

Chai~Lights



January 2010

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Keys Jewish Community Center

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President's Message Alan Beth



I would like to wish you all a healthy and happy new year. It is truly incredible to realize how quickly this year has gone. Also, I realize how quickly this *decade* has gone. It seems like yesterday when we celebrated the year 2000! An old, distant friend contacted me recently. We were friends in Israel and then in London about 30 years ago. So we exchanged the usual question: "what have you been up to?" I found myself talking about the KJCC.

Our KJCC 30th anniversary will be celebrated in a few months. The board discussed whether we should charge for this event or not. Needless to say it was a controversial issue. The board felt that to exclude anyone from the celebration because they could not afford to come would be unjust. Yet to include everyone at no charge means the synagogue has to underwrite this event. Soon, you will receive personal invitations from Sisterhood. I am asking that you please consider this a fundraiser event and donate as much as you can afford.

How did you feel when you heard that the synagogue was recently vandalized? A lot of people were upset. The press was involved. I got calls from the

Anti-Defamation League and a few rabbis in south Florida expressing their concern. Sadly, it is when we feel targeted as Jews that we most feel the need to come together. Here's another reminder. So let's all come together now, participate more in the KJCC and make our small community closer and stronger.

We owe thanks to Gloria, Yardena and Susan for the wonderful Chanukah play, to Erica for piano accompaniment of the ShabbaTones and *Yiddishkeit*, and to Sisterhood—especially to Sofy Wasser, Joan Stark and Roberta McNew—for organizing the wonderful dinner on December 11th. A special thanks goes to Dave Feder, who applied his special magic to our sanctuary's sound system. You should come to services to hear how great it sounds now!

Regarding the Survey: so far we have 65 responses. One of the questions asked was *What I like most about coming to the KJCC*. Overwhelmingly your response to that was our *warmth and welcoming atmosphere*. We'll have a full report in next month's issue.

-Alan

January 2010

15 Tevet - 16 Shevat

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Names denote leaders of Friday services. <i>Italicized names are Oneg sponsors.</i>					1 Jim & Gloria <i>Amelia & Steve Kasinof</i>	2
3 Sisterhood Meeting 9 a.m.	4	5	6	7	8 Gloria & Sam	9
10 Board Meeting 9 a.m. Blood Drive	11	12	13 Fashion Show & Luncheon	14	15 Linda & Joel Pollack <i>Barry Alter Patricia & Henry Isenberg</i>	16
17	18	19	20	21	22 Alan Beth <i>Carol & Steve Steinbock</i>	23
24 31	25 Yiddishkeit Night/ New Member Dinner 6:30 p.m.	26	27	28	29 Rabbi Danny Young 6:30 Service	30 Tu B'Shevat

Nosh

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Wall

I have discussed this with our teachers (Gloria and Yardena), Susan Gordon, and a few of the parents of past bar/bat mitzvahs at the KJCC: We would like to collect 4 x 6 or 5 x 7 framed pictures of the kids(adults too) at the time they were bar/bat mitzvah (hopefully in their *tallit* if you still have those).

We will then hang these pictures in a special place on a wall in our synagogue, recording this wonderful part of our KJCC history.

So, this is the initial request to please send us pictures—framed—from your bar/bat mitzvah at any time during the first thirty years of KJCC.

- Alan

A Unique Israeli Hospital

Whenever there are rocket attacks in the north of Israel, it is the Western Galilee Hospital that accepts the wounded, be they Jewish, Christian, Druze or Muslim. The hospital has a huge underground facility that enables it to operate during time of war or attack.

On Monday, January 25th, from 6-7 p.m. in the main conference room at Mariners Hospital in Tavernier, Judy Jochnowitz of the Western Galilee Hospital will discuss her hospital, how it works and how it is the pre-eminent example of emergency preparedness and functionality under often horrific conditions.

The talk is geared to health-care professionals, but Dr. Steve Smith has arranged admittance for any KJCC members who wish to attend. Attendance is free, but you must contact Jill Miranda Baker at Mariners to reserve a seat. Her phone is 305-434-1584, e-mail JillMb@baptisthealth.net.

New Members

We welcome new members Robert and Barbara Gintel of Key Largo and welcome back returning members Dr. Joseph and Susan Goldberg of Tavernier. Hope to see you soon and often.

Rabbi to lead KJCC services

Ritual/Religious chair Gloria Avner has arranged for the first in an occasional series of visiting rabbis to lead KJCC services, a program recently approved by the KJCC Board. Rabbi Danny Young will lead services on Friday, January 29th, which as the last Friday of the month will begin at 6:30 p.m. Rabbi Young was ordained at the Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles in 2004, and now lives in Miami. In his note accepting the assignment, Rabbi Young wrote Gloria that “it is a very interesting Shabbat, as it happens to be Tu B'shevat AND Shabbat Shira (the Shabbat of song because the Torah portion includes the Song of the Sea).”

Only on rare occasions since its founding has KJCC had a rabbi lead services. We trust that the sanctuary will be filled that night.

Beth Kaminstein, Ceramic Artist

For those of you who don't know, KJCC's own Beth Kaminstein is a renowned ceramic artist, with her signature platters gracing the tables of hundreds of homes and restaurants as well as the HGTV Dream Home in Islamorada.

You'll have to hurry, but Beth's artistry will be shown until January 3rd at the Gallery Morada, MM 81.6 oceanside in Islamorada. Platters come in a variety of sizes, for entertaining or festive everyday use.

Oneg Sponsors for January 2010

January 1st—Amelia & Steve Kasinof in honor of their anniversary.

January 15th—Barry Alter for his birthday, and Patricia & Henry Isenberg for Henry's birthday.

January 22rd—Carol & Steve Steinbock for Carol's birthday.

Bloodmobile is Coming Back

The next KJCC blood drive will be held on January 10th, the same day as the Board Meeting. All members are encouraged to donate. Did you know it's also healthy to donate blood?

January Birthdays

1st.....	Jerry Olsen
1st.....	Justin Wade Gilson
1st.....	Laura Goodman
2nd.....	Sherrie Willner
4th.....	Howard Gilson
4th.....	Randi W. Freundlich
6th.....	Janice Gorson
6th.....	Stanley Margulies
8th.....	Matthew Barrett
8th.....	Michael Pearlson
8th.....	Roger Levy
9th.....	Cathy Rakov
9th.....	Sarah Kamely
11th.....	Michelle Zinner
12th.....	Alex Dutton
12th.....	Meredith A. Cline
13th.....	Amy Nobil
14th.....	Murray Cooper
15th.....	Charlie Horowitz
15th.....	Heather Gilson
15th.....	Jamie Goodman
15th.....	Jill Taksey
16th.....	Brieze Levy
16th.....	Donald Zinner
17th.....	Andrea Kluger
17th.....	Neal Rakov
17th.....	Suzi-Sarot Feder
18th.....	Barry Alter
18th.....	Henry Isenberg
19th.....	Benjamin Friedman
19th.....	Mark Kanarek
19th.....	Sandy Seder
20th.....	Mary Terner
22nd.....	Sheila Olsen
22nd.....	Sidney Samuels
24th.....	Randy Kominsky
24th.....	Stuart Grossman
26th.....	Carol Ann Steinbock
27th.....	Beth Hudson
27th.....	Pat VanArtsdalen
28th.....	Yardena Kamely
29th.....	Beth Kaminstein
29th.....	Jeffrey Boruszak
30th.....	Kristen M. Schur
30th.....	Mark Feinberg

Thanks, Dave

On behalf of KJCC, a very large shout-out goes to the inimitable Dave Feder. Our sanctuary's sound system has been deteriorating for some time. It also just so happens that Dave is the best sound engineer around. Jim asked Dave to look at the system. Dave doggedly spent two full days here, tearing out miles of old and mis-routed wiring, and testing and re-testing. Our sound system now sounds balanced and clear, the CD player is hooked to the main speakers, and there's even a new connection for Alan's iPod. A congregation's grateful ears thank you, Dave.

