

Chai~Lights



May 2015

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Keys Jewish Community Center

P.O. Box 1332 • Tavernier, FL 33070 • 305-852-5235 • keysjewishcenter.com

May 2015

12 Iyar - 13 Sivan

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 Ken Atlas <i>Barney Coltman</i>	2
3 KJCC Board Meeting 9:00 a.m. Sisterhood Luncheon	4	5	6	7 Lag B-Omer	8 Erica Lieberman- Garrett & Mitch Harvey <i>Steve Steinbock</i>	9 Rabbi Agler Saturday Service 10:00 a.m.
10 Mothers Day	11	12	13	14	15 Medina Roy, Yardena Kamely & Jane Friedman <i>Medina Roy & Bernie Ginsberg</i>	16
17 Yom Yerushalayim	18	19	20	21	22 Dinner 6:30 p.m. Joyce Peckman & Gloria Avner Yizkor Service 8:00 p.m. <i>Medina & Carl Roy</i>	23
24 Erev Shavuot 31	25 Second Day of Shavuot Memorial Day	26	27	28	29 Marc Bloom & Yardena Kamely 6:30 Service	30

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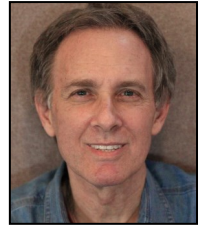
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President's Message Sam Vinicur



It isn't just that the week-end of April 10th was busy. In just three days it managed to be a microcosm of what KJCC is for, why it's so endearing to so many and why we all work so hard to sustain it.

It's always a treat when Bernie leads services, but on this Friday we had a surprise for him. (*Mah nishtah-nah...*) Steve Steinbock has become the ringleader of previous Joel Cohen Award winners, who each year vote to select the next recipient. Bernie was this year's winner. Steve made the presentation, with a bit of a twist. Since Bernie is such a dedicated Ashkenazi homeboy, we had the plaque's inscription transliterated into Yiddish. (Thank you, Liati.)

The next morning was April's Saturday service with Rabbi Richard Agler. Most come to hear his learned penetration of that week's *Parshah*. No one emerges without a burst of insight or without grasping a nuance in the text they'd never noticed before. (Think of how remarkable that is: the text has been exactly the same for about two thousand years.)

That evening almost eighty of us stood in reverence as Rabbi Agler led a memorial service for Joel at the Pollack home. This was KJCC at its best: voluntarily gathering, some having driven many hours, to honor a

man of quiet dignity who was crucial to the second generation of KJCC's leadership. We were also there to honor Linda. As Rabbi Agler noted, our sages say that in such circumstances no words of condolence are necessary. Eloquence speaks in the act of simply being present.

On Sunday morning we had our April Board Meeting, admittedly an endeavor of prose and not poetry. Administration is, at best, unexciting. Yet a safe building and dutiful committee work and a habitable sanctuary create the sturdy framework within which each spirit, old or young, can be nurtured.

On Sunday night, Rabbi Agler led a discussion of Simon Wiesenthal's haunting World War II memoir "The Sunflower." The book's premise is profound beyond words: Are some human acts simply unforgivable? The book includes, as an epilogue, the musings of eminent thinkers and theologians on the subject. As asked, we had all read the book. Rabbi Agler then gently led us through the same difficult moral thicket: is a Nazi forgivable?

This was all in one week-end. We smile and honor and celebrate, we explore the sacred, we mourn together, we keep the lights on, we ponder the unimaginable. We are KJCC. We are, in every way, the essence of minyan.

Keys Jewish Community Center

Sisterhood Luncheon

Sunday, May 3, 2015

12 Noon

Skipper's Dockside

528 Caribbean Drive, MM 100, Key Largo



Last Get Together of the Season

Contact Erica to reserve
your seat

hippiejap@hotmail.com

by Friday, May 1

* Separate Checks *

Nosh

Bernie Wins Joel Cohen Award

On Friday evening, April 10th, during the service he was leading, Bernie Ginsberg was presented with this year's Joel Cohen Fellowship Award, the highest honor KJCC has to bestow. The presentation was made by Steve Steinbock,



chairman of the committee of past winners, who are the sole voters for the award. As noted in this month's Prez column, we combined the plaque with one of Bernie's great joys and put the inscription in Yiddish. (In perfect Yiddish,

too. It was translated by Yiddish literature scholar Liati Mayk, Bea Graham's granddaughter; Liati then sent it to her Yiddish professor to be fine-tuned into pure, original Ashkenazi dialect, complete with idioms.) The inscription follows the form of one of Bernie's favorite Yiddish insults, the one about only having one tooth. Here's the English version: "Even if all your teeth fall out but one, may you always chew on the fact that KJCC is a richer and warmer place because of you. You have given us laughter and fellowship and deepened our appreciation of all things Jewish." (Please see Photo Gallery for more photos.)

Congratulations, Bernie. The award was well earned. We hope this compensates somewhat for all the *tsouris* you had to go through during your two years as KJCC president.

Final Torah Study for the Season

Mark your calendar. Be at KJCC at 10:00 a.m. on May 9th. That morning will mark the last of Rabbi Richard Agler's Shabbat morning Torah study services for this season. We trust that he will begin again after High Holy Days are over

and our snowbirds begin to return home. If you have attended one of these engaging discussions and uplifting-yet-informal services, you won't want to miss it. If you have never been to one, give yourself a gift and join an educational, stimulating, and involving event. You'll be glad you did. Thank you, Rabbi Agler, for all you share with us.

— Gloria

The KJCC offers its deepest condolences to daughters Maxine, Diane and Jacqueline and their families on the death of their mother
Shirley Boxer.

An Invitation to a Daughter's Open House

Toby and Joel Bofshever, proud parents of Dr. Gena Bofshever, would like to invite our KJCC family to Dr. Gena's grand opening and open house of her new chiropractic office on Thursday, May 28th from 6 to 8 p.m. The office is located at 7119 West Broward Blvd. in Plantation, FL (far enough to pose no competition to other eminent healers.) The phone number for directions is 954-417-5815.

A Special Section in June for Joel Pollack

We're planning a special section in memory of Joel Pollack to run in our June/July/August summer issue. Please begin sending your thoughts, reminiscences, funny stories, cries of grief and happy recollections now, to the prez e-mail, president@keysjewishcenter.com.

Oneg Sponsors for May 2015

May 1st - Barney Coltman for his birthday.

May 8th - Steve Steinbock in honor of Mother's Day.

May 15th - Medina Roy and Bernie Ginsberg to celebrate their shared birthday.

May 22nd - Medina and Carl Roy to honor Mom Bianka's 100th birthday.

May Birthdays

2nd.....	Sherry Zwerdling
2nd.....	Barney Coltman
4th.....	Ryan Curtis
4th.....	Pamela G. Marmar
5th.....	Richard Palacino
7th.....	Murray Rapoport
8th.....	Kelley Greenman
8th.....	Sidney Boruszak
9th.....	Rhett Curtis
9th.....	Reid Schur
11th.....	Richard Agler
11th.....	Sheila R. Steinberg
12th.....	Madelyn Ruby Pollack
12th.....	Nyan Feder
12th.....	Robert Silk
13th.....	Rose Marie Gordon
14th.....	Medina Roy
14th.....	Bernie Ginsberg
14th.....	John Temkin
15th.....	Paul R. Schur
18th.....	Jaime Brennan
18th.....	Andrea P. Silverman
19th.....	Sylvie Coeurjoly
19th.....	Jonathon Hodgson
22nd.....	Christian Strasser
22nd.....	Sharon Repka
23rd.....	Jenny Margulies
23rd.....	Nettie Seder
23rd.....	Jules Seder
23rd.....	Bianka Kirschenbaum
23rd.....	Rita Williams
25th.....	Matthew Birnbaum
27th.....	Joan Boruszak
27th.....	Jeffrey Pollack
27th.....	Alan Beth
29th.....	Liati Mayk
29th.....	Robin Forman
29th.....	Nancy Zinner
31st.....	Mark E. Silverman
31st.....	Robert Sherman
31st.....	Wes Conklin

May Anniversaries

		Years
2nd	Bennett & Deborah Beinfest.....	25
4th	Alan & Susan Cooper.....	29
14th	Alan & Chely Markowitz.....	24
21st	Marshall & Myra Kaplan.....	43
24th	Alfred & Sue Ann Wehl.....	56

BOOK PLATE

In Memory of
Eve L. Greenstein
by Barney Coltman

Yahrzeit Plaque

Susan May Schwaid
 February 6, 2015
Always in our hearts

*The KJCC offers its deepest condolences to
 the friends and family of*

Marjorie Present

On her passing.

BOOK PLATE

In honor of
Toby and David Goldfinger
 from
Muriel and George Swartz
 March 1, 2015

KJCC Library Report

Medina Roy, loving tender and supreme czarina of the KJCC library, wanted you to know about four new permanent additions to our rapidly expanding collection of Judaica books of all kinds: history, philosophy, fiction, religious practice, mysticism, humor, poetry, biography and others.

First, Joyce Peckman has donated her personal copy of Simon Wiesenthal's "The Sunflower,

the book we met to discuss on April 12th. Joyce has also donated her personal copy of "The Lost Tribes of Israel," by Professor Tudor

Parfitt. (Professor Parfitt, you will surely remember, regaled a large audience at KJCC on March 15th with stories of his travels and adventures throughout the Middle East, Asia and Africa researching claims of Jewish ancestry by the Lemba in South Africa, who he ultimately traced to Yemen and discovered that they carry distinct Kohane gene markers. His address was one of the highlights of the KJCC season.) Joyce says that "Lost Tribes" is not a breezy read, but that it's witty and literate and richly rewarding.

