



Temple Beth Israel News

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URJ MEMBER

SHEVAT-ADAR 5770

FEBRUARY 2010

FROM OUR RABBI

By Lisa Berney

I spent 11 months in Israel from July 2008 until May 2009. I arrived an eager first year rabbinical student who had previously visited Israel with my synagogue for my Bat Mitzvah, and had lived in Israel during the previous summer. These visits highlighted the exciting attractions of Israel, but went into little depth about the societal, religious and political nuances of the country. My image of Israel was the Western Wall in Jerusalem and the Dead Sea of the south. Yet after a few months living there, I soon realized that life in Israel is much more complicated.

This realization begs the question: how can we as American Jews living in the Diaspora continue to be advocates of Israel? We do not live there and we do not always comprehend the complex nature of the Israeli government and society, so how can we remain involved? Does one have to visit Israel? Give money to Israel? Become enraged at the news articles that slam Israel's political moves or the IDF's actions in Gaza? Does one have to embrace every decision the Israeli government makes? Many have even tried to convince me that I need to actually move to Israel in order to be a true supporter.

Instead of debating the "right" way to support Israel, perhaps it is time to consider that each of these acts can be a way to connect to Israel. What is most important is that we maintain an active dialogue and remain engaged in these issues. We can choose to become a partner with Israel through even the smallest of acts.

There are many opportunities to show our commitment to Israel: read *Haaretz*, an Israeli newspaper, online daily in English at <http://www.haaretz.com/>; at the next opportunity to travel abroad, choose to go to Israel; read Israeli literature such as novels by Amos Oz or short stories by Etgar Keret; watch Israeli films and research Israeli technology; see Israeli speakers; learn Hebrew; participate in the Jewish calendar. These are all ways to support Israel, no one better than another, just different expressions. What is important is that we stay informed and start talking.

Let us each consider the following meditation question throughout the upcoming month: **What does it mean for us to be supporters of Israel?**

PRESIDENT'S Message

By Steve Zlotowski

In an email exchange, a non-Jewish college friend recalled her eighth grade life as "practically every Saturday going to extravagant LA style productions." I suppose she wouldn't have recognized what happened at Eli's Bar Mitzvah last month or the other Bar and Bat Mitzvahs we celebrate here at TBI. That's not to say that Bar/Bat weekends can't have some glitter, but it's unlikely we will fall prey to more style than substance. I've attended a few bashes back in the Philadelphia area. Don't get me wrong; I love a good party. But when the post Bar/Bat affair

TBI CALENDAR

All events are at TBI unless otherwise indicated. Changes will be posted at www.tbiredding.org

Mon Feb 8

7:00pm: Board Meets: All members invited

Fri Feb 12

7:00pm: Fri night Live with Li (see p2)

Sat Feb 13

12:00pm: Shabbat Cinema (see p2)

Fri Feb 26

7:00pm: Shabbat Purim Service with Rabbi Lisa (see p2)

Sat Feb 27

9:30am: Morning Torah Service and Study

Tentative date for Israeli Dinner Dance

Sun Feb 28

10:00am: Bet Sefer Purimfest

10:00am Menchkins meet

Fri-Sun March 19-21

Rabbi Lisa Weekend

outshines the coming of age accomplishment, I think there's a price that is paid beyond the one-person wedding party bill.

My mom, after Bar Mitzvahs and High Holidays she spends with us always feels moved to comment on how genuine and real these experiences are in Redding. She treasures the feel of a close-knit community and how wonderfully different this is than her Jewish gatherings in other east and west coast settings.

In our struggles as a small and isolated community, we often focus on what we don't have: Jewish Theater, a JCC, a retirement community, stimulating lectures, etc. So I think it's especially important to recognize and cherish what we do have. Events through TBI are intimate and collaborative, and we shouldn't take it for granted. We make it happen through love and cooperation, passion and hard work. As the two I've referenced above would tell us, it's not true everywhere. Thank you all for helping us have such a joyous weekend.

