

J JEWISH PITTSBURGH LIVING

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5 People You Might Know... But Have Never Met

By Holly Rudoy



As a young architecture grad in 1982, Dan Rothschild and his bride, Lori, were searching for a city to begin their careers and start a family. They looked at Chicago, Washington DC, and Atlanta before deciding on Pittsburgh.

Well, aren't we the lucky ones! In the ensuing years, Rothschild and his co-workers at Rothschild Doyno Collaborative have been the architect and design gurus for dozens of structures in the region and beyond. But most notable in the Jewish community are Rothschild's distinctive

and meaningful architectural contributions to countless Jewish houses of worship and community gatherings.

From new construction, like the Hillel Jewish University Center and the South Hills JCC, to additions and renovations at Anathan House, Emma Kauffmann Camp and Tree of Life Congregation, Rothschild's work is infused with deep religious meaning and beauty.

As Rothschild, 53, explains, the firm has five guiding principles, including a mandate to create meaningful design

solutions, not just pretty buildings. In Rothschild's case, the mandate resulted in his combining insights from his regular weekly Torah study with his design talents to create beautiful spaces.

"In the Jewish community projects, I can delve into my understanding of Torah. It allows for a deeper, more meaningful solution. I've been involved in Torah study for 13 years now, and as I go through the cycle again and again, it gains a deeper meaning over time. One of the pleasures of working with

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the Jewish community is that I get to apply my own knowledge and outlook on Judaism. It's one of the reasons why it's such a good fit," says this father of four children ages 12-25.

Rothschild incorporates so much thought, symbolism, and meaning into his projects that he often writes an essay detailing the meaning of the physical form of his work, like an artist's interpretation.

"Some of the stuff can get pretty deep," he explains. For example, curious visitors and members at Temple Emanuel are welcome to a nine-page description of the biblical references in the structure and the details that represent light and the sanctity of time.

Some buildings such as the Hillel JUC boast a plaque explaining various design aspects to help visitors appreciate the work. But much of the meaning is there for the community to enjoy on first glance. For example, Rothschild conceptualized the sculpture on the front of the Hillel JUC building, linking it to a pillar of cloud and fire to represent G-d giving guidance to the Israelites, much as Hillel gives guidance to young adults away from home and family for the first time.

The round dome centerpiece and supporting pillars of the South Hills JCC are based on a tent, to represent "the concept of hospitality and welcoming to the community," Rothschild explains.



Similarly, the 613 colored glass pebbles dotting an outside wall of Temple Emanuel represent the number of mitzvot. "It's common for teachers at Temple to show this to their classes – so they can see the physical representation of the number 613," he explains.

Rothschild's designs for Jewish spaces also incorporate the relationship between light and time, based on the belief

that, "light is a metaphor for goodness...it relates to essential concepts of Judaism to do stronger and stronger good deeds over time," he explains.

"The Torah is such a great story...it's been helpful to me to apply to my work. It feels very purposeful. The fact that I get to interweave it into my professional life is so humbling. I think some of it shows through in the details." It sure does.