

Chai~Lights



February 2015

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Keys Jewish Community Center

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

February 2015 12 Shevat - 9 Adar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Sisterhood Meeting 9:30 a.m. Tu B'Shevat 10:30 a.m.	2	3	4 Tu B'Shevat New Year For the Trees Men's Club Game Night 7:30	5	6 Yardena Kamely & George Swartz <i>Erica Lieberman-Garrett</i>	7
8 KJCC Annual Meeting 11:00 a.m. Yardena lecture 7 p.m.	9	10	11	12	13 The Gross Family <i>Patti Gross Joel & Linda</i>	14 Jonah Gross Bar Mitzvah 10 a.m.
15 Sisterhood Jewish Food Extravaganza 5:00—7:30	16 President's Day	17	18	19	20 Erica Lieberman-Garrett <i>Marsha & Steve Harris</i>	21
22 Lecture "Jewish Magic" 7:00 p.m.	23	24	25	26	27 Sisterhood 6:30 Service	28 Rabbi Agler Service 10 a.m.
March 1st Yardena 2nd lecture 7 p.m.	Names denote leaders of Friday services. <i>Italicized</i> names are Oneg sponsors. Services every Friday at 8:00 p.m. except where noted.					

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CHAI-LIGHTS is the
monthly publication of the
Keys Jewish Community Center
P.O. Box 1332
Tavernier, Florida 33070
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President's Message Bernard Ginsberg



It is hard to believe that my two years as president of the KJCC have passed. Besides this being the end of my term, it's also about the end of the KJCC 2014 fiscal year, so it's a good time for reflection on what we have accomplished in these two years.

We started with a wonderful congregation, a decent physical plant, wonderful officers, and a great Sisterhood. After two hard years we still have the same. That's not progress, you might say, but just keeping the wonderful organization that I "inherited" together is success enough. Keeping it together is a boon to the Jewish community of the Keys and in a tiny way to the world Jewish community. The only changes I wanted were to place more emphasis on our religious school and its education of our children and to have at least a monthly Shabbat dinner to promote our "fun and fellowship" just a little more. We have succeeded in the religious school, as anyone who saw the joyful faces of our students leading Shabbat-Chanukah services could attest. Our students are being given a positive attitude toward Jewish education that will lead to their having a lifelong commitment to Judaism. It is hard to improve on the excellence of our education chairperson Susan Gordon, our teacher Yardena Kamely,

and ritual chairperson and "Bar Mitzvah" tutor Gloria Avner.

In regard to our fun and fellowship, we have had about three new memberships per month. All of them said they joined because of the joyful and welcoming atmosphere they found in our shul that they had never found before. This is a compliment to our whole congregation. I am proud of you all.

The little that I have done would not be possible without the wonderful Board of Directors and Officers of our congregation and our Sisterhood. There is not enough room to thank everyone individually, but I do want to especially thank Linda Pollack, who while constitutionally our treasurer, actually functions as the KJCC's "executive director" and collective memory. I want to thank Sam Vinicur, our executive V.P., who encouraged me at any moments of uncertainty I had as president, and did yeoman work in organizing all the programs of the KJCC. He will make a fine new president.

May G-d prevent any rancor between the members of our congregation and grant that our work at the KJCC redounds to the benefit of our people and the survival of Judaism.

*With gratitude and love
to all, Bernie*

Nosh

Jonah's Bar Mitzvah

On Saturday, February 14th, 2015, our son Jonah Gross will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah at the Keys Jewish Community Center. As a new member of the KJCC, he was hon-



ored to blow the shofar alongside President Bernie Ginsberg at High Holiday Services this year and also play his trumpet at the KJCC Hanukkah celebration. Jonah is a member of the Key Largo School Advanced and Elite Band along with being an active Ad-

vanced SCUBA Diver.

As his Bar Mitzvah project, Jonah has combined *Tikkun HaYam*, SCUBA Jews and the History of Diving Museum. He has been collecting discarded items from the ocean, bay and marinas that will be used by artists and teens to make art that will be sold at the nautical flea market or at the KJCC. The funds raised will go towards an underwater coral garden in honor of the KJCC *Tikkun HaYam* project and/or scholarships for Keys teens.

Please join Jonah and his extended family as part of this special day, on his journey to becoming a man and a mensch. We have family and friends coming in from around the U.S., Canada and even other parts of the world, and we would

love our new KJCC family to meet all of them. Our thanks to Rabbi Richard Agler, who will officiate, and to the teachers and officers of KJCC, who helped make this day possible.

—Tomar Gross and Randy Klein-Gross

A Lecture on Jewish Magic at KJCC

On Sunday evening, February 22nd, from 7-9 p.m., KJCC will present another in its ongoing series of speakers on the history and culture and religious practices of the full spectrum of Jewish life. Michael Swartz, Professor of Hebrew and Religious Studies at the Ohio State University in Columbus – and yes, he's related to KJCC's own brilliant member of the Swartz family...he's George's nephew – will be here, in his own words, to "explore the history and sources of Jewish magic, and their surprising influence on Jewish tradition."

Professor Swartz's academic specialty is Jewish mysticism, magic and ritual in Late Antiquity and the early medieval period. His research focuses on ancient Jewish mystical prayer and the ritual cultivation of memory. He is the author of numerous books and articles. This should be an amazing evening. It will be open to all, so invite anyone you know who'd be interested. Discussion will of course follow.

Rabbi Agler's February Service

Speaking of Jewish magic, Rabbi Richard Agler's ongoing gift to KJCC — his monthly Saturday morning Torah Learning services — will continue in February at the end of the month, on the 28th.

The *parshah* for that week is *Tetzaveh*, from Exodus. It deals mostly with God's instructions to Moses about how to dress priests and how to properly sanctify them. Pretty much of a snooze, right? Well, if you don't think Rabbi Agler will find fascinating parts of it that will stimulate a full and rich discussion, you just don't know Rabbi Agler. Join us and prepare to see anew something you once thought was boring.



February Birthdays

1st	Roy Pollack
1st	Evan Grossman
3rd	Caeleigh Stuart
3rd	Dick Bromwich
3rd	Leslie Janowitz
5th	Rebecca Smith Strasser
6th	Martin Field
6th	Evan Harvey
7th	Erica Lieberman-Garrett
7th	Larry Jacobs
9th	Ron Garrett
9th	Linda Pincus
12th	Paul Roberts
12th	Johnny Knowles
13th	Jerrold Benowitz
14th	Debbie Madnick
15th	Judith Weber
18th	Beth Hayden
21st	Stephen Harris
21st	David J. Marmar
22nd	Tomar Gross
22nd	Harry Friedman
23rd	Sienna Rose Lebofsky
24th	Suzie Greenman
24th	Muriel Swartz
25th	Rita Conklin
26th	Jim Williams
26th	John D. Schur
27th.....	Betsy Grossman
28th	Arlene Line

Yardena's 2015 Lecture Series

This year's lecture series by KJCC Adult Education Committee chair Yardena Kamely will begin on Sunday, February 8th at 7:00 p.m. in KJCC's David Kamely classroom. The second lecture will be March 1st. Last year's lectures delved into the life of Jews under Muslim rule in northern Africa and Spain during what historians call the "Golden Age of Judaism," until the expulsion of all Jews in 1492. This year's series will follow the Jews of Spain as they filter into Europe and become part of very different cultures. Coffee and light refreshments will be served. All are invited, including interested non-KJCC members.

Purim is Coming: It's The Gansa Megillah

It's coming on March 4th at 6:00 p.m. We are fortunate this year, as we were in the past two years, to be able to perform our reading of *Megilat Esther* (scroll of Esther) on the very evening that the holiday begins. Men's club will provide the *schnapps* and will feed us, all will contribute to filling our blue *tzedakah* boxes and the whole congregation, young and old, will participate in reading the whole *Megillah*. Rumor has it that last year's *Purimspiel* was so much fun that "Here's Looking at You, Esther" may be brought back by popular demand. Contact Steve Friedman or Joyce Peckman to see what you can bring. Here's hoping our students will bake their delicious *hamantaschen* again with help from *Savta Nettie Seder*.

—Gloria

KJCC Welcomes New Members

We are please to welcome five new members to the eclectic and wonderfully diverse group that is KJCC membership. Newly approved by the Board for membership are Dana Grace of Key Largo; Richard Kaufman of Tavernier and Highland Park, IL; Sherry Zwerdling of Islamorada; and Barry Neumann and Ellen Ecker of Key Largo and Jasper, GA. It is also a special pleasure to announce the return to KJCC from Israel of Zoe Berk-Moshe. We hope to see all of you often, and that you will fully avail yourselves of the unique combination of religious, cultural, educational and social events offered by KJCC to its members. (These four categories often overlap, by the way, and many include various forms of food, usually homemade.)

Oneg Sponsors for February 2015

- February 6th* - Erica Lieberman-Garrett to celebrate Ron and Erica's birthdays.
- February 13th* - Patti Gross for her Valentine David; Joel and Linda Pollack for their Anniversary.
- February 20th* - Marsha and Steve Harris for Steve's birthday.

Art News Brewing in the Halls of KJCC

Women artists take note. Past donors of art currently on KJCC walls also please take note.

The KJCC Art Committee is planning a new look for our synagogue walls this year. Most of the paintings currently hanging in the hallway and social hall are focused on old world rituals being carried out by old world men. We are appreciative of them and their donors' generosity in gifting these pieces to us over many years. We hope you donors will be just as generous in reclaiming them, or at least taking responsibility for storing them while we create a new look. This year marks the 35th year of the Keys Jewish Community Center's existence. Next year we will be marking our "double chai" year with a grand celebration. We say "l'chaim," to life intensified. When you enter our special Jewish place your eyes and soul will be uplifted by vibrant, colorful life on our synagogue's walls.

Over the next few weeks, KJCC's own women artists will create an exhibit for our synagogue that will put on display the products of their creative minds, hearts, and hands.

It will be a revolving exhibit, possibly changing with each season. It will allow space and encouragement for special projects as the artists envision them. The focus on women artists will last for at least a year. We encourage input from all women in the congregation. Tell us what you do and what you'd like to do. Or show us. There could be a large mural brewing that could use many hands. We may not know who all our talented people are. Contact Natalie Dorf or Gloria Avner if you wish to be involved. We want to welcome you and we want your art to be part of the beautiful welcome awaiting all who enter our community "home."