Yiddishkeit Night Part Two

Twenty-one people heeded the call, all of whom had either attended or heard about the first event and wanted "more." As billed, it was mostly about "practice" and people had a great old time paining up (or tabling up in the case of Bea Graham and company) and preparing Yiddish or Yiddish sprinkled conversations inspired by "situations." We lit Chanukah candles, practiced, schmoozed, reminisced about early Yiddish experiences with grandparents or Workman's Circle Schools, ate all the great "ibbergeblibbineh" food from our Chanukah/Shabbat dinner, and then laughed and applauded as people presented their conversations to the group. The best part of the evening for me was seeing the great pleasure on the faces of our elders, the divine Bea Graham and the two mothers brought by their daughters, Medina and Deborah. They couldn't have been happier to be there, and we couldn't have been happier to be there with them.

-Gloria

January Anniversaries

	Years
1st	Thomas & Leslie Dillon.....13
4th	Steve & Amelia Kasinof.....28
12th	George & Muriel Swartz.....29
17th	Alan & Elaine Schulberg.....16
26th	David & Pamela Marmar.....24

Survey Results Coming Soon

Next month's issue will include Alan's summary of the survey sent out recently. In a statistical stunner, almost half of you have sent back your opinions and comments. Most are nice (Chai-Lights is rated very highly, and we thank you), but some are a little pithier. Alan is busy compiling the results, and our guess is he'll have a spreadsheet available for all who'd like to see it.

Board Meeting for January

Just a reminder that all KJCC members are entitled, and even encouraged, to attend our Board meetings. If you enjoy process, and lively discussion, this might show you just how much is actually done in service of KJCC. Plus we also serve coffee and, usually, bagels. The January meeting is scheduled for the 10th at 9:00 a.m. in the Ruth Richardson Social Hall.

Yiddishkeit Nights a Big Success

As Gloria mentions elsewhere in this issue, the second Yiddishkeit night was also a big success. But this month's third installment will also feature dinner (food!) and it's being joined to our annual membership drive. So if you know anyone who you think might want to be part of the world of KJCC, invite them to what should be another wonderful night of laughter and gustatory smiles. It will be on Monday, January 25th at 6:30 p.m. in the Richardson Social Hall.

Reserve Seats Now for Second Seder

The Second Seder, believe it or not, is coming fast, at the end of March. It's never too early to reserve your seat. Tickets are \$45, with children under 12 free. Contact Joan Boruszak at 305-852-0833 for more information.

Ongoing Projects and Programs of KJCC

General Donations - can be earmarked to our various ongoing funds; e.g. Holocaust Education Fund, Scholarship Fund, Sara Cohen Memorial Tzedukah Fund, or General Fund. Honorarium and memorial cards can also be requested. Call Linda Pollack 852-8575.

Gift Shop - We have many lovely gift and holiday items on hand and can special order for you as well. Contact Joan Boruszak 852-0833.

Jewish Youth Enrichment Program - will assist in involving our children in Jewish activities. Call Neal Rakov 852-9400.

Sunshine Committee - If you know of any member who should receive a get-well, congratulations or condolence card from the Center, call Rene Rose, 852-3959.

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 Bea Graham, 852-0214.

Picture Postcards - We have beautiful picture postcards bearing the Millard Wells representation of the KJCC, which was commissioned by Sisterhood. Quantities 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 Joan Boruszak, 852-0833.

Oneg Shabbat Sponsor - To schedule your special date with Sisterhood, call Joyce Peckman, 451-0665.

KJCC Tree of Life Leaves and Rocks, Sanctuary Seat Plates, Yartzeit Memorial Plaques, Bookplates for Siddurim. Call Linda Pollack to arrange your donation, 852-8575.

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 Nancy Kluger, 852-4353.

Chai-Lights Mitzvah - Place a greeting or notice in Chai-Lights. Call Linda Pollack, 852-8575, to make your donation.

Advertisement in Chai-Lights - Your business ad will appear in every issue of Chai-Lights. Call Linda Pollack, 852-8575, for the low annual rates.

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.

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If you do not see what you want, we can order it for you.

Call Joan Boruszak 852-0833.

In Memoriam January 2010

In Memory Of

Irving Rosen

By Harvey & Joan Kay



In Memory Of

Harry Stoler

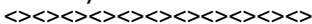
By Randy & Eileen Kominsky



In Memory Of

Ann Netzman

By Alan Netzman



In Memory Of

Anna Savage

By Marjorie Present



In Memory Of

Hyman Samuels

By Sid Samuels



In Memory Of

Abraham Rajj

By Salomon & Mary Terner



In Memory Of

Walter Hankin

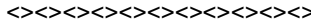
By Richard & Barbara Knowles



In Memory Of

Samuel Neubauer

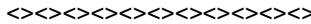
By Jackie LePree



In Memory Of

Betty Weinstein

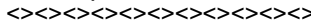
By Jerry & Sheila Olsen



In Memory Of

Eta Brownstein

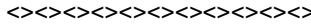
By Pauline Roller



In Memory Of

Joseph Cohen

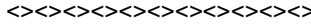
By Jules & Nettie Seder



In Memory Of

Sydney Zinner

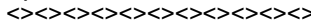
By Donald & Nancy Zinner



In Memory Of

Goldie Schweitzer

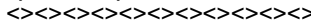
By Richard & Barbara Knowles



In Memory Of

Bernard Kaminstein

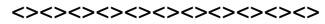
By Ron Levy & Beth Kaminstein



In Memory Of

Sylvan Oser

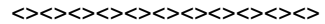
By Marjorie Present



In Memory Of

William Shapiro

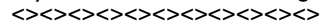
By Michael & Arlene Rosenbach



In Memory Of

Sally Sussman

By Richard & Sheila Steinberg



Mishebeyrach List

For those of you who might not make it to services regularly, each week we read aloud the names of those we know to be ailing so that we may include their names in a special supplication to G-d to heal them. Our printed list is read, and then the leader asks if anyone in the congregation has names to add. If you can't be at services, and would like someone you care about to be included in the *mishebeyrach* prayer, call or e-mail and let us know. We'll happily include any name (or names) you tell us about. The main KJCC number is 852-5235. The website, which accepts e-mail, is keysjewishcenter.com.