SOCIAL ACTION SPECIAL NEED

The old cliché says that charity begins at home. Although it isn't actually charity, but a cherished member has an immediate and remedial need for help.

Phyllis Glaser is now at home after an extended hospital stay and is recovering from – among serious illnesses – institutional cuisine. She cannot cook, and Meals on Wheels is now non-mobile.

If you would like to reserve a date to bring Phyllis G a dinner meal, call Phyllis Bobrow at 351-3304 or email phyllisbobrow@yahoo.com.

On another note, everyone is familiar with the apocalyptic type disaster in Haiti. We as Jews have an obligation to react. Israel has sent a team of 250 rescue and medical personnel with ancillary equipment. For information on how you can contribute online or by mail through:

URJ: go to

<http://urj.org/socialaction/issues/relief>

Shaare Zedek: go to

<http://www.israelgives.org/pages/haiti>
dialing 90995 (\$10 will be added to your phone bill, designated for Haiti)

FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE IS BACK

You asked for it. In successive surveys in past years, you consistently requested additional services and expanded offerings. Mark your calendars. Cantor Li Lyon has scheduled the following services with assisted singing: Feb 12, March 12 (Passover songs), April 23, and May 7.

SHABBAT CINEMA RETURNS

By Roberta Kelly

Shabbat Cinema will return **Feb 13** with a showing of *Defiance*. There will be lunch at noon, followed by the film.

This dramatic film is based on a true story. Daniel Craig stars as Tuvia Bielski, an ordinary citizen turned hero. The Bielski brothers, simple Polish farmers – outnumbered and outgunned – turn a group of war refugees into powerful freedom fighters.

Parents are advised of the R rating, for violence and language.

PURIM EVENTS PLANNED

By Roberta Kelly

We will be celebrating Purim a bit early to coincide with Rabbi Lisa's visit. On Friday, February 26, join us in a "sing-along" Purimspiel. With music and a little shtik, you'll all be keveling with this Purim story telling. See you at 7:00...and yum, hamantaschen for dessert.

BOOK CLUB SCHEDULE FOR THE YEAR

Here is the Book Club schedule for the rest of the season:

March 24 (note date change) at Kirsten's place. Books: *Rashi's Daughter Book II*, *Miriam*, by Maggie Anton and *Rashi* by Elie Wiesel.

May 19: Location TBA, Book: *My Father's Paradise*, by Ariel Sabar
July 14: Tilleses, 29571 Whitmore Rd, Whitmore 472-1533. Book: *Inside Outside*, by Herman Wouk
Meeting times are 1:30pm.

All except the Elie Wiesel *Rashi* (as of now) are available in paperback. You can usually find used copies in good condition for under \$10 (plus shipping) online through Barnes and Noble (BN.com).

So far for next season, we are planning *Defiance* (see the movie first at Feb 13 Shabbat Cinema) and *Sunflower*. We plan to alternate between novels and thought provoking, but not necessarily erudite, non-fiction

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE JAN BOARD MEETING

We have received dues pledge forms from 44 out of 48 who received them. They pledged \$35,556, \$272 more than what was paid last year.

Assets in checking and savings total 31K. Board approved placing 15K in a CD.

Rabbi Lisa has offered a Purimspiel that will work well.

Twelve students are now enrolled in Bet Sefer. George estimates that about 15 TBI children are eligible.

Board discussed compensation for Bet Sefer volunteers. This will require a budget line item for the school; teachers may choose to accept or donate their compensation.

Sisterhood is planning the Israeli Dinner Dance, tentatively set for Feb 27.

Diane Rapport reported on her research into site improvement. The board discussed various options for new classroom flooring: continuing sanctuary flooring into classrooms, vinyl square tiles and wood

laminated. Diane will do more research.