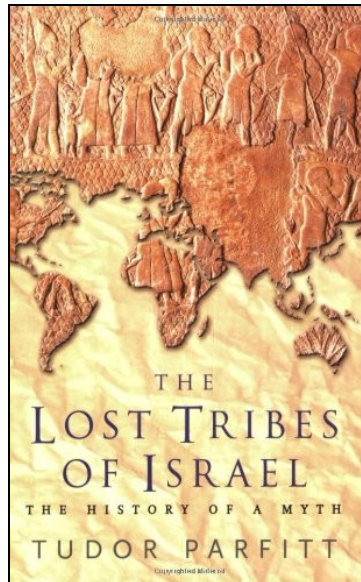
—Gloria

BOOK PLATE

In Memory of
J. D. Stanlake
by Joel and Linda Pollack

Don't Miss This Upcoming Talk!

Meet Tudor Parfitt, a modern-day "Indiana Jones" in search of the Lost Tribes of Israel. Come to the KJCC sanctuary at 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, March 15th. (Yes, it will be the Ides of March, but no one other than Caesar need beware.) You will hear this distinguished British professor, author, explorer and valued member of England's famed and exclusive Royal Geographic Society, tell tales of his quest, a mission that has taken him from the remote corners of South America to India to the far reaches of New



Guinea. Our past and future presidents, Bernard Ginsberg and Sam Vinicur, along with Rabbi Richard Agler, as guests of Kathy Shabathai, heard Professor Parfitt speak at FIU some months ago. They assure us that the evening will be both educational and fascinating. Tell your friends. We will be opening this to the full Keys community, and all are welcome. There will be Q and A afterwards, and of course, wonderful refreshments. This is a real coup for us, and we are very excited.

—Gloria

February Anniversaries

	Years
9th	Uri & Liliam Kameley23
11th	Joel & Linda Pollack53

A Reminder from Scholarship Committee

Scholarship Committee chairman David Gitin reminds all that the deadline for submitting college scholarship requests for children of KJCC members is April 1st. We no longer have printed forms. If you're interested, go to the KJCC web site (keysjewishcenter.com) and look at the drop-down menu under "school." There you will find both criteria and applications, both of which you can download. Again, we must receive your applications by April 1st. Please send them to KJCC, Scholarship Committee, P.O. Box 1332, Tavernier, FL 33070. Or scan your filled-out application and e-mail to president@keysjewishcenter.com.

Meditation Garden Brick

**Remembering Carol,
Her work, love
And commitment
to the KJCC.
Alan & Candy**

A Special KJCC Book Discussion

We're telling you now about a book discussion to take place at KJCC on April 12th, which you are cordially invited to join. Why bring this up so early, you ask? Because this discussion will be led by Rabbi Richard Agler, and he wants everyone who attends to have actually read the book prior to the discussion.

The book was written by famed Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal and is titled "The Sunflower: on the possibilities and limits of forgiveness." It takes place during his days in World War II as a concentration camp inmate. A dying Nazi officer asks for a Jew, any Jew, to be brought to him. That Jew turned out to be Simon Wiesenthal. And what was the point of the request? The officer wanted absolution; he wanted a Jew to forgive him for what he'd done. So this is the question considered in the book in a series of essays: can evil, especially unspeakable evil, be forgiven?

KJCC has ordered six copies of the book,

which are now in the KJCC library. There is of course no charge to those borrowing these or any KJCC books. But librarian Medina Roy will have a sign-out sheet operating on the honor system. This should be a moving and highly evocative discussion. So please take your turns reading the book and then join us.

Meditation Garden Brick

**In Loving Memory of
Our Dear Parents
Sidney and Mae Stark.
Joan and Joel Bernard**

Lights, Camera, Action!

There's been a lot of, um, discussion in the past few years about the inadequacy of the KJCC classroom or the Ruth Richardson Social Hall as venues for films or slide shows or Powerpoint presentations. The sound is poor, the folding chairs not very comfortable (certainly for the length of a movie or a full lecture) and the projection quality rudimentary. Many have felt that attendance would be far better, with many more being able to enjoy the truly high level of activities we offer, if the experience was more engaging and convenient.

We heard you. By the time you read this, KJCC will have installed a professional audio/visual system in our sanctuary, with a motorized drop-down screen, and that will play audio, from a film or from live presenters, through our fabulous new sound system. You're going to love it, for many years to come.

Meditation Garden Brick

**In Honor of
Bernard Ginsberg, M.D.
Carol and Foster**

A Tu B'Shvat Birthday Celebration

Join our KJCC Religious School children on Sunday, February 1st. We will gather outdoors to celebrate one of our favorite and most unique holidays: Tu B'Shvat (the 15th day of the Hebrew month Sh'vat), one of the four Jewish New Years and the Birthday of the Trees.

Meet outside the schoolroom at 10:30 a.m. and see what the children are planting this year. Have a tour of the fruit trees planted in previous years. Join in the blessings, the plantings and our traditional singing and dancing of "Mayim Mayim

(Water Water)." When the planting ritual is finished, all are welcome to join students, parents and teachers in the tasting and blessing of seven sacred species, the fruits of Israel's trees. The Tu B'Shvat Seder, devised by the mystics of Tz'fat hundreds of years ago, is a meaningful symbolic journey through the seasons, with stories, poems, delicious samplings of fruit, nuts, and, oh yes, four cups of wine – from pure white to blush to rosy red. Don't miss it.

—Gloria

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, idiveses, tablets and more. Call Steve Steinbock, 305-394-0143, or just bring your items to the KJCC.

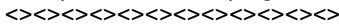
Call the names listed above for assistance or send your request and check to the KJCC, P.O. Box 1332, Tavernier, FL 33070. Recipients of your gifts will be notified by card and listings will appear in Chai-Lights as well. Honorarium and memorial cards can also be requested. Donations can be earmarked 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.

In Memoriam February 2015

In Memory Of

Sue Steinberg

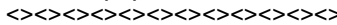
By Richard & Mindy Agler



In Memory Of

Lou Roazan

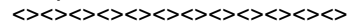
By Sylvia Berman



In Memory Of

Sunnie Bernstein

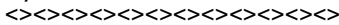
By Paul & Barbara Bernstein



In Memory Of

Kitty Nyman

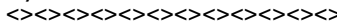
By Alan Beth & Candace Stanlake



In Memory Of

Ted Nyman

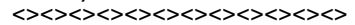
By Alan Beth & Candace Stanlake



In Memory Of

Marvin Galanty

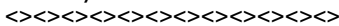
By Marc & Ellen Bloom



In Memory Of

Sarah P. Zalk

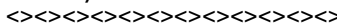
By Meredith A. Cline



In Memory Of

Reuben L. Zalk

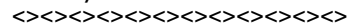
By Meredith A. Cline



In Memory Of

Eve Greenstein

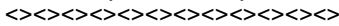
By Barnet O. Coltman



In Memory Of

Robert Kinney

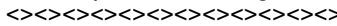
By Gerri Emkey



In Memory Of

Barry Feinberg

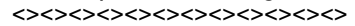
By Arthur Feinberg



In Memory Of

William Feinberg

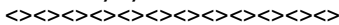
By Arthur Feinberg



In Memory Of

Manya Gelbard

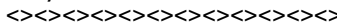
By Sy A. Gelbard



In Memory Of

Rose Gilson

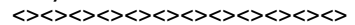
By Michael & Suzanne Gilson



In Memory Of

Charles Gilson

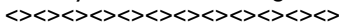
By Michael & Suzanne Gilson



In Memory Of

Dr. Joseph Goldberg

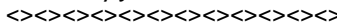
By Susan W. Goldberg



In Memory Of

Joseph Gorson

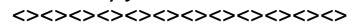
By Janice Gorson



In Memory Of

A. James Weiss

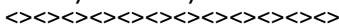
By Janice Gorson



In Memory Of

Nicholas Goldenberg

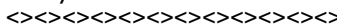
By Mrs. Marty Graham



In Memory Of

Frances Weiser

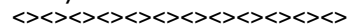
By Andrew & Randi Grant



In Memory Of

Leila Horne

By Andrew & Randi Grant

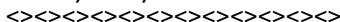


In Memoriam February 2015

In Memory Of

Robert Greenbaum

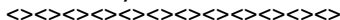
By Marilyn Greenbaum



In Memory Of

Chalom Haviv

By Leo Haviv



In Memory Of

Lillian Janowitz

By Sam & Leslie Janowitz



In Memory Of

Joseph Krissel

By Michael Krissel



In Memory Of

Sara J. Cohen

By Lynn Nobil



In Memory Of

Malka Frank

By Joel & Linda Pollack



In Memory Of

Shirley Horowitz

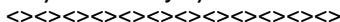
By Pauline Roller



In Memory Of

Ilona Ban

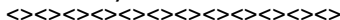
By Franklin & Judy Greenman



In Memory Of

Ida Ratchik

By Susan Horn



In Memory Of

Pinchas Kamely

By Yardena Kamely



In Memory Of

Samuel Marmar

By David & Pamela Marmar



In Memory Of

Irene Nobil

By Lynn Nobil



In Memory Of

Ida O. Present

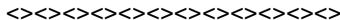
By Marjorie Present



In Memory Of

Al Roller

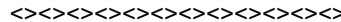
By Pauline Roller



In Memory Of

Nella Gross

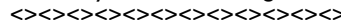
By Tomar Gross & Randy Klein-Gross



In Memory Of

Fannie Phillips

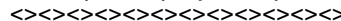
By Patricia Isenberg



In Memory Of

Sylvia Kay

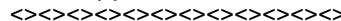
By Harvey & Joan Kay



In Memory Of

Joseph Kaufman

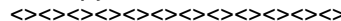
By Jeff & Lisa Miller



In Memory Of

William Pollack

By Joel & Linda Pollack



In Memory Of

Amos M. Present

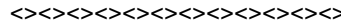
By Marjorie Present



In Memory Of

John A. Schur

By Lee Schur

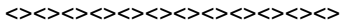


In Memoriam February 2015

In Memory Of

Miriam Blinder

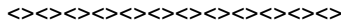
By Steven & Barbara Smith



In Memory Of

Sara J. Cohen

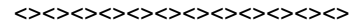
By Richard & Sheila Steinberg



In Memory Of

Ann R. Kapulskey

By George & Muriel Swartz



In Memory Of

Morris Estrin

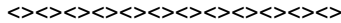
By Lillian Tallent



In Memory Of

Minnie Berger

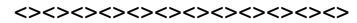
By Mark & Sofy Wasser



In Memory Of

David C. Willner

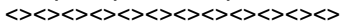
By Arthur Lee & Johanna Willner



In Memory Of

Morris Feinberg

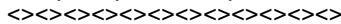
By Larry & Dorothy Wolfe



In Memory Of

Samuel Wolfe

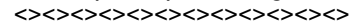
By Larry & Dorothy Wolfe



In Memory Of

Jerry Oshinsky

By Sherry Zwerdling



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: \$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.