YEDA VE'TORASHA

Yardena Kamely



Jewish Communities in the Diaspora: Iraq

Yardena's adult lecture series this season is "Jewish Communities in the Diaspora." Her first session, on December 6th, discussed the complex story of the Jews of Iraq, exploring their history, customs, traditions, texts, teachers and culture. Here's a brief recap and a taste of what's to come:

Iraq occupies a special place in the history of the Jewish people. According to tradition, Mesopotamia was the birthplace of Abraham, who traveled from Ur Kasdim, in southern Babylonia around 1800 B.C.E., to Canaan in the land of Israel. A millennium after his journey, Abraham's descendants came back to Iraq. In 722 B.C.E., the northern kingdom of Israel was defeated by Assyria, its Jews sent to what is now known as Iraq. A larger community was established there in 586 B.C.E., when the Babylonians conquered Judea and deported the elite of its Jews. These Jews distinguished themselves from Sephardim, referring to themselves as *Bavlim* (Babylonians). Iraqi Jews experienced numerous changes of empires and rulers of the region. They were able, somehow, to survive them all, and Babylonia had an unbroken Jewish presence for over 2,600 years.

The prophet Ezekiel, one of the exiled Jews during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian conqueror of Judea, began to preach to the Jewish community and conceived the synagogue, in Hebrew *Beit-Kneset*—house of gathering—as a place of worship for the Temple-deprived Jewish people. Thus, the first synagogue in history was established in Babylonia.

In later centuries, the region became the home to some of the world's most prominent Jewish scholars, who produced the *Babylonian Talmud* between 500 and 700 C.E. It is

estimated that one million Jews were living in Iraq at the time when Islam arose in the 8th century C.E.

Iraq became an independent state in 1932. Throughout this period, the authorities drew heavily on the talents of well-educated Jews. Iraq's first minister of finance, Yehezkel Sasson, was a Jew. In the 1936 Iraq Directory, the "Israelite community" is listed among the various other Iraqi communities, such as Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Muslims, Christians, Yazidis and Sabeans, and numbering at about 120,000. Hebrew is also listed as one of Iraq's six languages.

Yet, following the end of the British mandate, the 2,500-year-old Iraqi Jewish community suffered terrible persecution, particularly as the Zionist drive for a state intensified. In June 1941, the Mufti-inspired, pro-Nazi coup of Rashid Ali sparked rioting and a pogrom in Baghdad during the Jewish Feast of Shavuot. Armed Iraqi mobs, with the complicity of the police and the army, murdered 180 Jews and wounded more than 2,200 others, in what became known as the Farhud pogrom. After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Zionism became a capital crime.

From 1949 to 1951, 104,000 Jews were evacuated from Iraq by Israel in *Operations Ezra & Nehemiah* (named after the Jewish leaders who led their people back to Jerusalem from exile in Babylonia beginning in 597 B.C.E. and built the Second Temple); another 20,000 were smuggled out through Iran. After each war with Israel, Baghdad's persecution of its dwindled Jewish community became worse. Today, no Jews remain of the once glorious Iraqi Jewish community--2,600 years in the making, but dismantled in a few decades. ♦

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.

Chai-Lights

Stuart and Lauren Sax

In Memory of

Dale Vinicur

Oneg Sponsors

Garrettson, Tom and Marsha in honor of Maxine Kaplan, Mother

General Fund

Ash, Mary

Baskin, Norm and Tamara

In Honor of

Jim Boruszak
for wedding ceremony

Gilderman, Larry and Stephanie to honor the Gilderman grandchildren: 2 occasions

Nobil, Jim and Lyn to honor the Nobil Family

Peckman, Joyce in honor of a Special Occasion

Gilderman, Larry and Stephanie

Goldfinger 50th anniversary

Rakov, Neal and Cathy to honor the Rakov Family: 3 occasions

Graham, Bea

Sax, Stuart and Lauren to honor their Anniversary
Schaffer, Marc and Sandra as a Thank you to the KJCC community for their welcoming kindness

General Fund

Pollack, Joel and Linda

Pollack, Joel and Linda

Pollack, Joel and Linda

Sachs, Joseph and Susan

Sachs, Joseph and Susan

Steinbock, Stephen and Carol

Steinbock, Stephen and Carol

Temkin, Robert and Susan

Temkin, Robert and Susan

Temkin, Robert and Susan

In Memory of

Dale Friedman

Larry Novak

Frank Joyce

Morris Gordon

Elaine Hirsch

Elaine Hirsch

Dale Vinicur

Jerry Spero

Franne Alter

Elaine Hirsch

Shabathai, Joseph and Katherine to honor their Anniversary

Smith, Steven and Barbara to honor the Birthdays of Barbara, Steven, Rebecca, Brian, Carrie

Smith, Steven and Barbara for their Anniversary

Smith, Steven and Barbara in honor of the Anniversary of Brian and Carrie Smith

Veiner, Martin and Margaret Shearon as a Thank you to the KJCC community for their welcoming kindness

JNF Certificates Sent By

Cooper, Murray and Claire

Rutkin, Linda

In Memory of

Hilda Nelinson

Ellen Kreisler Helfman

Yartzeit Contributions

Coltman, Barney and Ellen

Coltman, Barney and Ellen

Cooper, Murry and Claire

Gould, Maryon

Grossman, Stuart

Kaplan, Frank

Lessner, Howard and Shaloma

Lessner, Howard and Shaloma

Lessner, Howard and Shaloma

Lessner, Howard and Shaloma

Schocket, Jeffrey and Patty

Temkin, Robert and Susan

In Memory of

Robert Coltman

Eva Levine

Edward Sandberg

Jeanne Schneider

Sylvia Grossman

Evelyn Stockser

Annette Foosaner

Samuel Lessner

Joseph L Shawmut

Sylvia Lessner

Seymour Schocket

Kenneth Temkin

Scholarship Fund

Kamely, Michal

30th Anniversary

Congregation

Goldberg, Joseph and Susan

Hayden, Elizabeth

Kamely, Michal

Plutzer, Arthur

Rakov, Neal and Cathy

Smith, Steven and Barbara

Sisterhood Joyce Peckman



The lights of Chanukah have burned down, the menorahs have been stored until next year, and hopefully our digestive systems have returned to normal after all the latkes and other fried food. Our Chanukah potluck dinner was its usual success, with thanks due to Sofy Wasser, Joan Stark and Roberta McNew for a terrific job of organizing and decorating. Nettie Seder shopped for and assembled the gifts for our Sunday School children. The food that so many of you provided, as usual, was delicious. Chanukah celebrates the large and little miracles that can occur when people step forward bravely and tirelessly to do what is right. All who participated in this event, and in the other activities of our tiny community, continue the efforts that make little miracles happen. We are, remember, all partners in the work of creation.

Our next gastronomic extravaganza will be on Monday January 25th, as part of a *Yiddishkeit* night. This time we are opening up the evening to potential new members, as well as current KJCC members. Anyone who attended last month's delightful event will agree that it is an excellent way to introduce people to our spirited *mishpoche*. Once again, this event will be coordinated by Dr. Erica Garrett. It will include a kosher-style meat potluck, so please bring a meat or vegetable dish (no milk, butter or cheese), your sense of humor and something Yiddish. Dinner will begin at 6:30 p.m. It is important to RSVP to Erica at 305-853-1003 or 393-1162 or at hippiejap@hotmail.com, so we can properly organize.