Medina has just taken delivery of two new books, shown in the photograph above. One the left is "The Prime Ministers: An Intimate Narrative of Israeli Leadership," by Yehuda Avner, and on the right "Lincoln and the Jews: A History" by historians Jonathan Sarna and Benjamin Shapell.

Yehuda Avner, who recently died, was a political adviser, speechwriter and diplomat. His book is a true insider's account of "details of life-and-death decision-making, top-secret military operations and high-level peace negotiations under the leadership of Levi Eshkol, Menachem

Begin, Golda Meir and Yitzhak Rabin." This book is also the basis of a major documentary produced by the Academy Award-winning film division of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

There has been increasing speculation, not just by Internet bombastics on both sides but by serious scholars, about Lincoln's relationship and seeming affinity for Jews. Yes, there are even questions being raised as to whether Lincoln was a bit of a crypto-Jew himself.

The two historian-authors of this book carefully document how Lincoln's relationship with American Jews impacted his presidency and the decisions he made. They reveal that he had a deep and broad knowledge of the Hebrew Bible and used its concepts in some of his most important writings. They reveal that he befriended a number of Jews from a young age, appointed numerous Jews to public

office, and had a well-stocked kitchen cabinet of Jewish supporters and advisers.

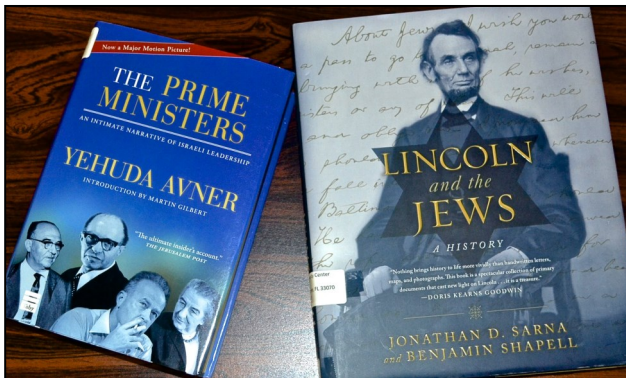
There is, of course, no charge to members who wish to borrow KJCC library books. Medina does have a sign-out sheet, but that's just so she knows where all her books are. Enjoy.

Shavuot Dairy Dinner on May 22nd

Please join us for our dinner get-together in May. It'll be on May 22nd in celebration of Shavuot, at 6:30 before the 8:00 service, sponsored by Michael and Lorena Kaufman in honor of son Lance's graduation from Law School. See the ad on page 20. Shavuot articles begin on page 42.

BOOK PLATE 2

In honor of
Toby and David Goldfinger
from
Muriel and George Swartz
March 1, 2015



CRF needs land-based volunteers, too

The first big project of KJCC's new Tikkun Olam Committee is working with the amazing Coral Reef Foundation (CRF), the Keys-based innovator of techniques proven to restore and replenish vital tropical reefs that are now being used around the world. (This is a very focused element of *Tikkun Olam*, intended to help heal our ocean neighbor, a project dubbed "Tikkun HaYam" – repair of the seas – by our friend and KJCC member Rabbi Ed Rosenthal of the Tampa-area Hillels.) But you don't have to be a diver to help with the vital work of CRF. They welcome land-based volunteers, too, at their education

center near the Pilot House restaurant, 5 Seagate Blvd., Key Largo. They need people to welcome guests and answer questions. Volunteers also handle retail sales, answer the office phones and generate mail orders. If your fingers are still dextrous you might be asked to create monofilament loops that they use for hanging new coral growths in their underwater nurseries. If you're handy, there is a need for those skilled with power tools and at small construction projects. Anyone interested is asked to sign up through the CRF web site, <http://www.coralrestoration.org/volunteer-opportunities/land-based>.

—Linda Kaplan

Ongoing Projects and Mitzvah Programs of KJCC

SUNSHINE COMMITTEE: If you know of any member who should receive a get well, congratulations or condolence card from the KJCC, call Gene Silverman, 305-664-3316.

CEMETERY INFORMATION: If you wish to plan for the very distant future, you can reserve space at the Kendall Mt. Nebo Cemetery in the KJCC section. Call Bernie Ginsberg, 305-852-9300.

MEDITATION GARDEN: Have you visited our beautiful garden? Call Steve Steinbock, 305-394-0143, to reserve a bench, brick or tree plaque for posterity.

PICTURE POSTCARDS: We have beautiful picture postcards in the KJCC Gift Shop bearing the Millard Wells representation of the KJCC which was commissioned by Sisterhood. They can be packaged to fit your needs and mailed to you or your gift recipient. The price is \$36 per hundred but we will sell lesser quantities. Contact Susan Gordon, 305-766-3585.

ONEG SHABBAT SPONSOR: To schedule your special date with Sisterhood, call Joyce Peckman, 305-451-0665.

KJCC TREE OF LIFE LEAVES and ROCKS, SANCTUARY SEAT PLATES, YARTZEIT MEMORIAL PLAQUES: Call Dave Mont, 305-393-9883, to arrange your donation.

KJCC BOOKPLATES for siddurim: Call Linda Pollack, 305-852-8575 for information.

JNF TREES IN ISRAEL: A gift of a tree, or two or more, makes a long remembered way to honor a loved one, a relative, a friend or an occasion. Both Israel and the KJCC benefit. Call Linda Kaplan, 305-396-7000.

CHAI-LIGHTS MITZVAH: Place a greeting or notice in Chai-Lights. Call Linda Pollack, 305-852-8575, to make your donation.

ADVERTISEMENT IN CHAI-LIGHTS or DIRECTORY: Your business ad will appear in every issue of Chai-Lights. Call Linda Pollack, 305-852-8575, for annual rates.

LIVE GREEN – RECYCLE: We are recycling ink cartridges, laser toners, cell phones, laptops, idevices, tablets and more. Call Steve Steinbock, 305-394-0143, or just bring your items to the KJCC.

Call the names listed above for assistance or send your request and check to the KJCC, P.O. Box 1332, Tavernier, FL 33070. Recipients of your gifts will be notified by card and listings will appear in Chai-Lights as well. Honorarium and memorial cards can also be requested. Donations can be earmarked to our various ongoing funds; e.g. Holocaust Education Fund, Meditation Garden, Rabbi & Cantor Fund, Scholarship Fund, Sara Cohen Memorial Tzedukah Fund, Sunshine Fund, or General Fund.

To Our Dear KJCC Friends –

Heartfelt thanks from the entire Pollack family for all of the support offered by members of the KJCC. It was a long haul for Joe and you all were here for him, and for us, throughout.

Joe was always pleased to know that we were part of this community. It surely helped him to feel secure when he needed to know that we were not alone.

So thank you one and all for your calls, visits, prayers, and kind words. We are proud to be part of this loving group, the KJCC Mishpocha.

*-Linda, Roy, Jeff, Judy, Will,
Maddy Pollack*

KJCC Gift Shop



**Tallit, Kipot, Kiddush Cups, Candlesticks
Mezuzzot, Jewelry and More!**



**For further information contact:
Susan Gordon (305) 766-3585**

In Memoriam May 2015

In Memory Of

Robert W. Singer

By Mary Lee Singer

<><><><><><><><><><><>

In Memory Of

Rose Wainer

By Richard & Sheila Steinberg

[illegible]

In Memory Of

Sam Wainer

By Richard & Sheila Steinberg

[illegible]

In Memory Of

Susan Cimkowski

By Stephen Steinbock

[illegible]

In Memory Of

Ida S. Reider

By George & Muriel Swartz

[illegible]

In Memory Of

Phillip Temkin

By Robert Temkin

<><><><><><><><><><><>

In Memory Of

Benjamin Weber

By Judith Weber

[illegible]

In Memory Of

Norma Cutler

By Donald Zinner

[illegible]

In Memory Of

Rene Rose

By Skip Rose

[illegible]

How Certain Contributions to KJCC Can Instantly Become Permanent, Living Memorials

Book Plates: We are, after all, the People of the Book. For \$36 an inscription of your choice will be placed in one of our Siddurim or Tanakhs. An example: "In Loving Memory of my grandfather, who first taught me about the treasures that lie between these covers."

Tree of Life Leaves: We have three beautiful, six-foot Trees of Life — the world's most enduring spiritual metaphor — adorning the wall at the rear of the KJCC sanctuary. For \$75 an individual, golden leaf can be engraved with your message of memory or love. An example: "To our grandchildren: May they always be in the presence of the Eternal Light."

Garden Bricks and Trees: \$125 buys a single brick and \$200 a double brick in our magnificent Meditation Garden walkway, engraved with your personal message. An example: "You were the best, Aunt Goldie. Well, you and those amazing cheese blintzes." For \$300 we'll plant the native tree of your choice as the ultimate living tribute; an outdoor plaque is included in the price.

Sisterhood

Erica Lieberman-Garrett



Passover was a wonderful time for the KJCC! Everyone seemed to enjoy the Family Seder at the Islamorada Fishing Club this year. Chef Joseph prepared a delicious meal, and the matza ball soup was especially good this year, thanks to a bit of instruction from me. Gene Silverman's *charoset* was scrumptious. Thank you, Mort, for coring all those apples!

Seventy-eight people attended. Many visitors and their families joined us, as well as some of our newest members. I know that they felt the warmth and the joy that "our little KJCC shul" has to offer. The service, led by Gloria Avner, Susan Gordon, Steve Steinbock and Steve Hartz, was very meaningful and fun, with many children looking for the *afikoman* and joyfully singing the four questions.