SMALL MIRACLES

By Alexa Singer-Telles

Today, Eli Zlotowski had his Bar Mitzvah. His Torah portion was Vayera, which Rabbi Shefa Gold translates as "And I Appeared." This is the parsha where YHVH (G-d) appears to Moses, tells him to lead the people out of Egypt, and then brings on the plagues. Adonai says, "...now you are ready to receive a glimpse of the Whole, that Unnameable One."

Eli said that if he had witnessed the miracles in this ancient story he would surely believe in G-d and miracles. Today, he said, he was struggling to find G-d and that the faith he was discovering in his own experiences would hopefully lead him to believe in G-d and miracles.

For those who were unable to attend this extraordinary event, I'd like to reflect on my experiences and share with you the small miracles that were evident throughout the day.

Seeing the entire Zlotowski family sitting in the front row beaming at Eli and seeing Eli beaming back gave the first hint of the miracles afloat, because you could see and feel the love manifesting in the room.

Both Barb and Steve gave heartfelt talks and quoted Albert Einstein, who said, "You can look at the world as if everything is a miracle or nothing is a miracle." If those are our two choices, which would you choose? Both Barb and Steve honored their son and declared him a miracle in his own right.

Returning to our beloved old home, the Frank Lloyd Wright church, always produces a sense of awe and gratitude for the miracle of having such a unique structure in Redding. Gazing at the bima, with the large stone boulders and cement wall, has a mesmerizing quality.

Today the bima was filled with powerful women leading the rite of passage for Eli.

Rabbi Jackie Brodsky's return was a delight, as she offered her deep spiritual connection and her quick sense of humor. Through her study and translation of Hebrew names, she found the wisdom in the Zlotowski's names. Steve's Hebrew name is Yitzak, "Laughing Boy", (that sure makes sense) and Barb's name Batsheva, one who makes an oath and follows through.

I perceive that Barb and Steve, through their own personal dedication to Judaism, have helped create a deepened sense of commitment in our congregation. I have felt a stronger connection to the synagogue based on their generosity, community outreach, and general loving presence.

I want to name and celebrate the women whose love of TBI and our tradition made the Bar Mitzvah flow – Li Lyon, Geri Copitch, and Nancy Warsinger.

Li has stepped into the position as our Cantor, and her voice grows stronger and more beautiful each year. Her joy for singing the liturgy is contagious. She told me she would rather sing a prayer than bake a cake any day. She has found her niche!

Geri was the commanding presence at the Torah, calling forward family members and managing the logistics of the Torah service. She was Eli's Hebrew teacher, and his flawless offering of the five aliyahs (Torah readings) showed their diligence as teacher and student and their love of Torah.

I think it would be unanimous to say that we have been blessed with a miracle of a chef, who finds cooking the most pleasurable experience in her life. Nancy has tirelessly offered us feast after feast, seeming to outdo herself each time. Her steadfast presence in food planning,

preparation and serving nourishes the congregation and all its friends and family. I think she must have made a record number of latkes this past Chanukah.

Thanks to Zoila Sperber, too, for some spectacular Challah.

So what's the miracle? These women and others in our community (and I know there are more unsung heroes) have grounded and stabilized TBI.

With our history of changing rabbis, it is essential to have a core community of people who provide consistency and vision. With many members making an offering of something they love to do for the community, everyone benefits.

Three of our beloved founding elders were in attendance today, Muriel Weissburg, Jan Cohen, and Phyllis Glaser, each escorted by community members who made sure they were cared for.

Jan told me that our community is the place she feels the most loved.

As I witnessed so many folks visiting with and in a way paying tribute to these wonderful women, I realized why community is so essential to our lives.

For many of us, families are dispersed, and those we hang with and worship with become a beloved family. There are a number of congregants, especially George Wandrocke, who have been tending to the needs of our elders as they face health challenges.

Perhaps it was Eli who said that there are two kinds of miracles, G-d's miracles and those carried out by human hands. TBI is filled with miracle makers.