The annual fashion show is scheduled for Wednesday, January 13th. Tickets are available

for \$25 from Joan Stark or from me. We always have an enjoyable lunch and the fun of seeing the latest fashions from Angelika. Lauren and Stuart always put on a wonderful show, and they manage to attract (at no fee!) the most beautiful models in the Keys.

We are also selling tickets to the fabulous "Miss Saigon" at the Actors' Playhouse in Miami for the March 7th Sunday matinee. It is always fun to go with a group. Some of us tag on lunch or dinner to the event - there is plenty of car-pooling as well. See Nancy Kluger or me with your check for \$40 to reserve your ticket.

Invitations for the March 14th Thirtieth Anniversary should be going out shortly. We've come a long way in thirty years, and have a lot to be proud of. This should be an unforgettable evening, thanks to the hard work of Gene Silverman and her committee. This event will be gratis to KJCC members in good standing, thanks to special donations by some of our members. In addition, we are asking anyone who wishes to help out by sending "Greetings and Congratulations" in a special advertising section of the March Chai-Lights to contact Linda Pollack.

The Sisterhood gift shop is open whenever the temple is open, stocked with cards, jewelry, candles and gifts. If you need anything special, Joan Boruszak will be happy to order it for you.

The next Sisterhood meeting will be on Sunday, January 3rd at 9:30, with coffee, as usual, at 9 a.m. We will be discussing the fashion show, the Purim party and Women's Seder, as well as some novel ideas to raise money and have fun. I hope to see you there. ◇

KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

Luncheon and Fashion Show



Styles by

Angelika



Date: Wednesday, January 13, 2010

Time: 11:30 am

Place: To be announced

Contact: Joyce Peckman 305-240-1000

Donation: \$25

World Jewish Report

Medina Roy



The Case of the 'Misplaced' *Hatikvah*

Organizers of an international fencing competition that took place in mid-November just outside of Vienna claim that they "misplaced" a recording of *Hatikvah*, the Israeli national anthem, when the event's winner, Israeli swordswoman Daria Streinikov, 14, took to the podium for the awards ceremony. Streinikov, along with bronze medal winner Alona Komarov and the rest of the Israeli team and coaching staff, sang the anthem *a cappella*. "I don't want to say it was anti-Semitism," said Yossi Harari, head of the Israel Fencing Association, "but it's not respectful." Harari, who pointed out that the exact same thing happened three years earlier during a competition in the same Vienna suburb, said he will send an official letter of protest to the European Fencing Confederation. Harari said that in any future tournaments the team will bring their own recording of *Hatikvah* (literally, "the hope"), guaranteeing that a third such incident would not occur. (*The Forward*, 11-18-09)

A Menorah in the White House

A rare menorah on loan from the Jewish Museum in Prague was lit during a special White House ceremony on December 16th, the sixth night of Chanukah. Five hundred guests were in attendance. First Lady Michelle Obama requested the loan when she visited the museum during President Obama's official visit to Prague in April. The menorah was created in 1873 by Viennese silversmith Cyril Schilberger. (www.jta.org, 12-1-09)

Bye, bye Kosher Pastrami

David Sax, author of *Save the Deli: In Search of Perfect Pastrami, Crusty Rye, and the Heart of the Jewish Delicatessen*, spent three years researching 150 delis in major

large American cities with a sizeable Jewish population. The book chronicles the demise of the unique restaurants that serve Ashkenazi cuisine originally imported by German immigrants to New York in the 1820s. According to Sax, in New York alone there were 2,000 Jewish delis in 1931. Today there are only 25. (*Dateline: World Jewry*, November 2009)

'Kick-a-Jew Day'

At least ten students at North Naples (Florida) Middle School assaulted or encouraged the assault of Jewish classmates in what was called "Kick a Jew Day," and it was not the first incident of its kind. One student told an NBC-TV correspondent that the phenomenon was "very widespread, happening all over school." The attackers received a one-day, in-school suspension (a mere slap on the wrist). In response to the incident, the school is now devoting the first twenty minutes of every day to discussing bullying prevention, respect, and kindness. One day after the Florida incident, a Los Angeles middle school student was attacked twice by over a dozen children for having red hair, inspired by what investigating officers said was a message on Facebook calling for "Kick a Ginger Day." It is thought that the idea originally came from *South Park*, the animated "adult" TV show. (www.israelnationalnews.com, 11-25-09)

The Wright Stuff

Beth Sholom Congregation in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, the only synagogue ever designed by famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright, is preparing to open a visitor center that will welcome outsiders three days a week. Opening the center to the public comes fifty years

after the building was first dedicated. The hope is to “allow a wider swath of the public to tour the building that’s infused with architectural and Judaic symbolism...and its significance to both American architecture and postwar Jewish life.” Two years ago the National Park Service declared the synagogue a National Historic Landmark, making it one of only four synagogues nationwide to be considered such an important national treasure. (www.jewishexponent.com, 11-5-09)

More Precious Than Gold

At the Technion Institute of Technology in Haifa, scientists are studying an innovative cancer treatment using nano-particles of gold and laser beams. The treatment is non-invasive, has no side effects and attacks only the cancerous cells without damaging the healthy cells that surround it. The treatment is somewhat related to an equally cutting-edge diagnostic test recently developed also by the Technion, in which a breath test is used to distinguish the breath of lung cancer patients from that of healthy individuals. The team is hoping to develop an inexpensive and non-invasive diagnostic test for lung cancer based on the study, which made headlines around the world after it was published this past August in the journal *Nature Nanotechnology*.

(www.israelnationalnews.com, 11-15-09)

Athletic Record Restored After 73 Years

Germany has restored the high jump record to Gretel Bergmann (now known as Margaret Lambert) who was kicked off the 1936 German Olympic track and field team because she was Jewish despite matching the then women’s high jump record of 5 feet 3 inches. Lambert, now 95 and living in New York, fled Nazi Germany in 1937. The German track and field association said that restoring her record is “an act of justice and a symbolic gesture.” (www.jta.org, 11-24-09)

At Last, a “Magic Yad”

A traditional gift for every Bar or Bat Mitzvah has been a ceremonial *yad*, or Torah pointer, often made of sterling silver or intri-

cately carved out of wood. Now a new technological device aimed at helping students learn their Torah and Haftorah portions has been unveiled. The Livescribe Pulse Smartpen, a grey metal stylus, features digital recording capabilities. When teamed with *Magic Yad* software, the device functions as a portable “hi-tech tutor” that records, stores and plays back 200 hours of chanting. “This is the only method that allows the student to point to exactly where he or she wants to study and practice recorded messages,” *Magic Yad* president and founder Alan Greenfield said. The Torah portions are printed in special booklets; when the *Magic Yad* touches a mark in the booklet, a cantor is heard chanting each individual phrase aloud in perfect pitch, eliminating the need for endless rewinding and fast-forwarding that is necessary when using a tape recorder. The Hebrew practice texts appear both with and without vowels and cantillation marks. Retail prices begin at \$170 plus \$100 for each Torah or Haftorah portion. (*The Forward*, 11-18-09)

Hebrew Planets

In honor of UNESCO's International Year of Astronomy, an internet vote was organized by the Hebrew Language Academy to allow Israelis to choose Hebrew names for the planets Uranus and Neptune.