The twelfth annual Women's Seder raised over \$1200 and this year's *tikkun olam* recipients will be The Talia Agler Foundation, the KJCC Scholarship Fund, and the Visiting Nurses Association of the Florida Keys (which provides hospice) in honor of Carol Steinbock. We are grateful to be able to help our community in this way.

Another season is winding down as our snowbirds head north for the summer. For those of us who stay in the Keys, there is still plenty to do. Our upcoming end-of-season Sisterhood luncheon will be on Sunday, May 3rd at noon. We will get together at a new restaurant in Key Largo called *Skipper's Dockside* (formerly Coconuts) to relax, socialize, summarize a great season, talk about our plans for the summer, and simply enjoy each other's company. All of the women work very hard at the shul. Everyone deserves so much credit for all their help, their time, and their contributions that make everything run as smoothly as it does. I really appreciate the support that I have received as the new Sis-

terhood president, and together we have a great team. I hope that you can join us for the luncheon on May third.

There will be a Shavuot/Shabbat Dairy Pot Luck dinner on Friday May 22nd, at 6:30 p.m. Please contact me at hippiejap@hotmail.com to RSVP and coordinate your dish. Lorena and Michael Kaufman will sponsor the dinner in honor of son Lance Roy's graduation from law school.

Sisterhood is excited to be hosting a new and fun event by our creative art group. Please save the afternoon of Sunday, June 14th. Details are to follow, but I can tell you that we will be having fun doing some art project, led by the brilliant Gloria Avner, and I'm sure that there will be some refreshments. It will be open to everyone to enjoy. Donations will be appreciated. We will also be getting together in June for a planning meeting, oy vey! Summer goes quickly and the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, will begin on Sunday, September 13th.

There are so many ways that people help our Sisterhood and the shul. As I've said before, we are small, but we are mighty. As our congregation continues to grow, expand and evolve, we end a great season feeling proud of who we are and how far we have come. We support each other in sad times, and celebrate our *simchas* with joy. The more involved I have become over the past few years with all of the activities and experiences that we offer, the more blessed my life has been. I hope that you all experience this as well, and I encourage all of the women who are our Sisterhood to participate, connect, and evolve with us as we head into the summer months, relax a bit, and anticipate with excitement our plans for the new year 5776. ♦

Contributions to KJCC

We appreciate the thoughtfulness of those who support the Keys Jewish Community Center by remembering and honoring their friends and loved ones through their generous contributions. All donations made after the fifth of the month will appear in the following month's Chai-Lights. When you make a donation, please signify the fund it is to go to and the recognition of the name or names to be listed.

General Fund

Cole, Ronald
Dandrea, Robert & Joni Sages Dandrea

In Honor of

love offering

Sisterhood Oneg Fund

Eisenstein, Michael & Heather Corrigan
Grossman, Herb & Elinor
Silverman, Mort & Gene

Meditation Garden

Nobil, Lynn
Nobil, Lynn
Nobil, Lynn
Nobil, Lynn

In Memory of

Orchid - Joel Cohen
Orchid - Sara Cohen
Orchid - James Nobil
Orchid - Erik Persoff

Sunshine Fund

Sax, Stuart & Lauren Sam & Babe Sax

Sara Cohen Memorial Tzedukah Fund

Joyce Peckman

In Memory of

Leslie Peckman

Yahrzeits

Azzato, Maryann E. Paul Charlap
Boruszak, Joan Robert Kohlenbrener
Kaplan, Marshall & Myra Gertrude Kaplan

Jewish Definitions

Torahfied (n.) Inability to remember one's lines when called to read from the Torah at one's Bar or Bat Mitzvah. (Or from the Haggadah at Passover)

Matzilation (v.) Smashing a piece of matzo to bits while trying to butter it.

Bubbegum (n.) Candy one's mother gives to her grandchildren that she never gave to her own children.

Chutzpapa (n.) A father who wakes his wife at 4:00 a.m. so she can change the baby's diaper.

Deja Nu (n.) Having the feeling you've seen the same exasperated look on your mother's face, but not knowing exactly when.

YEDA VE'TORASHA

Yardena Kamely



The Sephardim In The Berber World - Morocco

The history of the Sephardim fleeing the persecution of the Inquisition in Spain is a story of survival and loss, of conserving the old Jewish traditions and creating a new Sephardic Jewish world in the Diaspora, the Middle East and Israel. It is also the story of loss of Judaism, either by death, when they perished in the relentless Spanish persecution, or by assimilation. The expulsion from Spain in 1492 was the end of the greatest and most culturally assimilated Jewish community of Europe in the Middle Ages. One of the escape routes when quickly leaving Spain was migration to North Africa.

Large numbers of expelled Sephardim fled to Morocco, just across the narrow Gibraltar straits to the south. There had been close connections between the Jewish communities of Morocco and Spain in the past. Jewish communities had lived in North Africa for a long time. Morocco at that time was part of the Berber empire, which dominated all of North Africa and part of Spain for centuries. There had been a strong Jewish presence in all the *Maghrebi* countries (Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco) since Roman times, centuries before the rise of Islam. Where the Jews came from to these countries is not known; it is believed that they arrived from Cyrenaica (now Libya) and Egypt

in the 1st century C.E., when the Great Revolt against the Romans was crushed and the Hellenistic Jewish community of Alexandria was destroyed. Exiled Jews took refuge in the North African mountains and spread Judaism among the indigenous Berber population.

Historians write about massive conversions to Judaism among the Berbers, who practiced their adopted religion until the Islamic conquest in the 7th century. At that time some Berber tribes converted to Islam, while others retreated to the interior of the *Maghreb* (Tunisia westward) where they intermingled with other Jews forming new communities.

Throughout the Islamic Empire period the Jewish communities of North Africa and Spain interacted regularly. During periods of Spanish persecution prior to the famous 1492 expulsion, Jews had fled to North Africa where they were received by the old Jewish community, and where the two communities merged, sharing their common Jewish heritage. The Moroccan city of Fez was one

important Jewish center. Other Jews arrived in Morocco from Algeria and Tunisia, fleeing the Muslim conquest coming from the east. Then a flow of Jews from Palestine and Babylonia

A group of Sephardic Jewish women photographed in Salonika, Greece in 1917. This was their everyday dress.

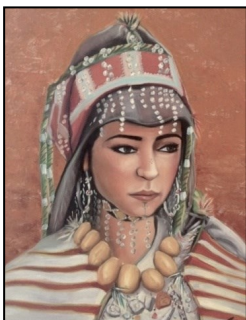


arrived in Morocco.

The history of the Jews of Morocco during the Middle Ages tells of persecution from various fanatical Islamic groups. The situation improved a bit when the exiled Sephardim and Marranos arrived. But the virtual flood of refugees after the 1492 expulsion did not assimilate to the old community as easily as the trickle of had in previous decades; the full merging of the Jewish communities in Morocco happened centuries later.

The Sephardim settled in the coastal towns and in major cities like Fez, Meknes, and Tetuan. They came to play a central role in the development of the country and in external trade. With their superior culture, skills in printing, manufacturing, and weaving, and their ability to speak different languages and to trade with their exiled brethren settled throughout central Europe and the Mediterranean, they had much to offer. They were intermediaries between their Muslim neighbors and foreign traders and consuls. Many served as diplomatic representatives to European governments on behalf of Moroccan sultans. They were rewarded with special rights and privileges that the old community did not have, and thus acquired wealth and rose to influential positions.

As soon as the Sephardim settled in Morocco, they formed separate communities, maintaining the social organization and the Jewish customs of Spain. They wanted to conserve the Judeo-Spanish culture of the Golden Age in Spain. They dominated Jewish life, but they didn't integrate with the old North African communities, regarding the native Jews of Morocco as inferior. Their privileged positions – they were the intellectual elite of lawyers, doctors, financiers, and royal advisers – and their seeing the other Jews as inferior, created inevitable resentment in the old community. The Se-



A late 18th century Moroccan Jewish woman in portrait.

phardim called the native Jews *Berberiscos*, the Sephardim were referred to derisively as *Megurashim* (Hebrew, the banished) and were also called *Forasteros* (Spanish, strangers). Tensions between the two communities lasted for hundreds of years.

From the late Middle Ages on, all North African Jewry suffered from the general economic and cultural decline of the Arab countries. Despite difficult conditions and increasing poverty, a rich Jewish culture – with both spiritual and intense social components – developed within the walls of the *Mellahs* (Jewish quarters in the cities). These Moroccan Jews were very pious; everywhere you could hear their prayers and chants.

During the time of French colonialism in North Africa in the 19th century, the more privileged Sephardi families adopted the French culture and assimilated with the Europeans. The Jews of the *Mellahs* left them and lived in neighboring old residential quarters or new European neighborhoods. The great majority remained traditional and religious. By the early 20th century, the largest Sephardi community in the Diaspora was that of North Africa, half of it in Morocco. With the independence of the North African states and the creation of the State of Israel, the mass migration of the Sephardim and North African Jews began. Many of the educated, affluent Jews went to France and French Canada. The population of the old *Mellahs* and Berber villages emigrated to Israel. A whole new social history of the Sephardim had begun.

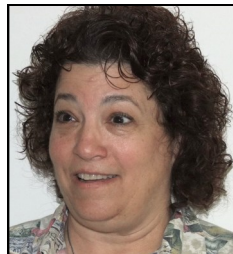
The history of the Sephardim and Marranos is to be continued in my next article – their migration to South America, their intent to escape Spanish persecution there, and their tragic fate. ♦



A Moroccan Jewish woman photographed in the early 20th century.