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The Zlotowski and Shapiro families travelled from Vermont, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Australia to make their way to Redding to celebrate Eli's real birthday and Bar Mitzvah. Seeing them all on the bima, especially the aunts and uncles singing out the prayers, was an affirmation of the continuation of Judaism. The strength of their dedication to their family and our Jewish traditions was an inspiration to me.

DARFUR EFFORT CONTINUES

By Art Tilles

Save Darfur is hosting another singalong at First United Methodist Church, Fri Feb 5 at 6:30pm. This time we will be doing *My Fair Lady*. We had a great time doing *Mary Poppins*, with Sam Rounds and friends from Enterprise High – also a recent high stepping drum major with the marching band – supplying great energy.

The letter writing “party” for Save Darfur will be at 7:00pm on Feb 18 at FUMC, and our monthly prayer vigil will be at 5:00pm on Feb 26 at the Sundial Bridge.

Call 472-1533 or email me at Dart@frontiernet.net for further information or suggestions.

ASK TANTA GOLDA

Dear Tanta Golda,

I know that Reform Judaism considers someone Jewish if either parent is. What is our take on the priestly castes?

My dear Priestess,

As you know, since the time following the destruction of the second Temple, one's Jewishness was determined matrilineally, that is

to say, if your mother was Jewish, you were considered Jewish. (You may be as surprised as I was to find out that this was not the case before then.)

The determination of one's priestly caste, however, was passed on through the father's side. Tanta Golda assumes that this was because men were the ones obligated to fulfill the various ritual duties, including sacrificial offerings of animals and schlepping the Tabernacle, while we women folk took care of the kinder and housework and telling our husbands what a wonderful job they were doing fulfilling the mitzvot.

Reform Judaism has always opted for the more egalitarian way of ritual participation. It has eliminated almost all of the ritual distinctions between THE SEXES and between the castes of Kohen, Levi and Yisrael (non-priestly Jews). Most Reform communities do not call up a Kohen for the first aliyah, or perform the rituals of dukhenen (blessing the congregation on festivals) and pidyon ha-ben (redemption for a firstborn Jewish boy). I say most, because as you know, we at TBI are honored to have Jan Cohen come up and hallow us with the priestly blessing during the High Holy days.

Since most liberal communities do not observe the distinctions at all, regarding them as obstructing, rather than furthering modern spiritual elevation, there is no credo in Reform Judaism regarding the dissemination of caste status.

In other words, my dear, according to most scholars Tanta Golda checked with, the point is

moot. However, I see no harm in bestowing the honor on your daughter if you feel so inclined.

If you would like to know how all this priestly caste business came to be, you'll have to attend the B'nai Mitzvah of those lovely girls, Kendyl and Julie Kaplan on May 15. Their parasha covers this in numerical detail!

May you be a blessing to your forebearers, whatever their distinctions.

With love as always - Tanta Golda

INTERFAITH

Editor's note: The following were executed for the Voices of Faith page of the Record Searchlight. The page is printed in the Record Searchlight religion page, in the second section on Saturdays. The section asks clergy and other representatives of various faiths how their tradition views certain values and issues, and George and I alternate in contributing to the feature.

Question: Does your faith tradition suggest the age of the earth or the habitation of it?

Art Tilles answered:

The great 12th Century Jewish sage, Maimonides, Rambam for short, was a rabbi, philosopher and physician. He wrote volumes on interpretation of Torah law, and his 13 principles are still regarded as a summation of traditional Orthodox Judaism. He suggested that every Jew hand-write the Torah in his lifetime, as Rambam did.

But Rambam was also a scientist, a great physician, whose texts on medicine and pharmacology were far ahead of his time. Rambam said that when the Bible and science conflict, the Bible should be seen as metaphor. Today, this Once and Future sage says to me: If you would understand the world and its complexity, the world is about 4.5 billion years old. If you would experience the wonders and mystery of God, the world is six thousand years old.

Question: Does your faith tradition practice a form of ecumenism/ interfaith cooperation? If so, did it always practice it?