Some of the names they chose from were: Oron (small light) and Shahak (skies) for Uranus, and Rahav (the ruler of the seas) or Tarshish (the name for sea in Jewish literature) for Neptune. The winners will be announced at a ceremony in December marking the end of the International Year of Astronomy. According to the report, the Hebrew names for Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn are Hama (or Kochav), Noga, Ma'adim, Tzedek and Shabtai, respectively. Earth is Eretz. (www.jpost.com, 10-09)

Finalists Named

Five nonfiction authors are in the running as finalists for the 2010 Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature. The finalists “represent important emerging voices in Jewish life and thought.” They are:

--Lila Corwin Berman, *Speaking of Jews: Rabbin, Intellectuals, and the Creation of an American Public Identity*.

--Ari Kelman, *Station Identification: A Cultural History of Yiddish Radio in the United States*.

--Kenneth Moss, *Jewish Renaissance in the Russian Revolution*.

--Danya Ruttenberg, *Surprised by God: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Religion*.

--Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Plumes, Ostrich Feathers, Jews and a Lost World of Global Commerce*.

Established in 2006, The Sami Rohr Prize "honors the contribution of contemporary writers in the exploration and transmission of Jewish values." The winner, to be announced at the end of January, will receive \$100,000. (www.jta.org, 11-25-09)

R.I.P.

The Jewish world has recently lost several noteworthy individuals:

-- Count Otto Lambsdorff, 82, a former German industry minister and the chief negotiator of the German government for compensation to Nazi slave and forced laborers. Lambsdorff was instrumental in securing the historic agreement in 2001 which finally enabled compensation payments to millions of victims of the Nazis. Over five billion dollars was secured from businesses and the German state. More than 1.6 million former slave and forced laborers received payments. The remaining funds are being used to both support projects that aid the victims and also to keep alive the remembrance of Nazi injustice. (*World Jewish Congress*, 12-8-09)

--Seymour Fromer, 87, founder of the Magnes Museum in California, which holds one of the largest collections of Judaica in North America. Opened in 1962, the museum houses over 10,000 artifacts from around the world, in particular documents tracing the history of Jews in the American West. Fromer and his wife started the museum in response to what they saw as California's lack of knowledge of its Jewish heritage. The museum has grown to become the country's third-largest Jewish museum. (www.jta.org, 11-4-09)

--Sy Syms, 83, founder of the men's clothing store chain and a major philanthropist. Born Seymour Merinsky in Brooklyn, New York, Syms donated \$12 million in 1987 to establish the Sy Syms School of Business at Yeshiva University. He also established The Sy Syms Foundation, which endowed numerous philanthropic institutions, among them The American Heart Association, Boys Town of Jerusalem, Children's Cancer & Blood Foundation, Friends of the Israel Philharmonic, Parkinson's Disease Foundation, and Public Television. Syms is well known for appearing in a commercial for his clothing store chain telling viewers, "An educated consumer is our best customer." (www.jta.org, 11-18-09)

--Mayer Kirshenblatt, 93, recorded the world of lost Jews in paintings and stories. Born in Opatow, Poland (known in Yiddish as Apt) he left Poland for Canada in 1934 and later taught himself to paint at the age of 73. Since 1967, his daughter, scholar Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, conducted interviews with her father on every facet of pre-war Jewish life in Apt. These recollections were published in 2007 along with nearly 200 of his paintings in a book titled *They Call Me Mayer July*, the title coming from Kirshenblatt's childhood nickname, slang at the time for "crazy Mayer." (www.jta.org, 11-26-09)

--Fred Silberstein, 80, an Auschwitz survivor whose testimony at the Nuremberg Trials in 1946 helped to convict Nazi leaders Hermann Goering and Rudolf Hess. Silberstein was 14 when he was taken to Auschwitz. He survived operations by Josef Mengele, and managed to stay alive by telling camp guards he was 15 and able to do manual labor. Silberstein moved to New Zealand in 1948 and spent much of his life educating people there about the horrors of the Holocaust and the dangers of racism. (*World Jewish Congress*, 11-30-09)

Update...

--On November 14th, Yuri Foreman, the Russian-born Israeli and future rabbi reported on in the October 2009 issue of Chai-Lights, is now a boxing champion. He defeated Daniel Santos in Las Vegas to win the World Boxing Association's Super Welterweight title. (*The Forward*, 11-17-09) ◇

KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

Yiddishkeit Night II & Membership Drive

Join our 'mishpocha' for another evening of fun, food, and yiddish folklore, as we welcome prospective new members to our synagogue.

On Monday January 25, at 6:30 pm, we will gather at the KJCC for a potluck traditional 'flayshik' dinner followed by a program including yiddish 101, yiddish 102, story telling, songs, and schnapps.....

Invite your friends who would like to become members to experience our 'fraylech' and 'haimish' community.

Please rsvp to Dr. Erica Lieberman-Garrett at hippiejap@hotmail.com, or 305-393-1162 if you would like to participate in the program, and plan to attend.



Enter our 50/50 Raffle for Sisterhood

Eye On The Arts

Gloria Avner



It's that time again. Our "Snowbirds" have returned and the Mishpocha is at full strength. Cultural offerings abound and we want to take advantage of them, on the rock and off. Here are a few select offerings we will want to support and enjoy. (Send your recommendations for next month to Gloria-- geetavner@gmail.com)

**Miami / January 12th, Adrienne Arsht Center:
Itzhak Perlman:**

Undeniably the reigning virtuoso of the violin, Itzhak Perlman enjoys superstar status rarely afforded a classical musician. He has come to be recognized by audiences all over the world who respond not only to his flawless technique, but also to the irrepressible joy of making music he communicates. 8:00 p.m.

Miami / January 16th-24th

13th Annual Miami Jewish Film Festival, presented by CAJE: For schedule and other info, check <http://www.caje-miami.org>.

I strongly recommend choosing a day with more than one interesting movie showing, and making plans for a mishpocha date outing (with some excellent eating out, of course, and car-pooling).

Islamorada / January 16th

Art Under The Oaks:

Fine Art & Original Crafts; San Pedro Church Gardens, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., Mile Marker 89.5 bayside on Plantation Key in Islamorada. Parking behind the church. Contact: 305-664-5574

Miami Beach / Thursday, January 21st-, Sunday, January 24th, 2010: The Original Miami Beach Antiques Show:

If you love antiques, art, and collectibles, whether it be fine glass, paintings, furniture or jewelry, and if you have good shoes, lots of stamina, or are willing to rent a motorized vehicle, there is nothing on earth as stimulating as wandering through this crème de la crème annual event at the Beach's Convention Center. 12:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Tickets are \$15 for all five days (but one may do you in).

Miami / Friday, January 22nd - Sunday, January 24, 2010

4th Annual International Chocolate Festival Featuring Coffee and Tea—Fairchild Tropical Gardens:

A number of us have been making annual pilgrimage to this entertaining, educational and delicious event and we highly recommend a group expedition.