JEWISH FOOD EXTRAVAGANZA



Sunday February 15, 2015 5:00 pm–7:30 pm

KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

Mile Marker 93 Oceanside \$20.00 per ticket

Raffle/Silent Auction~~~Jewish schtick & kibitzing

Enjoy a scrumptious smorgasbord of authentic delights including: Matzoh Ball Soup, Brisket, Cabbage Rolls, Knishes, Challah, Kugel, Chopped Liver, Gefilte Fish, Tabouli Salad, Kishka, Babka, Mandel Bread & more...

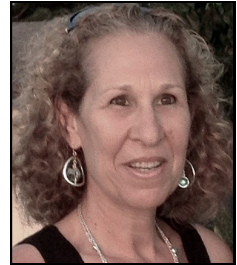
Limited number of tickets available at:

- * KJCC gift shop MM 93 Oceanside
- * Garrett Chiropractic MM 90 Bayside

Email for further information: Hippiejap@hotmail.com

Sisterhood

Erica Lieberman-Garrett



Writing my first column as your new Sisterhood president, I am excited and honored to be leading an exceptional group of women who selflessly spend endless time and energy to help make our little shul the incredible place that it is today. Barbara Knowles has done a fantastic job as our Sisterhood president for the past two years, leading us through many events, onegs, and fundraisers. Her generosity, energy and tireless capacity for work have brought us to this new year, and we all thank her for everything she has done. I believe that 2015 is going to be even more amazing than we can imagine.

Over 100 people (including 20 visitors) attended a night of dinner and menorah lighting so big that we needed two tables to hold all the menorahs! The children sang Chanukah songs, accompanied by Jonah Gross on his trumpet. We had seven *scrumptious* latke choices and a huge assortment of delicious dairy options made available, as always, by the incredible efforts of our members. Linda and Joel Pollack graciously sponsored the dinner again this year. We had our first outdoor seating area with lights and lanterns, courtesy of Susan Gordon, who decorated the event in a joyous and festive spirit.

KJCC president Bernie Ginsberg motivated our commitment to monthly Shabbat dinners with his mantra "If you feed them, they will come." My mantra for the next two years will be "If you feed them scrumptious food, they will come more!" With that, I am excited to tell you about our Jewish Food Extravaganza on Sunday, February 15th, from 5 p.m. till 7:30 p.m. We will have a selection of traditional Jewish food including matzoh ball soup, chopped liver, brisket, potato kugel, knishes, tabouleh salad, babka, mandel bread, and more. The event will begin with some silent auction and raffle items, followed by a short program of shtick, kibbitzing, and

Jewish food fun. Tickets are \$20, and we are selling only 90. Please don't miss out, and get your tickets early. They are available at the KJCC Gift Shop as well as at my office, Garrett Chiropractic at MM 90 bayside. We are asking all Matzoh Ball Mensches who would like to help underwrite this fundraising effort, either through a donation or an item for auction or raffle, to please contact me at hippiejap@hotmail.com. This event is a prelude to what will be our big event in 2016, the first-ever Keys Jewish Heritage Festival, which will celebrate the 36th (double chai) anniversary of the KJCC.

All are welcome at the Sisterhood meeting on Sunday, February 1 at 9:30 a.m. We always have a lot to talk about!! Sisterhood will lead services on Friday February 27th. All women are invited to be part of this wonderful experience. Please contact me. No Hebrew is necessary. Our new Sisterhood creative arts group will be getting together weekly on Wednesdays at 2:30 p.m for knitting/crocheting. Nettie Seder says no experience is necessary, and to contact her at ngseder@yahoo.com for more information.

We look forward to a busy March. Events will include: Shabbat across America/Canada on Friday March 13th, pottery for the Women's Seder, and the Women's Seder itself at 5 p.m. on Sunday, March 22nd.

The camaraderie and enthusiasm of our KJCC Sisterhood make me feel like I am doing all of this with my own sisters (I have three), and the fun and *simcha* we share is incredible. This shul has added so much to my life, and I feel that this year will only take it to the next level. I invite all the women of the KJCC to come the first Sunday of each month to share your ideas, eat some scrumptious food and be part of what has become my "Keys Mish-pocha." ◇

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.

Book Plates

Pollack, Joel & Linda

In Memory of

J.D. Stanlake

Sisterhood Oneg Fund

Dorf, Barry & Natalie
Gelbard, Sy
Harris, Steve & Marsha

General Fund

Begam, Delores
Margulies, Ben & Sue
Williams, Jim & Rita

Pray for Us

Tree of Life

Margulies, Ben & Sue

In Honor of

Stan Margulies

Meditation Garden

Bernard, Joel & Joan Stark
Steinberg, Richard & Sheila

In Memory of

brick - Joan's parents
Meyer Cohen, Samuel
Wainer, Erwin Wainer
Peter Steinberg

Yahrzeits

Boruszak, Joan
Cohn, Nancy
Dandrea, Robert & Joni Sages
Harvey, Mitchell
Olsen, Gerald & Sheila
Roberts, Paul & Susan
Taramona, Hermine

In Memory of

Kohlenbrener
David Cohn
Loa Rosenberg
Daniel Harvey
Betty Weinstein
Ruth Greenwald
Norma Robinson

Meditation Garden

Davidson, Foster & Carol Laskin

In Honor of

brick - Bernard
Ginsberg, M.D.

Yahrzeit Plaques

Steinbock, Steve
Steinbock, Steve

Carol Steinbock
Karen Hayhurst

Sisterhood General Fund

Pollack, Joel & Linda
Wolfe, Larry & Dotty

In Honor of

Barbara Knowles
towards shabbat dinner

Yizkor Book

Hayden, Beth

Sisterhood General Fund

Goldfinger, David & Toby

In Memory of

Carol Steinbock

Have You Seen Me?

Lost at Chanukah Dinner

If anyone has seen or mistakenly taken the platter that matches this plate (after the Chanukah dinner at KJCC), please contact Natalie Dorf (dorfnatbarry@aol.com) or Sisterhood.

Thank You.



YEDA VE'TORASHA

Yardena Kamely



Sephardic Jewry

History of the Sephardim and the Sephardic Communities

In last year's lecture series we learned about the life of the Jews under Islamic Rule and during the Golden Age in Spain. In this year's new lecture series we will explore the Sephardic emigration from Spain (*Sepharad* in Hebrew) after the expulsion of 1492, the Sephardic communities themselves and the paths of later emigration as the great Jewish culture in Spain was forced to find new homes and lives elsewhere. In his book "The Other Jews," Daniel J. Elazar, himself a Sephardi, studies the Sephardim and the rich heritage of this important part of Judaism. Those of us who are Ashkenazim, or have been educated in the Ashkenazic culture, often know little about the Sephardim or Sephardic communities and cultures. (For those who might wonder, I am neither Ashkenazi nor Sephardi, but as a Persian am what is called *Mizrachi*, an "eastern" Jew.)

Elazar's family background and experience is an example of the history of the Sephardic Jews that we will study in this lecture, "Sephardic Jewry." His family members are descendants of exiles from Spain, from the Kingdom of Aragon, who settled in the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 15th century, concentrating in Salonika (the Jerusalem of the Balkans, in north central Greece on the Aegean, and now called Thessaloniki), and the Turkish coastal cities of Gallipoli and Izmir (whose ancient name was Smyrna, with a long Jewish history). Members of the *Abulafia* branch of the Elazar family became pioneers

in Eretz Israel. They settled in Jerusalem. Another branch of the Elazar family fled from Spain to Portugal and there was forced to convert to Christianity in 1497. After living as Marranos for over 250 years, and in the aftermath of the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755, they fled to Newport, Rhode Island. There they lived until the American Revolution, then moved to Charleston, South Carolina, and then disappeared in the early 19th century.

At the end of the 19th century, other members of the *Elazar* and *Abulafia* families followed the paths of the Sephardic diaspora to Paris, New York, and Buenos Aires, where they became linked with other great Sephardic families, such as the *Yohais*, the *Kattans*, and the *Chicorels*. The family in Israel became linked to the *Baruhielis*, the *Tocatlis*, and the *Elhasids*. Connections by marriage have been made with Persians and Moroccans, Iraqis and Bukharans, Bessarabians and Litvaks. Elazar's neighbors in Jerusalem are Sephardim who have lived there for generations, some since 1485, seven years *before* the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. There are also the Eliachars, the Valeros, the Kimchis, the Sitons, the Elhananis, the Angels, and the Russos, just to name some of these old Sephardic families. They meet for prayer at the *Yisa Bracha* synagogue, the home of the *Rishon Le-Zion*, the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, and the leading congregation of the old Sephardic families of Jerusalem.



In this lecture series we will learn about the decline and revival of Sephardic Jewry in Europe, the Sephardim in Africa (north, central, and south), the survival of Sephardic communities in Asia, the Sephardim in Latin America and also those in North America.

We will explore the term *Sephardi*, as it is used today, which describes that branch of the Jewish people whose roots are from the Mediterranean lands and western Asia. Who are the *Mizrachi* or Oriental Jews? What do the Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities have in common? What are the differences in their community organization? What are the old prejudices of Ashkenazim and Sephardim against one another?

Because of ignorance about the Sephardic Jews in general, there have been and still are false myths associated with them. The myth of backwardness of the Sephardim was a common belief among the Ashkenazim. This

was a reference to the Jews from the Atlas Mountains or primitive villages of Southern Arabia or the tribal societies of Central Asia, who indeed were from a backward culture. But it was unfair and inaccurate to generalize and include in this portrait the Sephardic Jews who emigrated from Spain. In reality, as we will see, many of the Sephardim, especially from the old Sephardic families, were highly educated. They came from an urban society and brought a very rich culture with them wherever they settled. *Yitzhak Navon*, Israel's past president (1978), first Sephardi to hold that office, was one of them. His story tells about the Sephardic vision of Zionism.

