means suffering. According to Musar teacher Alan Morinis, ‘Being patient means bearing the burden of your own suffering. Telling yourself, I can bear these feelings on my inner shoulders. Holding them aloft and not crumbling under their weight, you are patient.

When tempted to become impatient, may we stop – take a moment – and say to ourselves: *B’sha-ah Tovah*. In good time.’ ”

Mangold’s odyssey from her New York suburb has taken her to Buffalo, Manhattan, Cincinnati, and Jerusalem; Fairbanks, Alaska, Columbus, Ohio, Muncie, Indiana, and Jefferson City, Missouri; Milwaukee; St. Petersburg, Florida; and now, Marblehead. Along the way, she earned a degree in English, a master’s in English education, a Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters, and rabbinic ordination from Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati.

Well-traveled and world-wise, Mangold has invited three rabbinical inspirations to her installation, although a fourth – Fass – will be unable to attend. They include her predecessor, David Meyer, now rabbi emeritus at Emanu-El. “He’s so kind – I can call him for anything and ask for help and he’ll always be there.”

Before Meyer were two rabbis she worked with at Congregation Shalom in Milwaukee. Rachel Kaplan Marks was an associate rabbi, whom Mangold called, “A friend, teacher, and role model to me. She remains a bright life in my life.”

Noah Chertkoff was senior rabbi at the Milwaukee temple when Mangold arrived as his assistant in 2018. “Everyone was taken with her warmth and vibrant way of expressing the soulful qualities of what she had to share,” he

said. “She very quickly endeared herself and brought her own style of worship. And did it while experiencing the birth of her three children.”

Chertkoff proudly accepted Mangold’s invitation to officiate at her installation, which he described as “A ritual moment. What I’m going to describe to the congregation is just how fortunate they are to have Rabbi Mangold stewarding their community.”

Mangold is training for the Boston Marathon in April. Her daily runs give her time to think. “Some of my best sermons are written when I run.” She brings marathon-like energy to her work. It’s all there in the Temple Emanu-El bulletins, her relentless schedule of religious and community events.

“I don’t know how she has enough time in the day,” said temple President Aaron Siegel. “All the study, life cycle events, community stuff, writing the sermons, the prayers, services, preparing the High Holy Days. So much going on – I don’t know how she does it.”

“I love that there isn’t a typical work week,” Mangold said. “There’s always something different, whether it’s working with a bar mitzvah student or planning a funeral, or getting ready for a wedding, or working on staff training. Being there for people in raw moments, visiting with them in a hospital, meeting in my office if they’re going through a hard time. Anything where I’m really listening

and they're just opening up in a confidential safe space. It's all different, which I love, it never gets boring."

She pulls off a work-life balance by having her three young children and husband Paul at temple. "My family is very much a part of my rabbinate. My children love being here. My husband Paul, who teaches ESL in Lynn, loves being here and comes to events when he can. The community has been so embracing and supportive, making my family feel comfortable, and making me feel like I can bring them to temple."

When asked to offer her favorite part of the Torah, her answer is instantaneous. "It's from a story where Jacob has the dream with the ladder. He's run away from home, he's all alone at night, using a stone for a pillow, probably afraid and nervous. And he has this dream and in the dream there's a ladder reaching up to heaven. And he connects to God and hears this divine voice that tells him God is with him.

"And then he wakes up from his dream – and this is my favorite line – he says, 'God was in this place and I didn't know it.' That's like my Torah. Because I believe the entrances to holiness are everywhere and that every conversation and every interaction everyplace is holy. And it's our work to find that holiness and blessing within each situation, even the toughest situations." ☺

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