Islamorada / January 23rd

Morada Palooza/Jam Fest—Kids Bands and Jam Bands: Founders Park, presented by ICE at TIB Amphitheater (www.keysice.com)

Islamorada / January 30th

Keys Community Concert Band presents: Time Capsule, Music Through The Ages:

Florida Keys Community Concert Band presents its 2010 season at Islamorada Founders Park, Bay-side, MM 87, Plantation Key. Performances are outdoors; no chairs provided. Starts at 4:00 p.m.; Admission free for all concerts. Contact: (305) 853-7294 Email: heinerdonna@yahoo.com

TBA: New York Children's Film Festival:

Presented by ICE at Founders Park, TIB Amphitheater, *Unique but intimate outdoor setting for wonderful films impossible to see elsewhere. Sit onstage and enjoy fresh popcorn with your neighbors, friends and kids.* Visit www.keysice.com for dates and program.

Islamorada / February 6th

American Shakespeare Company's "Romeo and Juliet":

This great, energetic and talented young touring company has brought us wonderful productions two years running. For details, see www.keysice.com.

Pigeon Key / February 6th-7th

16th Annual Pigeon Key Art Festival:

This is one of the highest quality art shows in the Keys. Definitely worth an arting/outing with friends. ◇

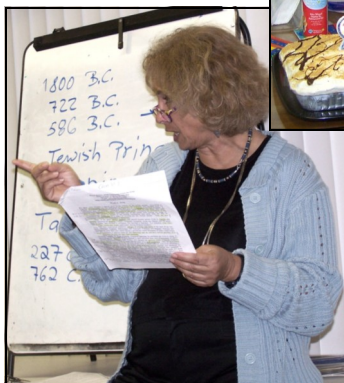
Photo Gallery



At top, scenes from another Gold Party to benefit Voices for

Florida Keys Children, Inc. That's Gene and Mort, of course, top right. The photos below are all from Havdalah at Carol and Steve Steinbock's house on November 21st. Gloria, our head of Ritual, officiated. If you've never attended, Havdalah is a sweet, short and engaging ceremony.





Saturday, December 5th was a special birthday for Joe Beth, his 21st. Parents Candy and Alan sponsored the Oneg on Friday. At left Yardena makes a point during her first adult lecture of the season. The series will focus on Jews of the Diaspora. At bottom left, the KJCC Chayakers (that's CHayakers, as in Chanukah or Chozzer) pose before slipping into the water at Silver Shores on December 13th. Contact Dave Mont for details about participating. (They have extra kayaks.) Below right is a clearly happy scene from the Religious School Chanukah party on December 13th.



KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

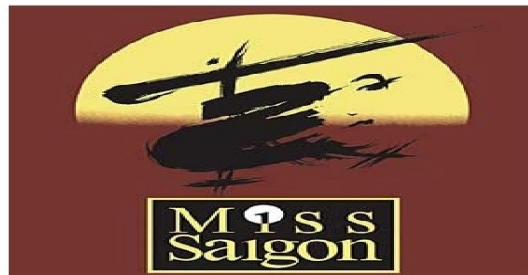
Sunday, March 7, 2010

2:00 PM

Actors Playhouse, Coral Gables

A classic love story is brought up-to-date in one of the most stunning theatrical spectacles of all time. In *Miss Saigon*, Alain Boublil and Claude-Michael Schönberg, creators of last season's acclaimed hit, *Les Misérables*, along with Richard Maltby, Jr., bring Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* to the modern world in a moving testament to the human spirit and a scathing indictment of the tragedies of war. An international sensation, *Miss Saigon* is an epic, daring pop opera that is universal in its emotional power even as it deals with controversial, contemporary issues. In the turmoil of the Vietnam War, an American soldier and a Vietnamese girl fall in love, only to be separated during the fall of Saigon. Their struggle to find each other over the ensuing years creates an unparalleled drama and a must see musical theatrical experience.

Donation \$40
Contact Nancy Kluger
klugerkeys@bellsouth.net
305-393-2129



What is Eco-Kosher?

by Georgia Landau

The term “eco-kosher” was coined in the late 1970s by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, the founder of the *P’nai Or* Religious Fellowship. He’s an interesting guy. When he was a teenager in Vienna, Austria, he studied Orthodox Judaism by day and secular, socialist Zionism at night. He and his family were fortunate to flee Hitler, were interned in Vichy, France, and escaped to America. He studied for the rabbinate in a traditional *Lubavitcher* Chassidic yeshiva but stirred up everyone by finding spiritual meaning in the thoughts of Christian mystics like Thomas Merton, plus eastern yogis, Muslim Sufis (that religion’s mystics), Jungian psychologists, Gandhian social activists, and even women who were creating feminist spirituality practices. Needless to say, he left *Lubavitch* and came up with a new notion of Jewish mystical thought and practice. He was quoted as saying that the traditional prayer book was like a cookbook: a guide to eating, but not the food itself. Another observation of his is that while a Styrofoam cup might be useful to someone keeping kosher, it would not be a good choice for someone keeping eco-kosher. If you Google him, you’ll find out a lot more about him. He lives in Boulder, Colorado and is still actively mentoring his many students around the world.

Now, you might be wondering what all this has to do with keeping kosher. Well, we are entering a post-modern age, and modernity has greatly affected the eating habits of the Jewish people. Many people once adhered to the tradition of kosher food, but most Jews abandoned the practice as they left the ghettos and identified with secularism and universalism. In our own time, we have subjugated the earth and created pollution and destruction. The idea that food should be treated as sacred—that it grows by the

unseen hand of God and through that hand sustains and nurtures man, a belief common to many ancient religions--has almost disappeared.

Technology has transformed the relationship between earth and humans. Food used to be the great connection. We now have a new category of “food-like substances” that are manufactured with unpronounceable chemicals and weird ingredients. Today we have Jews embracing vegetarianism, macrobiotic diets, becoming “locovores” (people who only eat locally grown food), and some who still try to follow the rules of *kashrut*. It would seem that all these ways of eating would qualify as eco-kosher, but there are many other factors involved, as you’ll see in the next segment.

In 1990, a group of rabbis and Jewish teachers gathered to discuss the ethical dimensions of *kashrut* and to open a discussion about modern-day kosher living. The four streams of Jewish life were represented as well as Jews who were active in organizations that were concerned about the environment.

Eco-kosher is a much broader concept than just following the biblical laws of *kashrut*. Jews in this movement have been trying to reconnect the idea of *kashrut* with some broader values and obligations toward the earth that stem from Jewish tradition. Some of the traditional Jewish ethical categories about relationships between human beings and the rest of God’s creation were examined:

Tza’ar ba’alei chai’m—literally means concern for the distress of those who possess life; usually we’d think of it as respect for animals;

Bal tashchit—literally “not ruining” the earth;

Sh'mirat haguf—the protection of one's own body;

Tzedakah—the sharing of food with the poor;

B'rakhah and Kedushah—the traditional sense that those who eat must consciously affirm a sense of holiness and blessing. Interestingly, even secular participants thought it was important to heighten the attention we give to the Unity from which all food comes, whether we call it God or not.