Learning about the Sephardic Jews can help us understand how we survived as one people, the Jewish People, in different parts of the Diaspora and in Israel. This will be my focus in this year's four lectures, and I hope you will join me. ♡

World Jewish Report

Medina Roy



Obama Closes the Loophole

An Associated Press (AP) report that was published in October 2014 revealed that due to a loophole in the law, dozens of suspected Nazi war criminals were still receiving Social Security payments long after they agreed to leave the United States. In December, President Obama responded by signing legislation that officially ends the practice. Previously, a final order of deportation was required before an individual's Social Security benefits could be terminated. The corrective bill moved quickly and was unanimously approved by both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The law targets suspected former Nazis who snuck into the U.S. after World War II and were later stripped of their American citizenship when the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations discovered them. Most of them chose to leave quietly before they faced deportation, and included in the deal was the promise of continued Social Security payouts. The revelation by the AP report was shocking: Since 1979, at least 38 of 66 of these war criminals who left the country had continued to receive Social Security benefits. (www.ap.org, 12-18-14)

A Game-Changer

StoreDot, a Tel Aviv-based company, says that it has developed a battery that is able to fully charge a cell phone in just a few seconds. According to the company, the battery can store a much higher charge more quickly, acting like a super-sponge that soaks up power and retains it. Currently, the prototype is too bulky for a mobile phone, but *StoreDot* believes that it will be ready by 2016; at that time they will market a slim battery able to absorb and deliver sufficient power to a smartphone for one full day in just 30 seconds. The concept is based around the creation of nanodots, which changes the way a

battery behaves, allowing it to absorb power rapidly and, even more importantly, retain it. The number of smartphone users is estimated to have already reached 1.75 billion. This new innovation could end people's constant search for a power outlet. Doron Myersdorf, founder of *StoreDot*, said that a fast-charge phone would probably cost \$100 to \$150 more than current models. It should be able to handle 1,500 recharge/discharge cycles, giving it about 3 years of life. Myersdorf plans to use the same technology to also create a car battery that recharges in two or three minutes. Current models commonly need to be charged overnight. (www.reuters.com, 12-8-14)

It's on the Shortlist

"*Ida*," a Polish movie about a Catholic nun who discovers that she is the daughter of Jews killed during the Holocaust, made the Oscar Award short list for best foreign-language film. The film was one of nine that made that list. The Israeli entry, "*Gett: The Trial of Vivian Amalem*," about the five-year legal struggle of an Orthodox wife seeking a religious divorce, did not make the list. The nine nominees on the short list were pared down to five finalists on January 15th, when the 87th Academy Award nominations were announced, and the Polish film made the list. The Oscars will be broadcast on February 22nd. (www.jta.org, 12-20-14)

Preserved Forever

The National Film Registry has selected "*Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport*," the Oscar-winning documentary originally released in 2000, for permanent preservation in the Library of Congress. The film chronicles the rescue of some 10,000 children – most of them Jewish – from Nazi-dominated Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia in the

months leading up to World War II. The children found refuge in Great Britain. Deborah Oppenheimer, the daughter of a survivor of the *Kindertransport* (most of whose parents did not survive), produced the film. "With the passing of so many eyewitnesses to that tumultuous period, the preservation of the film will recognize for all time the tremendous resilience of the children, the courage of their parents who were willing to entrust them to strangers, and the compassion of the British families who took them in at a time when so few would help," she said. Each year the National Film Registry adds 25 feature films, documentaries and even home movies to preserve for future generations. Among the films included along with "*Kindertransport*" as new additions this year are "*Saving Private Ryan*," "*Rosemary's Baby*," "*The Big Lebowski*," and two of my favorites, "*Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*" and "*Ferris Bueller's Day Off*." (www.jta.org and www.loc.gov, 12-21-14)

Keeping the Memory of the Holocaust Alive

The William Levine family of Phoenix, Arizona has donated \$25 million to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum – the largest gift the Washington, D.C. museum has ever received. The purpose of the gift is to increase the museum's educational programming, especially to young people. Levine is an investor and real estate developer. He was appointed to the museum's governing council by President George W. Bush in 2007. Levine's involvement with the museum began with his support of scholarly research. He created the *Ina Levine Scholar* so that leading academics could take advantage of the museum's archives. The Levine family's gift is part of the museum's \$540 million campaign being led by honorary chair, Nobel Laureate and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel. (www.ushmm.org, 12-3-14)

2014: The Numbers are in

According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2014 came to a close with 8.3 million Israelis. Of that number, 6.2 million (74.9 percent of the population) resi-

dents are Jewish and 1.7 million (20.7 percent) are Arabs. Defined as "other" were 359,000. During 2014, approximately 162,000 people were added to Israel's population; that's a two percent increase, similar to the rate of population growth over the past decade. Some 23,000 new *olim* (those making *aliyah*) arrived in Israel in 2014; 176,000 babies were born. The country's population has grown by 1,434,000 residents over the past decade. (www.ynetnews.com, 12-29-14)

In Memoriam

Sy Berger, a chewing gum executive and creator of the modern baseball card, allowing millions of young boys to connect with their baseball heroes, died in December. He was 91. In the early 1950s, Berger turned the side business of baseball cards into a booming industry. By the 1970s, he made baseball card collecting synonymous with American boyhood. During the Depression, baseball cards had been used to increase sales of certain products, but it was in the post-World War II era that baseball cards came into their own. Berger was an executive at the Brooklyn-based Topps Company. He created the basic design of the color portraits of major league ball players along with a facsimile of the player's signature and statistics that were sold with packages of gum. Across the United States, the cards were collected, traded and won in card-pitching games by millions of young boys. In the 1980s and 90s, baseball cards became a billion-dollar industry, with an estimated 81 billion cards produced a year. (In April 2013, a card of Honus Wagner, the Hall of Fame Pittsburgh Pirates shortstop, sold for \$2.1 million, a record for a public auction sale of a baseball card.) In 1988, Berger was honored by the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, for his role "in the development of the modern baseball trading card and for helping to introduce generations of fans to baseball for more than half a century." He also earned his own card, part of the 2004 Topps series called "All-Time Fan Favorites." Seymour Perry Berger was born on New York City's Lower East Side to Louis, a furrier, and his wife Rebecca. He served in the Army Air Corps during World War II. In 2012, Berger was inducted into

the National Jewish Sports Hall of Fame. Berger himself was not a baseball card collector. He called himself a “gatherer”.

(www.washingtonpost.com, 12-15-14)

· Harold M. Schulweis, influential rabbi and national leader in the Conservative movement, died in December at the age of 89. Schulweis spent his long career as a religious leader making Judaism more approachable to both non-Jews and Jews who had strayed from their faith. He was the founder of the *Institute for the Righteous* – known since 1986 as the *Jewish Foundation for the Righteous*, the organization devoted to identifying and supporting non-Jews who risked their lives and the lives of their families to rescue Jews during the Holocaust. During the 1960s, he was on the local board of the NAACP and was a spiritual adviser to many of the radical Jewish students at the University of California, Berkeley campus. In the mid-1980s, Schulweis helped found *Mazon*, an organization to combat hunger in the United States and Israel. *Mazon* asks affluent Jewish families celebrating *simchas* to donate three percent of the cost of the celebration to help feed the needy. In 2004, he co-founded *Jewish World Watch*, a synagogue-based organization that supports survivors of atrocities in the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. (There are some 60 synagogues and other Jewish institutions across the country supporting this effort.) Schulweis served as rabbi at the Valley Beth Shalom congregation in Encino, California. The synagogue has 1,800 family members totaling some 10,000 people and is one of the largest congregations in the United States. Under his leadership, the *shul* was open to all seeking a spiritual home whether they were Jewish or not. In the early 1990s, he welcomed the gay community to the congregation.

Schulweis is credited with having introduced the practice of *Havurot*, the gathering of small groups of families to share both religious and secular occasions. Schulweis was born in the Bronx. His father was a journalist and an anti-religious socialist who entertained like-minded Yiddish poets and writers. Young Harold did not even set foot in a syna-

gogue until he was twelve. On a day off from school, he was passing one and heard music. He wandered into the synagogue – it was a Rosh HaShanah service – and he was captivated. His mother, Helen Rezack, was the daughter of a pious man. She brought Harold to her father for lessons in Hebrew and Jewish history. The young boy gave his Bar Mitzvah speech in Yiddish (to please his father), English (to please his mother) and Hebrew (to please his grandfather). Rabbi Schulweis graduated from Yeshiva University and received his rabbinical ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary. His first congregation was in the Parkchester section of the Bronx. His book, *Conscience: The Duty to Obey and the Duty to Disobey* was named winner of the “2008 National Jewish Book Award: Contemporary Jewish Life and Practice.” (www.nytimes.com, 12-25-14)

· Bess Myerson, the first – and to date the only – Jewish woman to be crowned Miss America, died in early January. She was 90. Myerson was a spokeswoman for the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), speaking to over 10,000 high school and college students, telling them that “you can’t be beautiful and hate.” Days after being crowned Miss America in September 1945, Myerson began a career in public affairs. She headed both New York City’s Departments of Consumer Affairs and Cultural Affairs. She served on a variety of boards and commissions under Presidents Johnson, Ford and Carter and was an important asset in Ed Koch’s New York mayoral campaign. In the late 1980s, she was romantically linked to wealthy sewer contractor Carl Capasso. She was involved in a series of legal controversies, including bribery of a New York City judge (she was acquitted) and was once caught shoplifting. Her troubles became known as the “Bess Mess.” Myerson was born in the Bronx to Russian-Jewish immigrant parents. She attended the High School of Music and Art. She went on to play piano at Carnegie Hall. Myerson donated \$1.1 million to help found the *Museum of Jewish Heritage* in New York. She was a staunch supporter of Israel and never forgot her Yiddish roots. (*The Forward*, 1-6-15) ◇



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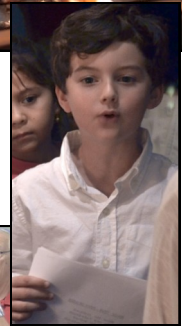
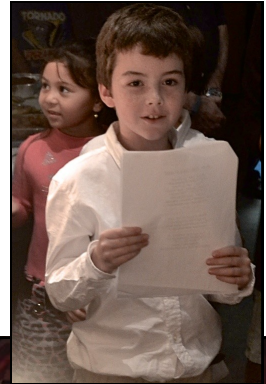
Photo Gallery

Some photos taken at the Morada Way Artwalk of December 18th, which featured lots of KJCCers. At top, Gloria Avner displayed some of her recent paintings. The beautiful photo in the center shows a home-from-college-break Nyan Feder with his Dad and musical mentor, Dave. Just below, Suzi Feder with a display of her hand-crafted jewelry at its first public showing. At bottom left, Beth Kaminstein and pal Samantha from Morada Clay were that week's featured artists. Below right, Medina gets into the mud, helping work 150 pounds of wet clay.





A new tradition At KJCC, and one of the highlights of each year's Chanukah celebration, is inviting everyone who comes to bring a menorah (well, technically a Channukiah), and then lighting all the candles on all of them at the same time. The effect is stunning. (We even had some oil lamps this year, just like at the original Chanukah celebration, which happened long before the invention of candles.) This all took place before the dinner on December 19th. The photos are a little dark because we turned out all the lights to enhance the effect of the candles.



The December 19th Chanukah photos continue. Our children recited all the prayers (learned dutifully at the KJCC religious school), Jonah blew his trumpet, and Bernie made sure that all the children got gifts that would make them smile and remember the day as one of joy.