World Jewish Report

Medina Roy



The 2015 Israeli Elections

The recent elections in Israel for the 20th *Knesset* saw the highest voter turnout since 1999. The percentage of eligible voters who came to the polls on March 17th was 71.8 percent; the turnout fourteen years ago was 78.7 percent. According to the *Israel Democracy Institute*, the number of women elected (28) broke the record of 27 set in the 2013 elections. The number of Orthodox and *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) lawmakers fell from 39 to 25, while the number of Arab-Israeli lawmakers increased from 12 to 17. Forty-one new lawmakers – slightly more than one-third of the parliament – will join this new *Knesset*. (www.jta.org, 3-18-15)

An Israeli Film and Television Milestone

Producer Steve Tisch has a Super Bowl ring and an Academy Award attached to his name. Now Tisch, who produced the film “Forrest Gump” and co-owns the New York Giants, has a film school bearing his name. He has given the Tel Aviv University (TAU) Department of Film and Television a \$10 million gift. The donation is the largest that the department has ever received, elevating it to the status of a full-fledged film school. He said he was prompted to make the gift after visiting Tel Aviv last year to serve as honorary chair of the *Tel Aviv Student Film Festival*. Tisch’s family previously endowed New York University’s *Tisch School of the Arts* in the 1980s. TAU’s Department of Film and Television is ranked among the world’s top 15 international schools of film and television. Notable graduates of the school include directors Ari Folman (“Waltz With Bashir”), Dror Moreh (“The Gatekeepers”) and Yaron Shani (“Ajami”); screenwriters Gideon Raff (“Homeland”) and Hagai Levy (“The Affair” and “In Treatment”). Tisch’s gift will increase the

school’s ability to attract top faculty, offer scholarships and increase international collaborations. (www.variety.com, 3-5-15)

A Request from *Yad Vashem*

The research team at *Yad Vashem*, Israel’s memorial and museum to the Holocaust, is attempting to track down information about a number of individuals who are listed in a journal and an improvised *Haggadah* written during the Holocaust. The team is requesting help from the public. The journal belonged to Regina Honigman, who worked in a slave labor factory at Gabersdorf Camp in Czechoslovakia. Honigman documented her daily activities in a diary and listed the names of some 40 women prisoners along with some of their autographs and poems. Her modified Passover *Haggadah* reflected the women’s experience in the camp. Honigman, originally from Zawierce, Poland, was sent to work at Gabersdorf following a decree by the Nazis that every Jewish family in the town send one family member for forced labor. Her parents and sisters were eventually murdered in Auschwitz, but she and one brother survived the war. She continued writing in the journal even after being transferred to a displaced persons (DP) camp. Eventually, she moved to Australia with her husband, whom she met at the DP camp. Honigman died in 1992 and her daughters donated the diary to *Yad Vashem* in 2005. (www.tabletmag.com, 4-6-15)

Methuselah is Looking for a Mate

Sarah Sallon, M.D., is director of Hadasah’s *Louis L. Borick Natural Medicine Research Center*. As part of her long-term *Middle Eastern Medicinal Plant Project*, she initiated the *Germination of Ancient Seed Pro-*

gram which works with neighboring Palestinians and Jordanians to develop and conserve the medicinal plants in the area. During the 1960s excavation of *Masada*, a 2,000-year-old Judean date palm seed was found in perfect condition. After much study, the seed was planted. Now ten years old, the tree – it was given the name *Methuselah* – is over ten feet tall with offshoots and flowers. It produced pollen for the first time last year, indicating that *Methuselah* is a potent male tree. To revive the species, a female is needed. Other date seeds were found in and around the same area but they have yet to be completely analyzed. The wild Judean date palm is considered to be extinct. After the Jewish War and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., the Jews were sent into exile. In the following centuries, agricultural continuity – essential for date palm cultivation – was lost. By the end of the Crusader period, the majority of date plantations were gone. For ancient Israel, the date palm was a symbol of prosperity; today it represents a historic connection to the Biblical land of Israel. Even today, the image of the tree is seen on the Israeli ten-shekel coin. Dr. Sallon maintains hope that the tree may have medicinal properties based on descriptions in ancient medical texts. For years, it was believed that *Methuselah* was the oldest seed to have been germinated, but in 2012, Russian scientists reportedly grew a 32,000-year-old seed found in Siberia that they believe was buried by an ice-age squirrel. (www.haaretz.com, 3-31-15)

Jews Make the Cut

At the beginning of March, *Forbes* released its 29th annual list of billionaires. This year's list featured a record 1,826 people, 181 more than last year. Ten of the top fifty were members of the Tribe. Larry Ellison, founder of the tech giant Oracle Corporation, is listed as the wealthiest Jew in the world and fifth wealthiest person overall, with a net worth of \$54.2 billion. Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg is the second wealthiest Jew (\$35.5 billion) and 14th wealthiest overall. Mark Zuckerberg, still one of the world's youngest billionaires at age 30, came

in at number 16 overall (\$33.4 billion). Several Jews are among the newcomers on the list, including Russ Weiner, the founder and CEO of Rockstar energy drinks, Jerry Reinsdorf, owner of the Chicago Bulls and Chicago White Sox sports franchises and Ken Grossman, a co-founder of the Sierra Nevada Brewing Company. While men still far outnumber women on the list, a few Jewish women are on it: Shari Arison, American-born Israeli businesswoman and philanthropist – and Israel's richest woman (her father founded Carnival Corporation) – is worth \$4.4 billion. Karen Pritzker, whose grandfather built the Hyatt empire (\$4.3 billion); Lynn Schusterman, a drop-out from the University of Miami – her wealth comes from oil and gas – (\$3.7 billion); and Doris Fisher, co-founder of the Gap clothing store (\$3.2 billion). Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, just made the list with \$1 billion. (*The Forward*, 3-6-15)

A Computer in Your Palm

In 2011, Nissan Bahar and Franky Imbesi founded *Keepod*, a company based in Tel Aviv. They were looking to create a USB drive that would keep all of a user's data on a small external drive rather than on a computer's internal hard drive. Bahar and Imbesi invented the *Keepod*, a cheap device (\$7.00) that places a computer's operating system on a small, affordable USB drive, allowing users to connect to the internet using older – and much less expensive – computers. With that in mind, the team's end-goal was to provide the world's poorest countries with widespread computer and internet access. Bahar and Imbesi say their device will help bridge the "digital divide" – the gap between those with and without regular computer access. "People can access information to empower themselves," Bahar said. "That means education, health care, personal growth...and see what's going on around the world through a free medium." This is not the first time an attempt has been made to bring internet access to the world's poorest people. About ten years ago, the United Nations backed an effort to create a \$100 laptop through *One Laptop Per Child*, a project that aimed to bring

inexpensive computers to developing nations. But Bahar believes that this method is impractical on a large scale because even \$100 is not affordable for people in developing countries. Since the *Keepod* allows users to store their personal information on the drive, people can share a single computer, further lessening the cost of internet access. *Keepod* is working on a plan to collect millions of computers that are discarded each year and ship them to the developing world at a cost of under \$100 each. The company has already sold more than 30,000 USB drives. *Keepod's* added bonus: by keeping sensitive information off the computer, the product provides users with an added layer of security and viruses won't be an issue. (www.jta.org, 3-12-15)

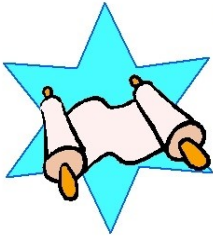
In Memoriam

- Al Rosen, third baseman for baseball's Cleveland Indians and the American League's Most Valuable Player in 1953, died recently. He was 91. Rosen, a four-time all-star, was known as the "Hebrew Hammer" (also a nickname given to Hank Greenberg, the first Jewish baseball superstar). He was given the nickname because he had been an amateur boxer, a sport he reportedly picked up after being harassed and beaten up in his neighborhood as one of only a handful of Jewish boys. Rosen played for the Indians from 1947 through 1956, which included the 1948 World Series – the last time Cleveland won the title. No other Indians player has been named MVP since Rosen, who retired after the 1956 season. He was 32 at the time and suffering from a back injury due to a car accident the previous year. Following his on-field career, Rosen worked in the front offices of the Houston Astros, San Francisco Giants and the New York Yankees. Rosen's childhood idol was Hank Greenberg, first baseman for the Detroit Tigers who (many years before Sandy Koufax) once refused to play on *Yom Kippur*. (www.jta.org, 3-15-15)

- Yehuda Avner, author, diplomat, advisor and speechwriter to several Israeli prime ministers, died at the end of March. He was 86. He loved Israel and the Jewish people "with a

fervor that resonated in his voice whenever he was called upon to speak in public." Born in Manchester, England, Avner migrated to pre-state Israel in 1947 after graduating from high school. He was among the founders of Kibbutz *Lavi* in the Lower Galilee. Avner fought in the siege of Jerusalem in 1948. In 1958 he joined the Foreign Ministry and became an insider in the Prime Minister's Office, later becoming a close advisor to and English speechwriter for four of Israel's prime ministers – Levi Eshkol, Golda Meir, Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Rabin – and playing a significant role in the history of the modern State of Israel. Through the years, Avner took copious notes, and after his retirement used them to chronicle the history of the state. His 2010 book, *The Prime Ministers: An Intimate Narrative of Israeli Leadership*, became an international best seller. In 1983, he was appointed as ambassador to the Court of St. James, the government of Great Britain. He was known to have said that when he presented his credentials to Queen Elizabeth, she asked, "Why is this knight different from all other knights?" (www.jpost.com, 3-24-15)

- Bernhard "Buddy" Elias, closest living relative of Anne Frank and guardian of her legacy, has died at the age of 89. A childhood playmate of Anne and her older sister Margot, Elias was born in Frankfurt, but in 1929 his father, a merchant, was transferred to his company's Swiss office. Two years later, Buddy and his mother joined him in Basel. Elias was Anne's first cousin and four years her senior. He was an actor, comedian and professional ice skater but primarily he lectured world-wide on the Frank family. At the time of his death, Elias was president of *The Anne Frank Fonds*, a charity in Basel, Switzerland founded in 1963 by Anne Frank's father Otto. (Otto Frank died in 1980.) The *Fonds'* mission supports social and cultural projects centered on tolerance. Anne's literary legacy received a major boost when, in 2001, Elias' wife, while cleaning out the attic of their house, discovered a trove of letters, postcards and photographs – some 6,000 items in all – sent to the Eliases by the Franks. (www.haaretz.com, 3-17-15) ◇



KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT

SHABBAT DINNER



We have been wandering in the desert for 49 days. Omer counting is over and it is time to receive the Torah.