Using the above principles, would it be possible to set new standards for what we actually consume, in other words set standards for an “ethical *kashrut*?” Because there would be many choices to weigh depending upon both individual and group values, it would be difficult to create a set of rigid rules. I think most of us would like to adhere to the above-mentioned categories in our daily lives. Every day we make many, many conscious decisions about our actions, and preserving our Jewish uniqueness can help to serve the needs of the earth and ourselves. Keeping kosher is about making choices, and eco-kosher is a new way of being uniquely Jewish and consciously adding in a new category of ethical choices.

If you would like to learn more about eco-Jewish organizations, there is an umbrella organization called *Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life*. They work on legislation, liturgical materials keyed to the Jewish calendar, guides to eco-sensitive living, and conferences of Jewish communal leaders, rabbis, and theologians, and annual training institutes for eco-activists. Their website is www.coejl.org.

The Shalom Center is developing theology and eco-kosher life practices to deal with the present ecological crisis; applying Jewish communal ethics to encourage corporations to act responsibly. They can be reached at www.shalomctr.org.

Teva Learning Center is concerned with teaching environmental ethics to young Jews by integrating direct outdoor experience with Torah.

Center for Tikkun Olam; e-mail at YHH@aol.com, is creating an ongoing guide to eco-kosher living.

While a Styrofoam cup might be useful to someone keeping kosher, it would not be a good choice for someone keeping eco-kosher.

I have two books about this subject that I'd be glad to loan to anyone who's interested in reading more about eco-kosher.

· *Ecology and the Jewish Spirit*, by Ellen Bernstein. This book asks the question: what is our place in nature and what is nature's place in our spiritual lives? It offers a perspective grounded in nature, and explores the concepts of sacred space, sacred time, and community. It discusses the themes of nature that are throughout the biblical creation story, ancient texts, traditional law, the holiday cycles, prayer, and *mitzvot*.

· *Torah of the Earth*, by Arthur Waskow. This is one of a two-book set. Volume 1 discusses biblical Israel and Rabbinic Judaism. The second book has contributions from the Zionist movement and the Eco-Judaism movement. (I don't have the second book yet).

These books explore 4,000 years of ecology in Jewish thought. An excerpt from the introduction says: “The relationship between human beings and the earth is bound up in two words of Hebrew: *Adam* and *Adamah*. The first means “human being,” the second, “earth,” and they're clearly from the same root. The two words intertwine to teach us that the human and the earth are intertwined. In Hebrew no one is able to say the name of the earth or of humanity without hearing an echo of the other.

There is certainly much more to be said about this concept, which is rapidly evolving. I'll attempt to discuss more detail in future issues of Chai-Lights. ◇

-This Month in Jewish History-

January

1253 – Henry III of England orders that Jewish worship in synagogues must be held quietly so that Christians should not have to hear it when passing by. In addition Jews may not employ Christian nurses or maids.

1436 – In Aix-en-Provence, France, a riot ensues after a crowd feels that a Jew who insulted the Virgin Mary receives too light a sentence.

1492 – Granada, the last Moorish stronghold, is overrun by Ferdinand and Isabella. Under the terms of surrender, the Jewish inhabitants are promised protection. Within a few months, Ferdinand orders the razing of the Jewish quarter.

1569 – Phillip II of Spain issues the order to set up an Inquisition in the New World. Mexico will be the first five years later.

1639 – In an *auto da fe* at Lima, Peru, more than eighty New Christians (i.e. Jews) are burned, including Francisco Maldonna de Silva (Elia Nazareno), after the Inquisition discovers them holding regular Jewish services. De Silva spends twelve years in prison. In that time he manages to write two books using a chicken bone and charcoal. He succeeds in assembling a rope out of corn husks, but instead of using it to escape he visits other prisoners, urging them to believe in Judaism.

1668 – Pope Clement IX cancels humiliating forced races. Known as the *Palio*, near-naked Jews are forced to run through the streets of Rome during carnival time. In return for the revocation, the Jews of Rome have to pay a special cancellation tax of 200 ducats. This tax is paid for almost 200 years.

1837 – An earthquake in the Tzfat-Tiberias area of Israel kills an estimated four thousand

people, mostly Jews. Many monuments and archaeological sites are damaged.

1852 – New York's Mount Sinai Hospital, founded by a group of mostly German Jewish immigrants, becomes the first Jewish Hospital in the United States. One of its founders is Samson Simson, one of the first Jewish lawyers in New York City. Other contributors included Adolphus Simeon Solomons, who in 1881 helps Clara Barton found the Red Cross.

1895 – Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish French military officer, is charged with treason, publicly degraded and sent to Devil's Island. It is later proven that evidence was forged. Three years later, in 1898, Emile Zola, the most popular writer in France, publishes his famous "J'Accuse" letter condemning the French establishment, ultimately leading to a new trial.

1904 – Theodore Herzl meets Pope Pius X and tries to convince him to support the vision of Zionism, without any success. The pope totally rejects the idea that Jerusalem could be in Jewish hands.

1906 – Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design is founded in Jerusalem by Boris Schatz, painter and court sculptor to King Ferdinand of Bulgaria. The school is named after biblical artisan Bezalel, specifically selected in the Bible to build the desert Tabernacle.

1935 – The religious kibbutz movement, *Hakibbutz Hadati*, is founded. Its idea is to combine religious life and labor in a communal agricultural settlement, the first being *Tirat Tzvi*.

1945 – Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat, disappears in Budapest two days after it is liberated. Eyewitnesses last see him in the company of two Russian soldiers. ◇

KJCC Annual Second Passover Seder



Tuesday, March 30, 2010

6:30 pm

Islamorada Fishing Club

Your check is your reservation. Checks must be received no later than March 20, 2010. Make checks payable to KJCC Sisterhood, c/o Leslie Dillon, PO Box 370736, Key Largo, FL 33037. Call Joan Boruszak at 852-0833 for information.

PASSOVER

Adults \$45

Children 12 and under are our guests.

TU B'SHVAT

DR. DOOLITTLE, VITAMIN J, AND THE BA'AL SHEM TOV

by Gloria Avner

I loved Dr. Doolittle books when I was young. Who wouldn't be drawn to a compassionate man who could understand and speak the language of birds and animals?

I was not surprised that it could happen. I certainly understood the desires and dislikes of my own pets over the years. And when I was a child, riding in the back seat of our car on endless Sunday drives through the country, I pretended (or knew) that the trees were all lined up on the side of the road to greet me. Egocentric? Oversensitive? I don't know. This is what I do know: All things in nature, all God's creations, take delight in communicating, with us and with God.

In our Shabbat prayer book, every Friday night, we read psalm after psalm in which the oddest things have a voice: Islands rejoice, trees clap hands in gladness, mountains thunder, waters lift up their voices in roaring. (See a wonderful book called *Pirkei Shira* for a full catalogue of nature speaking). When we are alone in nature, quiet and content, observant and not caught up in the niggling details of our daily lives, we too have the opportunity to communicate not just with birds and animals, but with everything that God has created. A joyous heart (joy being a greater vitamin—or pathway to radiant good health—than any capsule bottled in a pharmacy or health food store. Call it Vitamin J.) is the major prerequisite.