The Chanukah celebration continued on December 19th. After dinner the service was led by the religious school teachers and students (plus Bernie, acting as KJCC zayde, who gathered all the students to hear the story and lessons of Chanukah on the bemaah steps). At bottom, Max and J.B. Fink say the prayer and cut the challah for the HaMotzi.





Top left, Gloria and old pal Marilyn, visiting from Bar Harbor, Maine, took David Gitin to lunch on the water to celebrate his birthday on December 19th.

Honoring the Homeless

by Medina Roy

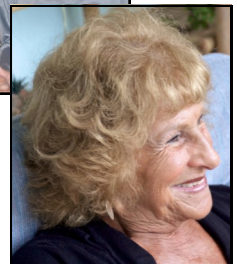
On December 21st, 2014, a group of some 25 residents of the Upper Keys – with the KJCC providing eight, the largest contingent – gathered at Settler’s Park in Tavernier. They were there to attend a solemn service led by Rev. Pam Feeser, Director of Baptist Health’s Community Health Ministries. Joyce Peckman delivered one of several “Meditations on the Stories of Homelessness” before the actual service began. Candles were then lit for each of the twelve homeless and 31 indigents who died in Monroe County in 2014. Jules and Nettie Seder and Linda Pollack joined in lighting candles as each name was read. The youngest of all attendees was Maddy Pollack, 12-year-old granddaughter of Linda and Joel. The service ended with David Gitin, Steve Steinbock, Medina Roy and Joyce reciting the *Mourner’s Kaddish*.

Since 1990, on or near the first day of winter – also the longest night of the year, the reason that day is chosen – *The National Coalition for the Homeless* has sponsored *National Homeless Persons Memorial Day*. Their purpose is to bring attention to the tragedy of homelessness and to remember our homeless neighbors who, in the Coalition’s words, have “paid the ultimate price for our nation’s failure to address this issue.” ◇



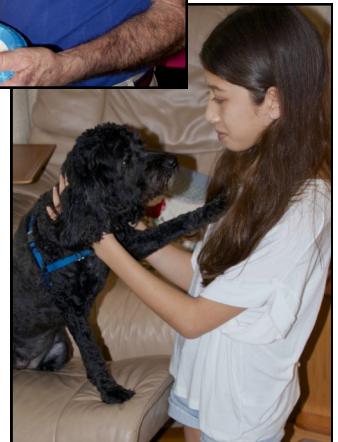


On December 25, Steve Steinbock continued his and Carol's practice of opening their home on Christmas Day to all of KJCC plus various friends and neighbors. The day was also intended as a celebration of life for Carol. There was a full house for much of the afternoon, the majority from KJCC. Stuart and Lauren Sax drove all the way from Dallas, Texas to be there. They even brought their dog Shayna, who's a littermate of Steve's dog Becka.





**More photos
from Steve
Steinbock's open
house on Christmas
Day. Shared by all
were food, and
laughter,
and warm
memories of Carol.**





The two top photos here were taken at the December 26th early service. At top, Gloria discusses KJCC history with Diane Boxer (on, ironically, Boxing Day), whose parents were early members of KJCC. In the next photo, Bernie leads Kiddush after services. Helping with the grape juice is Libby Peckman, Joyce's granddaughter. The formal photo at left center features All of Mary Lee Singer's grandchildren (and another is actually missing).



another is actually missing). The photo below was taken at the swearing-in of this year's Sisterhood officers: Erica Lieberman-Garrett, president; Susan Gordon, VP; Linda Kaplan, Treasurer; and Marsha Harris, Sec'y.



Barbara Knowles receives her "Ahava" pin from Linda Pollock. The pin is given to all Sisterhood presidents as they finish their term in office.



Blessing of the Fleet on New Year's Day

*KJCC joined the clergy of several other faiths
at what has become an annual ritual in the Upper Keys*

by Gloria Avner

At this year's annual "Blessing of the Fleet" ceremony, both commercial and private pleasure boats lined up patiently in an arc from the bridge to the horizon. January 1st seems unfailingly to be a gorgeous day, a blessing in itself. There was a plethora of blessers this year, representing Upper Keys faiths from Episcopal to Baptist, Methodist to Jewish, and Unitarian Universalist. It was interesting that the two specifically Jewish boats asking for Jewish blessings were the very first boat in line and the last. What a pleasure to bless the boat of David and Patti Gross – their family, friends and all who might board their vessel – with safe and peaceful journeys on (and beneath) Keys turquoise waters (which they and

others from Coral Reef Restoration work so hard to sustain). Steve Steinbock



and Shalom Too, last in line, asked for and received special blessings – for the well-being of the entire KJCC community, for the healing of Pauline Roller, for Linda and Joel Pollack, and for the spirit of Carol Steinbock, surely looking down on this sparkling day, watching over Steve, their boat, and our "mishpocha."

There were lots of people on the bridge this year, watching, waving, catching up with friends on this warm, sunny, clear, special day.

Amazingly, there were few complaints from the barely moving bridge traffic. Many of the boats besides Steve's also asked for blessings and prayers relating to loss – captains, mates, old friends gone, a dying daughter. Prayers and blessings were offered as well as requested, with New Year good wishes coming from boat captains to the community along with expressions of support for our servicemen and women. Stalwarts who appear every year were joined by new boats, and businesses praying for survival and success.

The morning held an archetypal quality.





Above, the assembled clergy (plus Gloria) atop the Whale Harbor Bridge waiting to convey blessings. From left: Father Tom Graf, St. James Episcopal Church; Rev. Kerry Foote, Burton Memorial United Methodist Church; Rev. Tony Hammon, Island Community Church; Rev. Dr. Pam Feeser, Community Health Ministries; KJCC's own wonderful Gloria Avner, Rev. Kerby Avedovech, Coral Isle Congregational Church, Rev. Marlin Simon, Spirit and Truth Ministries. At right, Gloria with Pam Feeser.



our Ancestors, asking for protection and giving thanks for God's gifts, watching over us, our goings-out and our comings-in. We ask that they all be in peace.

We choose to live in the Keys in partnership with forces that could easily destroy us. Think about the story of Jonah

Here we are in the 21st century, in the face of the beauty and uncontrollable power of nature, doing what we can to mitigate danger, loss and fear. Sometimes we all feel a need deeper than one that jetties and flood control and weather forecasts can address. Similar ceremonies for human survival have probably been practiced for millennia. As Jews, we have a special Traveler's Prayer; in it we acknowledge our frailty and praise the God of

resisting God's call to go to Nineveh. The fishing/diving/pleasure boat industry is vital to everyone's survival on this skinny string of islands. Listening to myriad blessings given and received today heightened my awareness of our dependency on forces greater than ourselves. The awareness made me proud that the KJCC, under the leadership of Linda Kaplan and Patti Gross, has chosen to contribute actively to the health of our home, to repair the seas - *Tikkun HaYam*.

The day was marked with special punctuation. At least three times, a giant ray hurled itself out of the water and made a thunderous splash-and-return. It felt like an enthusiastic interfaith AMEN. ◇



My Life in Israel - Part 1

by Zoe Berk-Moshe

I grew up in Brooklyn, New York, and learned there never to take my safety for granted. That's how it is in Israel. Life goes on normally, but signs of war are all around. All of the young people serve, and the country has their back. Soldiers ride for free on public transportation. No military kid ever goes hungry; most restaurants have a fund set up by patrons to pay for their meals. Hotels keep free rooms for soldiers on leave. Everywhere you go there are kids in military uniform, carrying rifles. Soldiers have to take their weapon with them wherever they go, even when not on duty; so you see girls in sundresses with rifles on their backs.

Before and during the Gaza War, there was hard bombing for sixty days.

The sirens went off at least once, but often six or seven times a day. The Iron Dome



kept people from being scared crazy. It is an amazing system. It knew where the bombs were headed and didn't waste energy on something that would fall in a field, although a bunch of cows got killed once. On the bombs it went after, it had 98 percent success, exploding them in the air into tiny pieces of shrapnel too small to do a lot of damage. But the Iron Dome is like contraception; you want to be 100 percent sure. So inside every apartment house are shelters.

Every supermarket and store has a shelter. When the siren goes off, you grab your purse, leave your shopping



Photo at left is of Zoe in Jerusalem with the Tower of David in the background. The two photos above were taken at Moshavim near Tel Aviv. The eggs are from a fully organic chicken farm owned by Joshua's best friend. The cows are on another Moshav.

cart and run to the shelter. It becomes a part of everyday life. You never get used to it, but you know what to do.

When the rockets from Gaza hurt some Bedouin children, the Israeli military brought big concrete pipes into the desert to try to protect Bedouins. They even placed porta-potties next to the pipes.

There isn't a part of Israel that isn't under surveillance. Even in the desert you hear sirens. In Tel Aviv there is a military department full of girls watching security monitors. (Most of the guys are in the field.) Josh's niece Mor Halili works there. It's tough. All of the kids are utilized and every parent knows that their children will serve. That's just how it is in Israel. ◇



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A Memorable Evening

There was dinner, a touch of the sacred, and warm appreciation

by Gloria Avner

With an air of 99 percent celebration and one percent sadness, KJCC's Annual Advertisers' and New Members' Dinner got off to a breezy and elegant start. Organizer Medina Roy's decor, her arrangement of tables and variety of delicious food brought by member volunteers, were all delightful. Her primary helpers, Joyce, Sam, and Bernie, with the help of Steve Steinbock and Yarden Kamely, did a magnificent job of creating room for 100 people in a way that did not feel crowded.

We are always delighted to see each other and the *schmoozing* time before "*fressing*" (eating in Yiddish) is, as Sam pointed out, an important part of our social nourishment. The food kept coming while we talked and greeted, until the tables would hold no more. (And then there was dessert.)

The ritual part of the evening began, as all Jewish holidays do, with the commandment to light the Shabbat candles. We bring in light, not



Preparation: Lee Schur and Gene Silverman at the welcome desk with name tags; Medina helps Elaine Solas cut up the food labels; Steve Steinbock at set-up that afternoon with tabletop doilies.



just for illumination as darkness descends, but to make a point of seeing *hamavdil beyn Kodesh l'chol*, the difference between sacred and secular time. For those to whom Jewish customs may be somewhat mysteri-





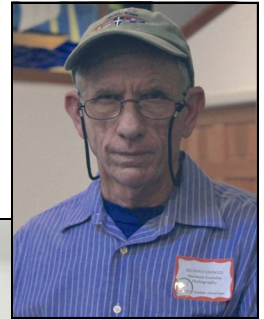
Joyce, Medina and Gloria got the evening started by lighting the Shabbat candles. Using the new KJCC P.A. system, Gloria explained to our guests the meaning of every step.



ous, I was able to share some fundamentals, as I had been asked to lead the candle-lighting ceremony. Unlike most of the world, Jews begin the new day, every day, as the sun is setting.



night until sundown on Saturday night we are instructed to take a day of rest. Why? Because God finished the work of creation in six days and, on the seventh day, rested. As above, so below.