Let's make up for our ancestors who nearly slept through the great moment.



Tikkun Leil Shavuot is the widespread custom of studying Torah on Shavuot night until dawn (or maybe until 10:00 pm). And we'll have a great Dairy meal before our 8 pm Services and Yizkor.

JOIN US on FRIDAY, MAY 22, 2015, 6:30 PM

SHAVUOT CELEBRATION

DAIRY DINNER, SERVICES, YIZKOR, DISCUSSION OF

MEGILLAT RUTH, FILM,

RECEIVE THE TORAH



-Sponsors -

Dinner: Michael & Lorena Kaufman in honor of Lance Roy's graduation from law school.

Oneg: Medina Roy in honor of Bianka's 100th birthday.



- Contact Erica -
hippiejap@hotmail.com
to reserve your spot and
coordinate your covered dish.
- No Charge -

Photo Gallery

Saturday, March 21 was native plant give-a-way day at Pennekamp State Park in Key Largo. Gardenmeister Steve Steinbock led a contingent of KJCCers who stocked up on plants (only up to the legal limit, alas) for the KJCC Meditation Garden. Below left, Steve stands with the four corner stanchions of the new Levy/Miller Garden pergola, the one that will house a collection of his beloved orchids, at the other end of the Garden from the original pergola built and donated by Alan Beth and Candy Stanlake. The roof trusses went up shortly after.



At right and just above, Jane Friedman stands with and blows out a candle on a cake celebrating her birthday at the March 27 oneg. Notice how many candles she's blowing out in the upper photo. All the others must have gotten, um, lost.



At the same March 27 oneg that featured a celebration of Jane Friedman's birthday, Medina does HaMotzi honors after the Kiddush. It was her final official act of the night after leading services along with Gloria and Jane. Gloria captured the photo, below center, of Art Itkin, our ageless Pauline Roller and Barry Dorf. In the photo below right, taken by Joyce Peckman while

visiting oldest son Daniel at his home in Denver for Passover, Joyce captured a ritual not engaged in too often any more by very many of us: the collection and burning of all household chametz prior to the beginning of the holiday.

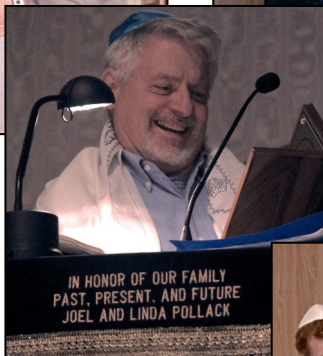
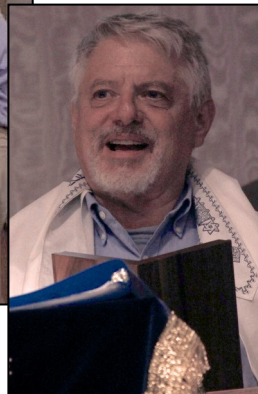


In the photos below and below right, the new 2015 Board for Voices for Florida Keys Children, which includes KJCC members Elaine Schulberg, Maryon Gould and Mary Lee Singer. That's Rita Conklin at left in the small inset photo below, who also attended the luncheon. It's very nice to see you, Maryon, if only in pictures.

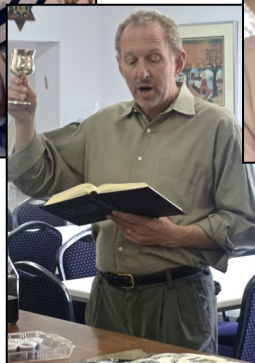


Some photos from the April 3rd first-night seder put on each year by Beth Kaminstein and Dave and Suzi Feder at Beth's oceanside home in Islamorada. The first night of Pesach, of course, always corresponds to the full moon. If you look carefully you can see it in the upper right corner of the top right photo.





The top four shots are from the Friday, April 10th service, where Bernie was awarded this year's Joel Cohen Award. At top left are all the previous winners at services that night. (Our thanks to Steve Harris for capturing the pictures.) The photos below were all taken the next day, at the April 11th Torah study service conducted by Rabbi Richard Agler. Everyone left knowing a little more about the Exodus story than when they came in. Except Pauline, of course, who knew Moses personally.





Some photos from the April 12th discussion of Simon Wiesenthal's "The Sunflower," led by Rabbi Agler. No one was unmoved.



The photo just above is, as it seems, of the Highland Park, IL train station. It was sent by Richard Kaufman, and we include it as a clear symbol that high season is over and our snowbirds are returning to the north. At left is the year-end picnic of the Upper Keys Concert Series volunteers, led by our own Joyce Peckman. Six of her volunteers are also KJCC members.

On April 17, the day after Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, KJCC's Holocaust Committee, comprised of chair Yardena Kamely plus Medina Roy and Muriel Swartz, led services. As you can see from the photos, Gloria was also called to the bemaah several times to join in the singing. Bert Jimenez, a friend of KJCC and long-time student in Yardena's Hebrew classes, brought his guitar and strummed soft accompaniment to several songs.

And why are we showing a photo of tulips placed in front of the bemaah, replacing our usual flowers? Yom HaShoah commemorations often feature tulips as a way to honor the Dutch people, who did so much, often risking their own lives, to help Jews during World War II.





Photos continue of the KJCC Yom HaShoah commemoration on April 17th. It has become traditional for the Holocaust Committee

to present six candles, one for each million Jews murdered, not as a consequence of war but as an act of calmly and coldly calculated strategy.

We're an informal shul, and almost always there is warm, casual banter and the soft murmur of conversation during services. But during this ceremony, when they call selected people to the front to light candles, there is virtual silence. Each candle is dedicated to a group of innocents destroyed in this incomprehensible act by what was at the time the most cultured and educated country in Europe.

That Sunday, April 19th, the Holocaust Committee also sponsored a viewing of "Treblinka's Last Witness," a documentary about the last survivor of the famous and doomed revolt by Treblinka prisoners. Thank you for your work, Holocaust Committee. We are grateful.

KJCC Meditation Garden

Our extended brick walkway is in place. Come and spend some time walking around our peaceful and beautiful Meditation Garden.

Plans are under way for a new pergola which will house our new KJCC Orchid Garden.

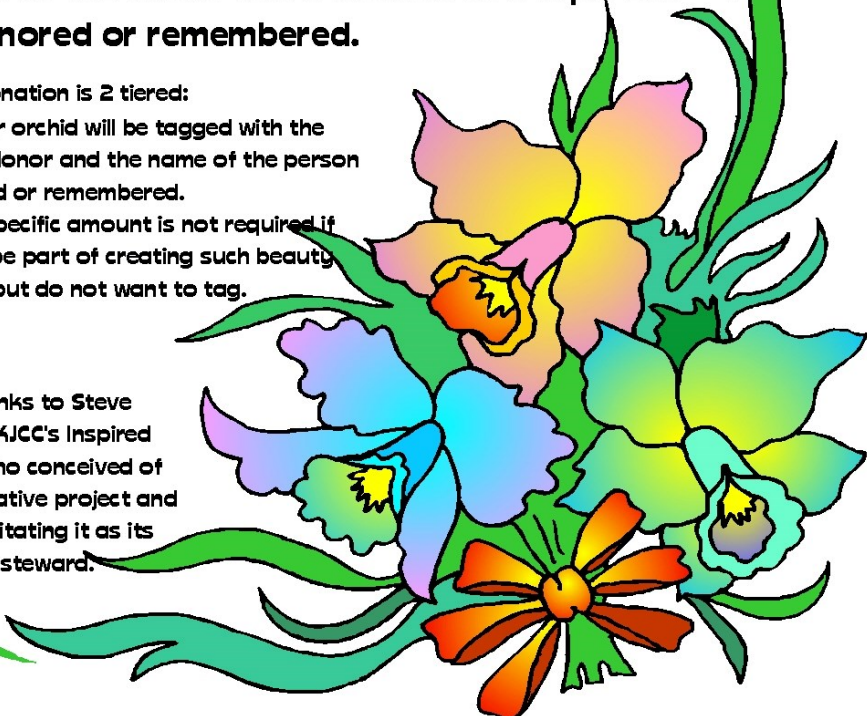
We invite you to become a part of this fresh undertaking. Make your donation toward a new and beautiful orchid. The orchid will be tagged with the name of the donor and the name of the person being honored or remembered.

Suggested donation is 2 tiered:

\$ 65 - Your orchid will be tagged with the name of the donor and the name of the person being honored or remembered.

\$ Other - Specific amount is not required if you want to be part of creating such beauty and serenity but do not want to tag.