George Wandrocke answered:

Ecumenism promotes unity of belief,

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creed, and practices. Any desire, at least within Judaism, to “unify” denominations would entail a futile battle over which beliefs and practices should dominate.

“Ecumenism” and “interfaith cooperation” are not synonymous terms. Connecting them implies they both have the same “unity” goal. Jonathan Sachs believes there’s “dignity in diversity.” Rather than homogenizing religious diversity, he says we should embrace it.

Many religions seek common goals such as world peace, unconstrained access to mutual holy sites, and security from ridicule and persecution. Religious diversity need not stand in the way of personal or group interactions to achieve those goals.

Temple Beth Israel has been a member of a local interfaith forum, SCIF, for over 20 years. That forum offers a way to embrace differences, to explore them, and to participate in common efforts. By doing so, we all grow in our own faiths and help crumble the walls of misunderstanding.

TODAH RABAH TO

- Our gutsy teens, for their dance contribution to the multi-cultural event at Central Valley High
- Phyllis Bobrow, for truly Menchy

service to her friend Phyllis Kaplan

- Rabbi Jackie Brodsky, for a warm homecoming at Eli's Bart Mitzvah
- The Rubanowitz men, for shlepping the prayer books to Pilgrim for the Bar Mitzvah
- Patricia Penn, the Akmans and Kaplans, for their generous donations of toys and clothing to Western Service Workers

REFUAH SH'LAYMAH

Phyllis Glaser
Putti Baigelman
Jan Cohen
Marscia Pereira
Allison Ashby
Judith Schmid
Leigh Stoval

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

4-Feb Sheryn & Russell Hodgson
14-Feb Jory & Julie Kaplan

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

2/1 Rachel Cohen
2/1 Oliver Silverstein
2/7 Joanne Akman
2/7 Stacie Rounds

2/14 Arthur Nguyen Silverstein
2/16 Carol Gage
2/19 Emily Sperber
2/23 Francis O'Conner

FEBRUARY YAHRZEITS

Anna Blatt, grandmother of Marscia Pereira
Maer Bradlyn, paternal grandfather of Allen Bradlyn
Szeren Clarke, maternal grandmother of George Wandrocke
Dennis Fine, uncle of Hillary Fine
George Handman, grandfather of Hillary Fine
Barbara Katell, mother of Geri Copitch
Isaac Kirschner, grandfather of Jan Cohen
Ellen Lucas, niece of Neal Periera
Benjamin Spector, paternal grandfather of Harvey Spector
Judith Warsinger, mother of Nancy Warsinger
Rebecca Waxman, mother of Muriel Weissberg
Al Weissberg, husband of Muriel Weissberg

TZEDAKAH

There they sit, the pile of unopened solicitations and appeals. Direct marketing charity drives are the modern replacement for the communal *tzedakah* (charity) appeals of the past.

Food for the poor, tuition assistance for children in need of a Jewish education, support services for single moms, outreach work, hospitals, medical research...take a deep breath, because there are thousands of organizations struggling to make the world a better place. And they are all good causes.

In order to make sense out of this barrage of requests, it may help to know that within Jewish thought there is a recommended hierarchy to one's order of giving.

The Torah states that top priority in giving should be to those nearest and dearest to you – your family. Within this category itself, there is a hierarchy that depends upon the closeness of the relationship (siblings before cousins, one's family before a relative's family, etc.)

Giving to those to whom one is not related has a different hierarchy. A friend or acquaintance has priority over a stranger, and a stranger in one's own community has priority over a stranger from another community. These rules apply when giving to individuals, but similar rules apply to the mass fundraising appeals mentioned earlier.

One has a priority to give to organizations that work within one's own town, before giving to out of town organizations. (The land of Israel is considered as your own town.)

While every Jew has an obligation to give to charity, how a person chooses to give is left to that person's discretion; everything to one individual or one organization, or shared among a variety of individuals and organizations.

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