Though not a showy multi-day holiday - like Passover, Chanukah, or Sukkoth - Shabbat, appearing once each week, is the most important of all Jewish holidays (or holy days, its antecedent and twin). From its beginning on Friday



Why is Shabbat so important? Because it celebrates not just the end of the noisily busy workweek, but on a higher level celebrates "*shalom bayit*," peacefulness in the home.

The Keys Jewish Community Center is





Bernie Ginsberg's major events. Bernie's two-year tenure would be complete in less than a month. It seemed fitting, before a large assemblage of KJCC members and friends, to honor him, too, on this special night. His legacy



our home, and our members, guests, and supportive advertisers are our family, our "mishpocha." We celebrate the holiday as the fifth commandment



will be enduring and three-fold: joy in the children's classroom (they come because they want to come), support of Jewish learn-



tells us - to observe it and keep it holy. Look at the faces in these pictures. We love sharing the peace and joy of Shabbat with our neighbors and loyal advertisers. Now, why was there a hint of sadness? Sam gracefully acknowledged in his moving introduction that this night would be the last of President



This dinner was the last major social event of Bernie Ginsberg's KJCC presidency. This was fitting, because regular dinners, which foster friendship and community, will be a large part of Bernie's legacy.

ing on every level, and commitment to hosting a homey (*haimishe*) meal in our social hall every month. Feed them and they will come is the law of nature here. The corollary is that in the course of sharing food and talk, ceremony and song, we nourish our souls as well as our bodies and create the engaged faces and relationships we see on these pages. More than sixty people stayed for the Shabbat services that followed dinner, including Father Tom Graf from St. James the Fisherman

Church, who joined us as Bernie's guest. We nourish ourselves. We nourish our relationships and our community. And then that strong and warm community we endeavor to build in turn supports us. It's a simple thing. But the act of doing that simple thing - Judaism teaches us to act, not profess - we approach the profound. *L'Chaim*. And thank you, Bernie.



Note: It is good to know that our supporters are not restricted to this skinny string of islands. A huge and heartfelt thanks goes to Lynn Nobil, daughter of KJCC founders Joel and Sara Cohen, living in Bar Harbor, Maine on another island at the far other end of U.S.1, for carrying on her parents' legacy and sponsoring this fine evening. ◇



Our sincere appreciation to Eve Knowles, who spent her evening taking the photographs you see in this article.

Keys Jewish Community Center, Inc.

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

To all KJCC members:

The KJCC Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 8th, 2015 at 11:00 a.m. in the KJCC sanctuary.

The February Board meeting, in the Ruth Richardson Social Hall, is scheduled for the same day at 9:00 a.m. All members in good standing are invited to attend both meetings.

The primary order of business at the Annual Meeting is the election and installation of Officers and the Board of Directors. According to our by-laws, nominations from the floor can be accepted at that time.

Light refreshments will be served to all present immediately following the installation of Officers and Board of Directors.

The Nominating Committee has met as required and selected the following slate of 2015-2016 Officers and Board Members. This slate was approved at the January 11th, 2015 Board Meeting:

President – Sam Vinicur

Executive Vice President – Steve Steinbock

Vice Presidents – Gloria Avner, Susan Gordon, Steve Hartz

Treasurer – Linda Pollack

Recording Secretary – Beth Hayden

Financial Secretary – Dave Mont

Corresponding Secretary – Joyce Peckman

Directors:

Ken Atlas

Marc Bloom

Dave Feder

David Gitin

Mitch Harvey

Linda Kaplan

Barbara Knowles

Skip Rose

Medina Roy

Gene Silverman

(Note: Past presidents who maintain regular attendance are automatically voting members of KJCC's Board.)

Respectfully submitted by the 2015 Nominating Committee:

Steve Steinbock (chair), Bernie Ginsberg, Linda Pollack, Sam Vinicur

The Missionary Position

There is "Good News" In Ethiopia

by Richard Kaufman

Last fall I taught at the brand new Myung-sung Medical College, at the Myung-sung (Evangelical) Christian Medical Center in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

My dear friend and colleague, the Reverend Jong Lee, Pastor Emeritus of the Hanmee (Evangelical) Presbyterian Church in Itasca, Illinois, is now Head Chaplain of the Myung-sung Medical College, a part of the larger Myung-sung (Evangelical) Christian Medical Center. He asked me to come there to teach neuroscience. I walked into a world I knew about but knew nothing about. In their Christian Evangelical perspective, all one needs to be re-born is faith. You don't need priests. You don't need nuns. You don't need saints. You don't need statues. You don't need sacraments. You don't need to suffer. You don't need to renounce this world. You don't have to worry about "transubstantiation" or "consubstantiation." You don't need Inquisitions. You don't need cathedrals. You don't need to "cross" yourself. You don't need intermediaries. You don't need Hebrew. You don't need Greek. You don't need Latin. You don't need Italians. You don't need the Pope. You don't need Rome. To be spiritually reborn, all one needs is faith; one is therefore cleansed and healed of original sin, in the Christ Jesus. Of course, it goes without saying, to them you also don't need *mohels* or circumcision. No need for rabbis, Torah, *Eretz Yisrael*, or *mitzvot*. Salvation to them is easier, granted as a gift by the grace of God.

I arrived in the fall of 2013 to begin a two-month-long teaching assignment at the Medical Center. I was greeted and welcomed into a community of born-again Korean missionaries, born-again missionary doctors, and born-again health professionals from around the



Richard in a typical low-key pose in front of the Korean Evangelical Christian Medical College in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, an interesting place for a nice Jewish boy from Chicago to end up teaching.

world. The Myung-sung Christian (no tobacco or alcohol allowed) Medical Center (MCM) occupies a square mile of landscaped, sparkling-clean meadow and garden within the sprawling urban shambles and the squalid shantytowns of Addis Ababa, which somewhat improbably means "New Flower" and is typically shortened to "Addis." There are several residential buildings there, a chapel, numerous outbuildings, the medical college, and a 150-bed hospital complex, all scattered around the perimeter of a large, grassy prairie. The rainy season is over. There are no bugs. There will be clear skies until next year's rainy season. This is a bird-watcher's paradise in the center of the great African migratory flight pathway. We are at eight



Richard's colleagues at the Myungsung Christian Medical Center, who became friends, all affiliated with the Myungsung Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Seoul: at left, Rev. Jong Lee, Deacon Yohana Kim, M.D., Deacon Kuhn Hong, M.D.

thousand feet, so although we are on the equator, the climate is wonderfully temperate. "In Addis, never too hot, never too cold." This is not Kansas.

Addis is a blighted clot of alleys, yards, pathways, markets, fields, unpaved roads and open drainage, a shack-city made of "tin" (corrugated sheet metal), plastic sheeting, and rubble. Ethiopia looks like every other Third World country that I have seen in the Middle East, South America, China, India, Pakistan, Central America. Human misery and poverty look the same all over the world. Four million souls live in Addis. They call themselves lucky to eat a full meal once a day. It is, again, not Kansas.

Korean food is served at the Guest House. My first breakfast was a buffet of pancakes; kimchee; toast; fried eggs; cold cereal; oatmeal; rice; rice with red beans; fermented glutinous material; rice congee; spinach mystery soup; more kimchee; cheesy material in a...sauce; pickled vegetables; pickled other stuff; spicy, brownish unidentified substances; extra kimchee; fragrant sheep kid-

ney soup; boiled soy nuts; amalgamated pink medallions, and watery coffee. I had no trouble with keeping a vegetarian diet. In truth, many of the dishes were strange, but delicious. But definitely not Kansas.

Everyone here was born-again, except me. My hosts at the Guest House were Korean. Many did not speak English, or did so poorly at best. I was unable to communicate with many of them. English is, however, the *lingua franca* at the medical center. All classes at the medical school are taught in English. There were a number of missionary doctors from around the world who rotated through. Most were Canadian. I was the only Non-Korean American at the facility. And to the chagrin of Dr. Yohana Kim, the head of the Pathology Department, I beat him out of his honored first place as the oldest person on campus. I felt sorry, but not my fault.

OMG, HaShem, what had I gotten myself into? I had launched myself into six alternative universes that I previously did not know existed: the world of Korean missionaries; the world of medical missionaries; the world of Ethiopian medical students; the world of Ethiopian doctors; the world of the Myungsung Christian Medical Center Korean Hospital (150 beds), perhaps the best in Ethiopia; and the streets of Addis Ababa.

The Myungsung Christian Medical Center in Addis is the missionary project of the Myungsung (Evangelical) Presbyterian Megachurch in Seoul, South Korea, which has *one million* members. They allot eighty percent of their tithing for missionary work in fifty-six countries. They donate food to the poor in Korea with the remaining twenty percent.

There are 250 Koreans in Ethiopia. Half of that number live in Addis, with half of those at the medical campus and half off-campus operating dry cleaning stores. There are ten thousand Chinese in Ethiopia. All are in the countryside developing mining projects and railways. Addis has the second-most number of foreign embassies of any city, below only

New York. It is the headquarters for the Organization of African States; what they do there, and to what good, though, I have no idea.

Ethiopia is the second-most-populous country in Africa at 98 million, behind Nigeria's 169 million and ahead of third-place Egypt's 81 million. Ethiopia is also the second-poorest country in the world, as measured by the Multidimensional Poverty Index. (Niger has the dubious honor of being in first place.) Life expectancy is, at best, 60 years. There are approximately 150 languages spoken here. *Amharigna* (pronounced Amhar-in-ya), an ancient Semitic dialect, is spoken by most Ethiopians. One can get by with English in most tourist areas.

The MCM was founded eleven years ago as a joint venture between the Myungsung Church and the Ethiopian government. The government donated the site, a square mile of land on what, back then, was the outskirts of Addis. Although the government, in general, is hostile to foreign companies, NGOs, and missionaries, they have continued to support the MCM, based on a special relationship between South Korea and Ethiopia. During the Korean War in the early 1950s, several thousand Ethiopians fought on the side of South Korea. These ex-soldiers were impris-

"I had expected an onslaught of concern for my soul, a siege war of persuasion to convert me. It didn't happen. I was a bit disappointed."

oned or executed during a period of Ethiopian history known as "The Derg," a ruthless and brutal socialist-inspired dictatorship from 1974 to 1991, under the rule of Colonel Mengistu Haile Maryam. The surviving veterans of the Korean War are now given free treatment at MCM Hospital in honor of their service to Korea.