Many thanks to Steve Steinbock, KJCC's Inspired Gardener, who conceived of this living, creative project and will be facilitating it as its loving steward.



The Women's Seder – A Dozen Years Old

By Gloria Avner and Joyce Peckman

Look at the pictures. There's a new question circulating the week before Passover: Why is this Women's Seder different from all other Women's Seders? Aha! The answer: not only is a man present, but he sits among us as a treasured friend and honored guest. Forty-two women, ranging in age from nine to ninety-nine, plus our first male attendee, Steve Steinbock, participated in KJCC's 12th annual Women's Seder on March 22nd. From the beginning, there have been three themes at each seder: a convivial gathering based around a meaningful ceremony, a collection of funds to be sent to organizations that help women and children (our small effort at *tikkun olam*), and a tribute to one of our members. This year the funds collected will be donated to The Talia Agler Girls' Shelter in Nairobi, Kenya, the KJCC Scholarship Fund, and the VNA Hospice of the Florida Keys. Steve was in attendance for the third reason. Last fall we told his wife Carol

Cimkowski Steinbock that she would be this year's honoree, and Steve was there to witness the fulfillment of that promise.

The Seder began as always with an introduction that went around the table: "I am (name) daughter



Special Guest of Honor Steve Steinbock with Linda Pollack

[Steve said "son"] of (mother's name), who was the child of (grandmother's name)." This year at Erica's suggestion we added countries of origin. For Linda Kaplan from Miami and Jane Friedman, from the Philippines, this was an especially meaningful addition. Although a few of our guests recounted three generations in North Carolina or Pennsylvania, many of us traced our roots to Rumania, Poland, Germany, and Russia, or even the Netherlands and Morocco.

Gloria Avner was the leader, with Joyce Peckman, Beth Kaminstein and Joan Stark her assistants. Muriel Swartz put it best when she wrote,





"Gloria explains in a caring, thoughtful way as she includes those who are at their first Seder along with those who have been to countless... All learn something new from Gloria's extensive knowledge." Using a condensed version of *The Journey Continues: The Maayan Passover Haggadah*, we read a deeply meaningful consideration of our continuing journey from bondage to freedom. We narrated

the bravery of Shifra and Puah, the Hebrew midwives who ignored the decree of Pharaoh to kill newborn Jewish boys. We filled Joan's hand-made goblet with water to create *Kos Miriam*, commemorating the well of fresh water that followed the wandering Jews through the desert until Miriam's death.



With the accompaniment of musical instruments, we sang a new *Dayeinu*: "If we continue to organize, march and vote to affirm our values, *Dayeinu*. If we care for the earth and its future as responsibly as we care for those we love, *Dayeinu*. If we honor our visions more than our fears, *Dayeinu*."

As always, the food was plentiful and delicious, expertly organized and beautifully presented by Erica Lieberman-Garrett and her team. Once again we were uniquely honored to have the





real deal *ko-*
sher schmeer
matzah, pre-
pared via the
exacting 18-
minute rule by
the talented
Susisara Feder.
There was
killer horse-
radish and two
varieties of
sweet
charoset,
thanks to the
efforts of Joan
Stark and Paul-
ine Roller.



Then came the home-
made tropical *gefilte*
fish by Beth Kamin-
stein. After Carla as-
sisted in serving Eri-
ca's dill-enhanced
chicken soup with
matzoh balls, we



headed for the buffet. There was
brisket provided by Carol Laskin
and Gloria Avner, Moroccan chicken by Sofy
Wasser, and a table full of other dishes wor-



thy of queens,
prepared by
generous wom-
en too numer-
ous to name.

Between the
friendly conversa-
tions during
dinner and des-
sert, we were
called to quiet,
as Teresa
Kwalick, Carol's
good friend,



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ONEG \$60

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AND ANNOUNCED FROM THE BEMA.

Honor a loved one or celebrate a special event such as a birthday, anniversary, new baby, graduation, bar/bat mitzvah, safe return or any other occasion of your choice. Sisterhood will purchase challah, wine, coffee/ tea/soft drinks and baked goods.

Contact: Joyce Peckman
(732) 447-5225





Once again this year, our deepest appreciation to Holly Padgett for her patience and beautiful photography.



fellow Catholic, and one of us for many years, spoke of our fond memories of this



year's honoree. A ceramic orchid container will be created and donated to the KJCC Meditation Garden in Carol's honor, and her name will be added to the tapestry adorning the KJCC vestibule.

The Women's Seder is also special because our intent goes beyond the mandated re-telling of our story. We aim to "Do Something," to recognize the injustices that exist in our world and work to repair them. In doing this we follow in the footsteps of a long line of remarkable women throughout Jewish history. ♦



Photos continue on next page...



photos continue next page...





PESACH

THIS YEAR IN THE FLORIDA KEYS

by Gloria Avner

When the son of a founding KJCC member (now almost the same age his father had been when he left us) tells us how happy he is to be at our seder and that he would never miss one (although he has to drive all the way from Naples to get here), the message rings loud and clear: this is an important evening, we must be doing something right, and our people's most important traditions will go on.

Look at the excitement on the children's faces, the tables full of happy guests, and the enthusiastic team of leaders (cantorial Steve Hartz beaming out the special *Yom Tov Kid-dush*, Gloria Avner and Susan Gordon sing-

ing, story-telling and coordinating kids, and Steve Steinbock on his roller skates and with his cordless microphone facili-

tating readers throughout the large room who are sharing the important task we are all charged with: to re-tell, out loud, the story of our escape from slavery into freedom as if it were happening to us, all of us, right now.

We obeyed the *mitzvah* with gusto and gustatorial delight. Thanks to special guidance from Erica Lieberman-Garrett, the chicken soup with *matzoh* balls sur-

passed all previous years. The food was delicious, especially the *charoset*, generously prepared by Gene Silverman and KJCC matri-



arch Pauline Roller (who insisted on chopping all those apples, even though at 99.5 years old she would have been granted a pass).

Seeing a tableful of Susan and Joe Sachs'





youngest generation, hearing their three grandchildren sing the four questions like champs along with our own Mikhaela, Rachel and our other visiting children, seeing how generously Mikhaela Bitton helped a younger child find the *afikomen* though she had



found it first – it all reassures us that *Yiddishkeit* is alive and well in the Florida Keys.

We acknowledge our responsibility to make the world a better place. We bless, we sing, we eat, we laugh, we express our thanks as a community, we even remember not to gloat over the Egyptians who were drowned chasing us across the Reed Sea. *Dayeinu*. Let's do it again next year. ♦



**Photos continue
from the 2015 KJCC
Family Seder...**





Bernie has often said that the children should be bribed with sweets so they will associate that with the practice of Jewish rituals. Each child at our seder was rewarded for the *Afikomen* search. And, as you can see at top, it was they who we asked to open the door for Elijah.



KJCC Live Green - Recycle



In our quest to help you help the planet, we are collecting:

- ◆ **ink cartridges**
- ◆ **laser toners** (not previously recycled)
- ◆ **cell phones**
- ◆ **lap top computers**
- ◆ **i devices**
- ◆ **tablets**
- ◆ **and more.**
- ◆ **Items can be working or in need of repair.**

**Contact Steve Steinbock
305-394-0143
or just bring to the KJCC.**



May – in the Midst of the Omer

by Joyce Peckman

The month of May begins with the 27th day of the Omer. What is this Omer all about? And what is Lag BaOmer?

An Omer is an old Biblical measure of grain, quantified at about two quarts. In Leviticus, *Parshat Emor*, is the commandment, "When you come to the land that I will give you and you reap its harvest, you must bring an Omer of your first reaping to the priest....for a wave offering to God....The priest shall make this wave offering on the day after the first day of the Passover holiday....You shall then count seven complete weeks....until the day after the seventh week, fifty days....This day shall be celebrated as a sacred holiday (Shavuot) when no work may be done. This is an eternal law for all generations, no matter where you may live." So following the clear instructions in the Torah, we begin the count each year at the end of the second Seder, immediately after the triumphant shout of "Next year in Jerusalem!"

According to the *Halakha* (Jewish law), a person may only recite the blessing while it is still night. If you miss a night, you can continue to count, without saying a blessing. The period of counting the Omer is also a time of semi-mourning for the disciples of Rabbi Akiva. According to the Talmud, 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva perished during the time of the Omer-counting as a sign of Divine anger for not honoring one another properly. (They were either killed by the Romans during the Bar Kokhba revolt in 132-136 CE or they died in a plague.) Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (1829-1908), author of *Aruch HaShulchan*, postulates that the mourning period also memorializes Jews who were murdered during the Crusades, and later blood libels and pogroms (Wikipedia). As a result, *Halakha* forbids weddings, haircuts, or listening to instrumental music (a boon for *a cappella* groups) during the period between Passover

and Shavuot. I don't think it is a coincidence that Yom HaShoah is also observed during the Omer.

On the 33rd day of the Omer – *Lag BaOmer* is Hebrew *gematria* for "33rd [day] in the Omer" – the plague killing Rabbi Akiva's students ended. (Some cite a military victory.) And so on Lag BaOmer the bans are lifted for that day.