To me, at first, the Korean missionary community was strange, alien,

opaque, exotic, and incomprehensible. I did not understand their language, their culture, their ethos, their religion. I did love their food. Yet they were more welcoming, tolerant, generous and loving to me than most groups I have previously known. A caveat, though: they had no idea who I was, and utterly no knowledge or understanding of me as an individual or as a Jew. I got my first taste of the born-again attitude toward the stranger: In Him all are accepted. In Him all are loved. In Him all are saved. (Surprisingly, they were very nice to me even after we became better acquainted.)

I had expected an onslaught of concern for my soul, a siege war of persuasion to convert me. It didn't happen. I was a bit disappointed. I came well armed. I schlepped a lot of ordinance, but for naught. No

glory. What's the matter, my soul wasn't good enough for them? A reject?

The main religions in Ethiopia are Christianity, Islam, and paganism. Sixty million Ethiopians are Christian, primarily Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo. Twenty million of those Chris-

To give you a really good idea about the neighborhood surrounding the medical complex, this scene of a herd of goats is very close by.





Richard with his students at Myungsung Medical School. Just so we'd be sure which one was him, he helpfully noted that he "was the one with the gray hair." What's really interesting is noting how many of the students are women.

tians are Evangelical. Amongst these are the Evangelical Presbyterian Koreans who established the medical college and hospital, and who were my hosts for two months. And, by the way, there are more Lutherans in Ethiopia than in the United States.

An Evangelical Protestant is "a person who believes in the "Good News." And the "Good News" is that the essence of the Gospels consists in the doctrine of salvation by faith in the atoning death, burial, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Through faith in Jesus, sins can be forgiven and humanity reconciled with God. One can be born again. The new birth is received by the grace of God through faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, without the need for either sacraments or good works. It's different than our Judaism.

Evangelical Christianity is a vital, growing, worldwide movement. There are 750 million Evangelical Christians. China is now the leading publisher of Christian Bibles, having just published its one-millionth. By 2030, if rates

continue, there will be more Christians in China than any other country. South Korea, by percentage, is a Christian nation.

Jesus is alive and well in Ethiopia. The missionary position is to be Christ Jesus' representative on Earth. Born-again Christians are diplomats for Jesus. This means that they care for the poor, the sick, the oppressed, the humble, the weak and meek, the downtrodden. The missionary position is to altruistically surrender to the welfare of others. This means that individuals donate their time and treasure to serve. Many of the missionary doctors and health care professionals work nine or ten months in Addis, then return to their homes to raise money to fund their next year.

The missionary position is to love unconditionally the poor, the rich, the oppressed, the sinners, the humble and humiliated, the proud and haughty, the spoiled and the saints, believers and non-believers. To them Christ Jesus died for all, suffered on the cross

to save all humanity from damnation, and offers salvation for all who believe.

We spend hundreds of billions of dollars to learn about the oldest, the farthest, the largest and the smallest parts of the universe. With space ships and giant particle colliders we explore "what is above and what is below." Nothing escapes our curiosity – except ourselves and one another. We barely know who we are, and we know almost nothing about our neighbors. Our brains are wired to see the physical universe as a fascinating, majestic puzzle to be solved. Yet at the same time we are hard-wired to perceive those of our fellow human beings who are outside our community as "them," as "the other." Members of our species who are "they" or "those people" to us are regarded as enemies to fear and plunder. Religion seems to both alleviate and increase human destructiveness. Sad to say, walking through Jerusalem wearing my kippah, I had a bout of Jewish cognitive dissonance. I felt less like an outsider in Arab Abu Tor, where people smiled at me, than in Mea Sharim, amongst Haredi wearing Hassidic garb, where I was politely ignored.

The good news is that the "Good News" (that is, the Gospel of Jesus Christ) is expanding the most rapidly in those countries where human rights abuse is the most flagrant. The good news is that the "Good News" is growing the most rapidly in those countries where human life is the cheapest. Where there is the most oppression, fear, misery, starvation, sickness, injustice, tyranny, and hopelessness, the "Good News" is a force for societal and political change. In the hellholes and poverty-pockets of the world – in failed nation-states, police states, in the anarchies and in the military dictatorships of Central and South America, of China, India, Africa, and the Middle East, of Central Asia – Evangelical movements are taking hold.

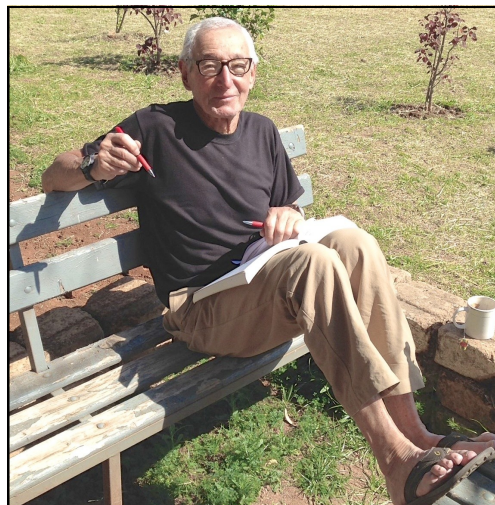
The Evangelicals I have met are quiet revolutionaries. They wage an asymmetric war

Richard's notes say that this was his official "office" at the medical school. Well, he had a cup of coffee, a book and beautiful weather. A person could do worse.

against suffering and injustice. Their weapons are medicine and food for both the body and soul. They are prepared to out-love the opposition, even to death, if need be. They have girded their loins with suicide belts of faith. In their view they represent "Him Who Conquered Death." They ask themselves, "What would Jesus do now?" Their answer: "Jesus would do now what he did back then, feed the poor and heal the sick."

Thank you, Rev. Jong Lee; thank you, Deacon Yohana Kim, M.D; thank you, Deacon Kuhn Hong, M.D., for your love and understanding and generosity, for your deep humanity and pious Christian grace and goodness. You never tried to convert me. You opened my eyes. May your examples inspire us to deepen our own faith and to pursue our own Jewish principles and values in lives of worthwhile service. ◇

Richard Kaufman is a new KJCC member and practicing psychiatrist in Highland Park, Illinois. His Oneg stories about being a Jew recruited to teach at a Korean Evangelical Christian Medical School in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia were so interesting that we thought all of you might enjoy being part of the audience. (This, by the way, is the quality of conversation you miss if you aren't there at the KJCC Friday night Onegs.)



“Etz Chaim Hee” – Happy Birthday, Tree of Life

by Gloria Avner

When spring arrives and you first see a fruit tree burst forth with blossoms, there is a blessing we are told to say: Baruch Atah Adonai Elohainu Melech ha-Olam, Blessed are you, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who did not cause any lack in this world, but created in it good creatures and good trees that all may enjoy them.” As Jews, we are nothing if not constantly attentive to “firsts” and grateful to be alive to celebrate them. Witness all our “Shehechyanu’s.” But this prayer, and these trees, are even more special. The Kabbalah teaches that the blessing upon blossoming fruit trees, Bircat Hallanot, can redeem souls.

*I*t is Shabbat morning. We’re getting ready to take out the Torah. Rabbi Agler chants: *L’dor va dor*. We echo with gusto: *L’dor va dor*, from generation to generation. There is pride in our on-goingness, and in almost every mention of continuity there is metaphor. In every metaphor, at bottom, is a tree.

As children we learn to count growth rings to tell the age of a tree. When we want to document our personal ancestry, generation to generation, we make a graph of continuity and call it a family tree. Awe sets in early when we discover that trees use the carbon dioxide waste we exhale to make their food and they then excrete oxygen. We breathe their air, eat their fruit, and plant their seeds to make new trees. The linkage between trees and man, physically and metaphorically, extends throughout every field of study from Biblical history to anthropology, art, poetry, philosophy,

biology, and mysticism. The deep-rooted fascination (pun intended) crosses cultural boundaries, continents, and centuries. On the 15th day (the number *Tet Vav*, pronounced *Tu*) of the month of *Sh’vat*, the Jewish take on trees comes to life.

Because *Tu B’Shvat* marks the last of the winter rains in Israel, it also marks the time when life force in the form of sap begins to rise from earth, roots, and tree trunk to the growing tips of branches. Seasons transition from death-like winter stasis to a promise of spring and budding fruit growth. The day is not just a birthday, but the beginning of a New Year for the Trees, one of the four distinct New Years that Jews celebrate over the course of one calendar year.

For us, the tree is a double symbol, representing both Man and Torah. From the psalmists we hear “. . . a man is as a tree of the field.” From our liturgy on Shabbat morning, we sing *Etz chaim hi*. Torah is a “tree of life” for all who cling to it. Both Man and Torah have roots, trunk, branches, and fruit, all the major elements of a tree.

The roots of man, the Jewish people, are our ancestors, our matriarchs and patriarchs, the whole book of Genesis. The trunk is the whole body of the Jewish people, the “signers-on” to the covenant at Sinai, who received the Torah and entered the Promised Land, the cast of the Book of Exodus.

In Hebrew, the word for tribe is *Shevet*, a word close to *Sh’vat*, the name of this month and also the exact word for branch of a tree, all who came before us, survived oppression, and nurtured



coming generations in the ways of Judaism. Our tribes are our branches, spreading out from but still attached to the trunk, with sub-branches from original branches reaching all the way to and throughout the Diaspora.

What is the fruit? The fruit of Man and the fruit of the Torah are the same: the good deeds of every living soul. When Rabbi Agler talks on a Shabbat morning of those deeds that we cannot do too much of – visiting the sick, honoring our parents, consoling the bereaved, celebrating with bride and groom – studying Torah is the last act mentioned, and is said to be the greatest, because, as the verse goes on, the study of Torah leads to them all.

Do we at KJCC revere trees? Absolutely. Our children plant fruit trees every year at this time while we watch, help, sing and dance. (see the Nosh announcement on page 5). Mort Silverman comes to the synagogue at least once a week to water and care for the mango and avocado orchard he planted for us – a living, growing gift. Steve Steinbock selects, plants, and maintains the trees that many of us have chosen to symbolize and celebrate a loved one in our ever-more-beautiful Meditation Garden. We revere trees and we revere Torah. The rewards of paying attention to both are like the flowers on an almond tree in springtime – uncountable.

Tu B'Shevat: Jewish Appreciation of the Natural World

More and more Jewish schools, such as our own KJCC Sunday School, hold a special Tu B'Shevat seder that teaches appreciation for nature in the embodiment of the noble tree, provider of food and shade and beauty and so often, in many other cultures as well as our own, the symbol for life itself and all its meandering connections. As with so many things, traditional Jewish teachings are being applied, through new eyes, to challenges offered by the modern world. This arti-

cle is adapted from an internet article by Richard H. Schwartz, Ph.D that appeared on the web site all-creatures.org. His point was to promote vegetarianism. Ours is not. Ours is to explore the holiday and its teachings more broadly. We thank Dr. Schwartz for his scholarship. Anyone who wishes to pursue the vegetarian angle is encouraged to visit the web site.

The *Tu B'Shvat* seder, in which fruits and nuts are eaten, along with the singing of songs and the recitation of biblical verses related to trees and fruits, is the only sacred meal where only vegetarian – actually fruitarian – foods are eaten by all who participate. This is consistent with the diet in the Garden of Eden, as indicated by God's first (completely vegetarian, by the way) dietary law:

And God said: "Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree that has seed-yielding fruit; to you it shall be for food." (Gen.1:29)

The Talmud refers to *Tu B'Shvat* as the New Year for Trees. It is considered to be the date on which the fate of trees is decided for the coming year. In recent years, one of the prime ways of celebrating *Tu B'Shvat*, especially in Israel, is through the planting of trees.

Many contemporary Jews look on *Tu B'Shvat* as a Jewish Earth Day, and use *Tu B'Shvat* seders as a chance to discuss how Jewish values can be applied to reduce many of today's ecological threats. Our Jewish sages, as did the founders of most cultures, understood the importance of trees, and not just as a source of food or wood. But they could not have understood the pace of the modern world, and how we are denuding our planet of its trees. One of the prime reasons for the destruction of tropical rain forests today is to create pasture land and areas to grow feed crops for cattle. We are destroying forest areas in countries such as Brazil and Costa Rica, where at least half of the world's species of plants and animals live.

When God created the world, He was able to say, "It is very good" (*Genesis 1:31*). Every-

thing was in harmony as God had planned. The waters were clean, the air was pure. But what must God think about the world today?

An ancient *Midrash* has become all too relevant today: In the hour when the Holy one, blessed be He, created the first person, He showed him the trees in the Garden of Eden, and said to him: "See My works, how fine they are; Now all that I have created, I created for your benefit. Think upon this and do not corrupt and destroy My world. For if you destroy it, there is no one to restore it after you." (*Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 7:28)

The Talmudic sages assert that people's role is to enhance the world as "co-partners of God in the work of creation." (*Shabbat 10a*) They indicated great concern about preserving the environment and preventing pollution. They state: "It is forbidden to live in a town which has no garden or greenery" (*Kiddushin* 4:12; 66d). Threshing (for the non-rural among us, the process of mechanically separating seeds from harvested plants) floors had to be placed far enough away so a town would not be dirtied by chaff carried by winds (*Baba Batra* 2:8). Tanneries had to be

kept well outside a town and could be placed only on the eastern side of a town, so that odors carried by the prevailing western winds would not overwhelm the town (*Baba Batra* 2:8,9).

The rabbis express a sense of sanctity toward the environment: "the atmosphere (air) of the land of Israel makes one wise" (*Baba Batra* 158b).

Tu B'Shvat embodies the important teaching that "The earth is the Lord's" (Psalm 24:1) and that people are to be stewards of the earth. Property is a sacred trust given by God; it must be used to fulfill God's purposes. No person has absolute or exclusive control over his or her possessions. The concept that people have custodial care of the earth, as opposed to ownership, is illustrated by this ancient story:

Two men were fighting over a piece of land. Each claimed ownership and bolstered his claim with apparent proof. To resolve their differences, they agreed to put the case before the rabbi. The rabbi listened but could come to no decision because both seemed to be right. Finally he said, "Since I cannot de-

Tu B'Shvat Tidbits

In the Hasidic community, some Jews pickle or candy the *etrog* (citron) from Sukkot and eat it on *Tu B'Shvat*. Then they pray that they will be worthy of a beautiful *etrog* on the following Sukkot.

In keeping with the idea of *Tu B'Shvat* marking the revival of nature symbolized by the budding of the almond tree, many of Israel's major institutions chose this day for their inauguration. The cornerstone-laying of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem took place on *Tu B'shvat* 1918; the Technion in Haifa, on *Tu B'shvat* 1925; and the Knesset on *Tu B'Shvat* 1949.

Throughout the world, religious Jews strive to eat foods on *Tu B'Shvat* that are distinctive to, or characteristic of, the land of Israel, specifically, the seven fruits and grains mentioned in Deuteronomy, chapter 8 verse 8. (When Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, encyclopedic author of all things Jewish, was a child, his father used to bring home an Israeli-grown carob, a fruit that is only sweet after just falling from the tree, with the decidedly un-Jewish name of St. John's bread. In Yiddish it was known as *buxer*.)

Nachmanides said: A Jew may not derive any benefit from the produce of a fruit tree for the first three years after it is planted. This rule applies even outside of Israel. Any fruit yielded by the tree in these three years is called *orlah* - "blocked" (prohibited). In Temple times the fruit of the fourth year (or its value) was brought to Jerusalem and eaten there. The fruits of the fifth year (and on) were permitted for normal consumption.

-Gloria

cide to whom this land belongs, let us ask the land." He put his ear to the ground and, after a moment, straightened up. "Gentlemen, the land says it belongs to neither of you but that you belong to it."

Tu B'Shvat reflects the Torah mandate that we are not to be wasteful or destroy unnecessarily anything of value. It is interesting that this prohibition, called *bal tashchit* ("Thou shalt not destroy") is based on concern for fruit-bearing trees, as indicated in the following Torah statement:

When Thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, Thou shall not destroy (lo tashchit) the trees thereof by wielding an ax against them; for Thou mayest eat of them but Thou shalt not cut them down; for is the tree of the field man, that it should be besieged of thee? Only the trees of which Thou knoweth that they are not trees for food, them Thou mayest destroy and cut down, that Thou mayest build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it fall. (Deut. 20:19-20)

Tu B'Shvat reflects a concern about future generations. In ancient times it was a custom to plant a cedar sapling on the birth of a boy and a cypress sapling on the birth of a girl. The cedar symbolized strength and stature of a man, while the cypress signified the fragrance and gentleness of a woman. When the children were old enough, it was their task to care for the trees that were planted in their honor. It was hoped that branches from both types of trees would form part of the *chuppah* when the children married.

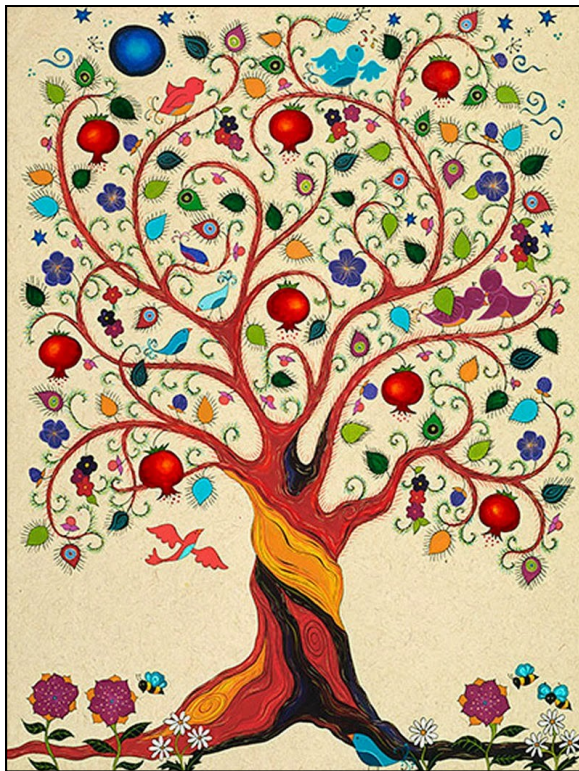
Choni (the rainmaker) was walking along a road when he saw an old man planting a carob tree. Choni asked him: "How many years will it take for this tree to yield fruit?" The man answered that it would take seventy years. Choni then asked: "Are you so healthy a man that you expect to live that length of time and eat of its fruit?" The man answered: "I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planned for me. So I will do the same for my children."

It is customary, on *Tu B'Shvat*, to recite Psalm 104, which indicates how God's concern and care extends to all creatures, and illustrates that God created the entire earth as a unity, in ecological balance:

...Thou [God] art the One Who sends forth springs into brooks, that they may run between mountains, to give drink to every beast of the fields; the creatures of the forest quench their thirst. Beside them dwell the fowl of the heavens; Thou art He Who waters the mountains from His upper chambers;

Thou art He Who causes the grass to spring up for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, to bring forth bread from the earth. How manifold art Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy property.

It sounds simple, as profound things often are: enjoy the fruits from the trees. (All KJCC members, of course, are welcome to join the Sunday School for their annual *Tu B'Shvat seder*). But remember the trees they came from. Care for them and preserve them and all their gifts for your children. ◇



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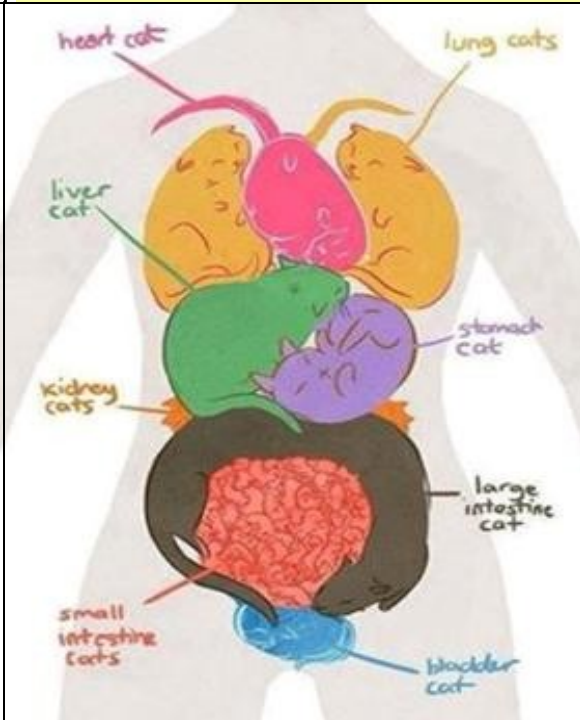
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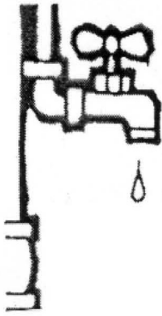
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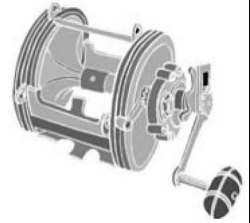
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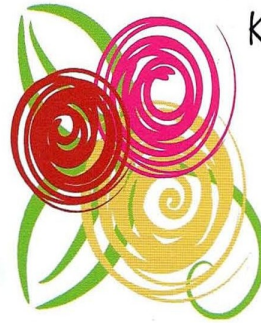
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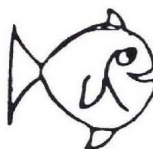
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