One of Rabbi Akiva's few surviving students was Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who went on to become the greatest teacher of Torah in his generation, and is asserted to have authored the *Zohar*, a landmark text of Jewish mysticism. (This is according to Jewish tradition; historians, it should be said, disagree with this.) According to the *Zohar* (III, 287b-296b), on the day of Rabbi bar Yochai's death, he revealed the deepest secrets of the Kabbalah. Lag BaOmer therefore became a day of joyful celebration of the light of wisdom that he brought into the world. Lighting bonfires has become a well-known custom. In Meron, Israel, the burial place of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son, Rabbi Eleazer, hundreds of thousands of Jews gather throughout the night and day to celebrate with bonfires, torches, food and singing. But the beaches of Haifa and Tel Aviv are also ablaze with Israeli celebrations. During the Middle Ages, Lag BaOmer became a special holiday for rabbinical students, when they took a day off from studies to play at outdoor sports. I remember it as a Hebrew School "field day," with organized games of softball, tug-of-war and relay races. Later, it took on significance as the first spring day when a wedding could be scheduled.

Lag BaOmer is May 7th this year. May it be a day of special light for you, too. (It's also the only day during the Omer counting when tradition says you're permitted to cut your hair. Better make that appointment now.) ◇

The Changing Face of Shavuot

(And How the Yizkors Came to Be)

by Gloria Avner

Let's face it. With the possible exception of Georgia Landau, Linda Perloff, Mort Silverman, and Steve Steinbock, we are not agricultural people anymore. We haven't been for a long time. Even if we had "*bikkurim*," or "first fruits" for offerings, there has been no authorized holy place to bring our fruits for sacrifice since the destruction of the Second Temple about 2,000 years ago.

Here are some post-*Pesach* questions to ponder. How is it that our holidays and observance are so closely linked? One eight-day ritual is barely begun when we start our preparation for the next. By the end of the second day of *Pesach* we are already counting *Omer*, sheaves of barley grain, for the seven "weeks" leading up to *Shavuot*. When we are finished counting *Omer*, it will be time for sacrificing the *Bikkurim* of harvest season. Finally, on the second day of *Shavuot*, comes the fourth and final *Yizkor* of our ceremonial year.

How are these events connected? After years of organizing KJCC's ritual events and holy days, I was sure there were never more than three or four weeks a year without a holiday or fast or feast to be observed (and that's not counting *Shabbat*). It could make a person dizzy.

The passage from *Pesach* to *Shavuot* was always connected, but a yearlong proliferation of holiday events such as KJCC celebrates may not always have been the case (and definitely was not called for in the *Torah*). In fact, prior to exile in the Diaspora, there may only have been two ceremonial seasons. Both would have been related to the necessities of farming.

The first would have been the ceremonial season beginning with *Rosh HaShanah*, through the Ten Days of Awe, ending with

Yom Kippur and the first *Yizkor*. This ten-day period, not unlike the *Pesach* period, was followed almost immediately by another multi-day celebration, this time the harvest celebration of *Sukkot*, again celebrating "fruits." This time it's an eight-day joyous observance capped by *Simchat Torah* and *Shemini Atzeret*, the day on which we hold our second *Yizkor* memorial service of the year.

Here comes the season in which we pray for rain and dew to nourish our crops. Six months later comes the second season, the one that heralds Spring. On the full moon of Nissan

we celebrate our passage from slavery to freedom with eight days of *Passover*. This would have heralded the planting season along with all associations with new growth



Israeli children, here and in all the other photos of this section, celebrate the bounty of the harvest at Shavuot. It was certainly something to celebrate after a hiatus of close to 2,000 years.

and transformation. On the last day, a third *Yizkor* service is held in the memory of our parents and grandparents.

Seven weeks later *Shavuot* arrives and the final celebration before the hard work of harvest takes place. On the second day of *Shavuot*, here in the Diaspora, the fourth and last *Yizkor* service of the year is observed. In Israel, founded with strong agricultural roots by *kibbutzim* making the deserts bloom, people still celebrate with singing, dancing and flower displays. In Temple days, the farmers would leave Jerusalem after bringing their sacrifices and go home, back to their fields.

We won't go home. Like many congregations, we will focus on another face of *Shavuot*, the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, the metaphorical signing of the contract between us, the newly forged Jewish People, and *Adonai*. As God promises us rain and sun in proper season, we agree to honor the *Mitzvot* and be a "light to the nations." The covenant is sealed.



On the morning scheduled for presentation we will not fall asleep as our ancestors nearly did. With the possibility of some dairy induced carb-drowsiness (**please see the ad on p. XX**), our congregants will be fully awake, having a Torah study session after a shared meal, a *Shabbat* service and a *Yizkor* service. Ah, we come back to *Yizkor*, a ceremony begun a mere thousand years ago.

Read the words inside the box to learn more of *Yizkor*'s origins. They are not so very ancient. But why is *Yizkor* relevant to the holidays it follows? Think about *Bikkurim*, the fruits. They were sacrifices, gifts to God. It is the custom when honoring our departed to give charity or *tzedakah* in their names. That will be our sacrifice, in somber times and happy ones. Grateful for the teachings and the nourishment our parents gave us, it becomes obvious that we are their fruit, giving of ourselves, our good deeds, remembrances, and *tzedakah*, in their names, so that others may thrive. ◇

The Origin of Yizkor

This is quoted from a book review by Israel Drazin of "May God Remember," edited by Rabbi Dr. Lawrence J. Hoffman.

The custom of reciting *Yizkor* on the solemn holiday of Yom Kippur began in Germany in the eleventh century following the devastation of Rhineland Jewry during the Crusades, a trauma that was exacerbated in the fourteenth century when Jews were butchered because non-Jews were convinced that they caused the Black Plague. It was originally a personal family prayer recited to remember their dead, but it soon became a prayer recited within a community in synagogues on Yom Kippur.

The custom of reciting *Yizkor* spread eastward very quickly and Polish Jews supplemented it with a prayer remembering the Jewish victims of the 1648 Cossack massacre under the leadership of Bogdan Chmielnicki. The Polish Jews also extended the recital of *Yizkor* beyond the sole recitation on Yom Kippur to the last days of the three festivals Passover, *Shavuot*, and Sukkot.

The Prayer

May God remember the soul of my beloved _____ who has passed to his/her eternal rest. I pledge charity in his/her name and pray that his/her soul be kept among the immortal souls of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah and all the righteous men and women in heaven. Amen.

SHAVUOT SHARDS

Shavuot, as other Jewish holidays, is known by a variety of names, each one representing different aspects of the festival. It is the *Hag HaKatzir* (harvest festival), *Hag HaShavuot* (festival of weeks) and *Hag Habik-kurim* (festival of first fruits). The Torah describes the biblical festival in all three ways.

◆ In the Talmud, the word *atzeret*, meaning “cessation” or “solemn assembly,” is used to reflect how the rabbis viewed Shavuot as a conclusion to Passover and the Omer-counting period of 49 days that immediately follows. Talmudic rabbis also used the description *z’man matan torateynu* (“time of the reception of the Torah”), thereby anointing Shavuot as the moment when all Israelites gathered at the foot of Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah. (The Bible is not specific as to when this momentous event actually took place. So naturally the rabbis spent many

years studying and arguing about it. All the Bible says, in Exodus 19:1, is that “on the third new moon after the Israelites had gone forth from the land of Egypt...they entered the wilderness at Sinai.” The calculations go from there, and they finally

agreed that the day was Shavuot.) By linking Shavuot to the day Torah was received – merely the most important day in the history of the Jewish people – rabbis assured that the celebration of a middle eastern agricultural harvest would forever be infused with powerful and lasting significance. Indeed, today Shavuot is known mainly as the “birthday of the Torah.” References to its origins as an agricultural festival persist but are secondary and seem almost quaint.

◆ Religious scholars speculate that Shavuot was probably not celebrated until Solomon’s Temple was built, some 300 or so years later. It would also have been the most difficult festival to observe, coming as it does in the middle of the growing season. Still, there is evidence of its dutiful observance: the Roman/Jewish historian Josephus (first century C.E.) speaks of large attendance in Jerusalem for Shavuot. The *Mishnah*, in the

section known as *bikkurim*, describes the bringing of first fruits as a gala affair, and included all seven species for which the land of Israel is praised: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates.

◆ One might today con-

Why Eat Dairy Foods on the Night of Shavuot

Our meal on the night of Shavuot is traditionally made up of dairy foods, cheesecake and ice cream ranking high among the favorites. There are many reasons cited, including some very convoluted *gematria* – correlations between numbers and letters in words and names, some adding up to cheese and others to milk, some having to do with the beginning of the laws of *kashrut*. Considering that this is the night on which the Jewish people are given the Torah, the following verse in the Song of Songs, comparing Torah to milk, makes the most sense to me:



"Like honey and milk [the Torah] lies under your tongue" (Song of Songs 4:11). Just as milk has the ability to fully sustain the body of a human being (i.e. a nursing baby), so too the Torah provides all the "spiritual nourishment" necessary for the human soul.

– Gloria

sider it a simple thing – especially with the issue now resolved – but there was great controversy in the beginning about when to begin counting the Omer. The Torah says to make the first offering (and therefore begin the counting) “on the morrow after the Sabbath” of Passover. Clear and direct, right? Well, no. A serious dispute arose over what “Sabbath” meant here. The Pharisees were the first to say that “Sabbath” here meant any prescribed day of rest, and therefore referred to Passover itself. (They were also not corrupt and reactionary as they are at times portrayed in Christian literature. They were, in fact, the reformers, and the first to institute the idea that it was okay to interpret and debate the Torah’s meaning. Hillel was probably a Pharisee, and they were certainly the dominant sect at the time the Second Temple was destroyed. It was the Pharisees who saved Judaism by reconstituting it from a religion of sacrifice to one of prayer. Soon they began to be referred to with a different honorific: rabbi, and the term Pharisee disappeared.) Over the centuries, later rabbis and sages came to agree with this interpretation, and mandated that we begin counting the day after Passover. This is, of course, now considered settled practice. But the Sadducees, who included the Second Temple priestly class and who tended to be more literal in their readings, claimed that “Sabbath” meant nothing other than the Sabbath itself, and therefore counting must begin only after the first Saturday during Passover. And the Sadducees were not alone in this view. Their subset the Boethusians also held this view, as did later Biblical literalists the Karaites (a few of whom still exist), and, interestingly, Catho-



lics (they get to vote?) and much secular scholarship. The author of the fascinating and controversial Book of Jubilees, which was not included in the Hebrew canon, also begins counting on the Sunday after Shabbat, so his math does not agree with that of the Talmudic rabbis.

◆ Because of Shavuot’s connection to the gift of Torah, Eastern European Jews in the 17th century began the practice of introducing very young children – often between the ages of three and five – to Torah study on Shavuot. This initiation would include cakes, honey and candy so that the children would quickly associate Torah study with sweetness. Some would even daub honey onto the Torah pages for the children to literally lick off. The early

Reform movement, using similar reasoning, initiated their confirmation ceremonies for 15- and 16-year-olds on Shavuot; this practice is still in widespread use today.

◆ Some say the *Zohar*, the major work of mystical Judaism, was written by Rabbi Shimon

Bar Yochai in the second century C.E. Others, including most scholars, believe it was written in the 13th century by Moses de Leon. It’s fairly well established that de Leon was the first to publish it. Since the days of Rabbi Isaac Luria in the 16th century, mystical practices and ideas have been connected to Shavuot. It was probably Luria and his Tz’fat mystics who began the practice of *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*, the reading of sacred literature the entire night of Erev Shavuot. To mystics, the nation of Israel is seen as a groom and the Torah as its bride. Shavuot then becomes a kind of anniversary. The counting of the omer has been especially infused with mystical

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meaning. The number seven repeats. There are 7 x 7 weeks of counting the omer. Seven equals the days of creation. “Sefirah” means the counting of the omer; but “sefirah” also is the word for each of the levels of divine emanation in Jewish mysticism. (Of the ten levels, the lower seven are seen as within human comprehension.) Those of a mystical bent often spend the seven weeks of the Omer preparing and studying to be ready, on Shavuot, for the gift of the Torah. In Jerusalem, beginning in 1967 after the city’s reunification, tens of thousands of Jews finish off a night of study by walking to the *Kotel*, the Western Wall, to join a sunrise minyan.

♦ Some customs connected to Shavuot reveal old remnants of its agricultural traditions. Because arid Mt. Sinai was said to have suddenly blossomed with flowers in anticipation of the giving of the Torah, many synagogues honor Shavuot by decorating their *bemahs* with plants, colorful flowers and leafy branches, some creating a canopy of flowers and plants so that it resembles a *chuppah*. Some eastern Sephardim actually read out a *ketubbah* between God and the nation of Israel as part of their service. (The Vilna Gaon in the 18th century once cancelled the tradition



used for their holidays.)

♦ Kibbutzim and Moshavim in Israel today offer a special celebration of the agricultural origins of Shavuot. In parades and other ceremonies, they show off the fruits produced in their fields, in the manner of the *bikkurim* taken to the Temple in Jerusalem two thousand years ago. Agricultural equipment is also put on display, aids to farming not avail-

able to those making pilgrimages to the Temple.

♦ It is traditional to read the Book of Ruth on Shavuot. That book’s story actually takes place during the spring barley and wheat harvest seasons. (A hungry, widowed Ruth goes to the fields of Boaz during the harvest to glean ungathered grain as food for herself and

mother-in-law Nao-mi.) Her desire to become a member of the Jewish



people is also seen as a parallel to Shavuot, when through accepting Torah the Jewish people actually became...the Jewish people. Also, the final lines of the book of Ruth detail her lineage; King David, Ruth’s great-grandson – Ruth’s son was Obed, whose son was Ishai, whose son was David – was said to have both been born and died on Shavuot.

♦ Just before the morning reading of the Torah on the first day of Shavuot, Ashkenazi Jews hear *Akdamut*, a liturgical poem written in Aramaic by Rabbi Meir of Worms late in the 11th century. The renowned rabbi had been forced to defend Torah and Judaism in debates with local priests, and this poem conveys his love of God, the Jewish people, and reverence for Torah. It is one of two *piyyutim* (medieval poems usually set to music) meant to strengthen the faith of Jews during the Crusades. (Rabbi Meir’s son had been killed during the First Crusade in 1096.) The other *piyyut*, also in Aramaic, is a poem of praise and wish for protection written by Rabbenu Tam and read on the second day. Sephardim do not read *Akdamut*, but before the evening service sing *Azharot*, a poem that sets out all 613 *mitzvot*. Positive commandments are recited on the first day and negative commandments the second. ♦

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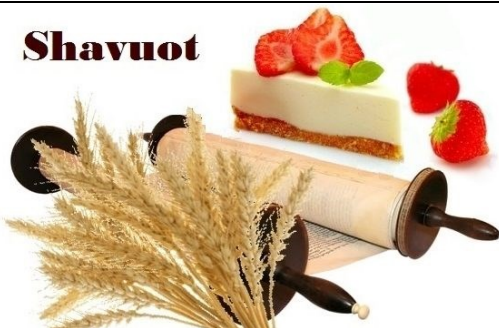
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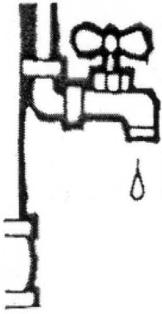
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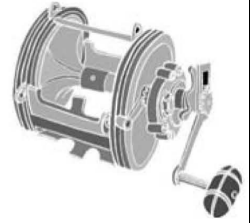
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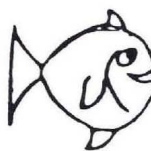
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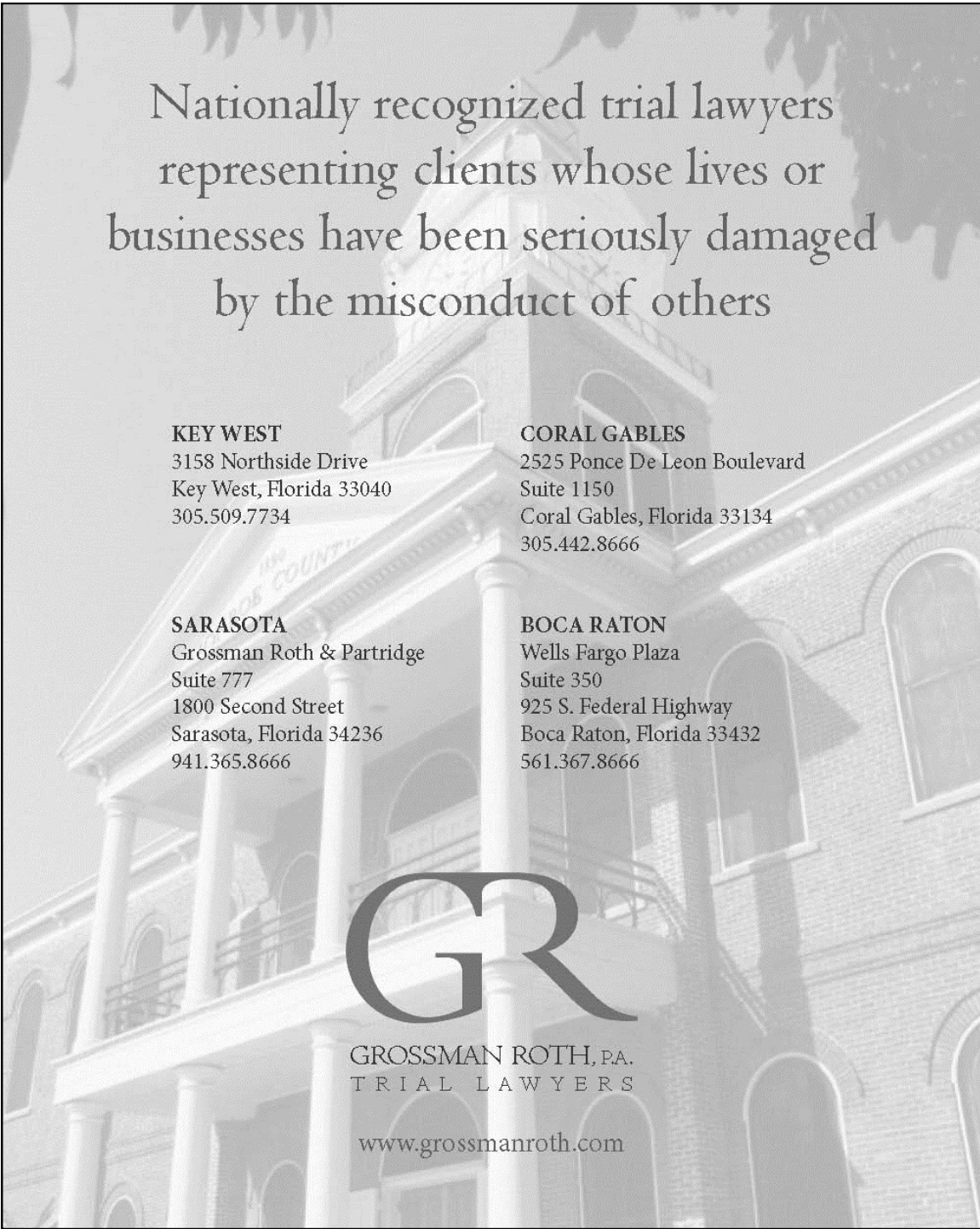
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