As we move closer to one of our favorite holidays, *Tu B'Shvat*, the New Year of the Trees, let's acknowledge that even though it is mostly associated with reclaiming land in Israel by planting thousands of trees, we are actually celebrating something so ancient it goes back to Temple times. As we prepare for our mystical seder and the blessing of the seven kinds of fruits found in Israel, let's look to one of Judaism's most legendary teachers, wonder workers, and storytellers, The Ba'al Shem Tov, for some insights into the holiday,

nature itself, and the ways in which we are taught and absorb lessons.

The Ba'al Shem Tov studied Torah in the *beit midrash*, but he also studied the natural world with the penetrating gaze of a mystic; he saw through the veil to the divinity within Nature. He saw God in all things and heard Him in all sounds. He heard the divine voice in the rustling of tree leaves, in the flowing sounds of the river, in the singing of birds. This mystic knowledge is the "language of the animals, the birds, and the trees." The Besht (a shortened version of Ba'al Shem Tov) loved the divine music emanating from every aspect of natural creation. Once, when he was sitting in a field with the Maggid of Mezritch—one of his greatest disciples—and they heard some cows lowing, the Besht taught him secrets of the Divine Chariot and the languages of the animals, birds, and trees. He also said, "If you listen carefully to the inner sound that's within the material sound that enters your ears, you'll hear the voice of God, which enlivens and brings into being, each moment, the sound that you hear."

Once, on *Tu B'Shvat*, the Ba'al Shem Tov was sitting with his closest disciples in Medzibuz. They were eating fruits in honor of the day, drinking *l'chayim* and discussing the importance of joy, *simcha*. During this conversation, the Baal Shem Tov said: "Joy is so great, because by joy a person can reach an exalted spiritual level so that he sees the *Shechinah*. After the verse: 'you shall be only joyful' (Deuteronomy 16:15), the Torah continues (v.16): 'Three times a year every man of you shall be seen [in the Temple] before the presence of the Lord your God.' When a Jew is happy, he is revealing that he is satisfied with the world that the Holy One, blessed be He, created, and also with the behavior of all the children of Israel, the people close to Him. He has no complaints against Heaven and no demands or grievances against any other Jew. Everything is good, upright, ac-

ceptable, fitting, and sweet; and this kind of joy, which brings a person to have a good eye, so that he looks on the Creator and His creatures lovingly, causes a revelation of the *Shechinah*. That is the secret of the teaching of our sages, who said about the person who goes to the Temple to 'be seen' by God: 'Just as he came to be seen, so does he come to see'-- that is, to see the Divine Presence."

After this conversation about joy, the Ba'al Shem Tov suggested to his Hasidim that they go out for a sleigh ride together in the snow-covered countryside and take along with them some wine, honeycake, whiskey, and fruits for *Tu B'Shvat*.

As they careened along in the sleigh, snow was falling and they were so joyful that they felt they were lifted up on a cloud of light. Remembering that it was *Tu B'Shvat*, they sang songs from the mystic Book of Song, *Pirkei Shira*, that tells how all creatures, both plants and animals, sing Torah verses praising their Creator. They sang: "The fig tree says: 'The one who tends the fig tree shall eat its fruit.' The pomegranate says: 'Your cheeks are like the halves of a pomegranate.' The palm tree says: 'A righteous person shall flourish like a palm tree.'"

The road entered the forest, and the horses galloped in pleasure, kicking up snow

all over. On the two sides of the road an ancient, dense forest stretched out, with trees whose branches leaned out, arching over the road, almost touching in the middle and nearly blocking out the light of the sun. But here and

there the sun peeked through the branches, lighting the travelers' path as they sped along in the sleigh. And as they went, they sang another verse from the Book of Song: "Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord. . .!"

Their singing grew stronger and stronger and flocks of birds flying above them began chirping so loudly that it seemed that they were singing along with the joyful travelers in the sleigh.

The Ba'al Shem Tov and his disciples knew the secret—that God is within the world and always with us. How could they not sing? I don't know if Dr. Doolittle was Jewish or even a spiritual man. But he just may have had inklings of that secret.

Come celebrate a *Tu B'Shvat* seder with our Sunday School children, drink four cups of wine representing the four seasons, bless and eat the seven types of fruit, dance with us around the fruit tree

we will plant. When we learn the secret, we too will sing and hear the songs of the trees and the birds praising God. May this *Tu B'Shvat* bring us all closer to that realization. ◇

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 fruit of the fifth year (and on) were permitted for normal consumption.

Chanukah 2009 At KJCC

text by Gloria Avner

What made this year's Chanukah celebration different from previous years?

More latkes than ever? The beat of the Native American drum unifying our KJCC student performers? The addition of pre- and post-play pieces sung with gusto by the adult



members of the ShabbaTones, accompanied by Erica at the piano? Whatever the cause, we had the biggest crowd in our sanctuary

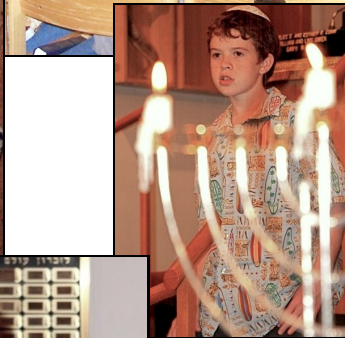




since the High Holidays (and the most children). The food prepared by Sisterhood and sponsored by Linda and Joel Pollack was not only delicious, but plentiful enough to nourish the next *Yiddishkeit* event.

We ate, we sang, we watched an entertaining performance, and we embraced both Chanukah and Shabbat. We loved Natalie, our full-time spinning dreidel; Lili, our crazy King Antiochus; and Zach, our Alexander (The Great, no less). Harry, Max, and Moira kept the narrative beat going strong and our tutors Hannah, Rachel, and Cory added depth and enthusiastic zest. It was a delight to have our post-Bar and Bat Mitzvah students choosing to take part with us. It's not just about the oil. We have our own KJCC miracles, too. ♦





above. Then, of course, there was services. It was all a bit much for Natalie Werthamer, captured below just as services were ending.



It was a busy, hectic day at KJCC on Friday, December 11th. First we had our annual Chanukah dinner, replete with many kinds of latkes (including Beth Kaminstein's with ginger and cardamom) and a healthy (so to speak) selection of kugels. Then there was the children's play, shown

Our deep appreciation to Richard Knowles for shooting some of the photos you see in this section.



Newport's Touro Synagogue

George Washington didn't sleep here, but he did send a famous letter.

by Beth Hayden

The Touro Synagogue is the oldest standing synagogue in the United States, the oldest surviving synagogue in North America and the only surviving synagogue dating from the colonial era. A synagogue dedicated in New Amsterdam in 1730 predated the Touro, but that building is no longer extant. The New Amsterdam Jews arrived in the New World in 1654; Newport's Jews were close behind, arriving in 1658. The first Jewish families who came to Newport were Sephardic Jews who arrived from the islands of Barbados, Suriname, Curacao and Jamaica in search of the same religious freedom their ancestors had sought. The Touro congregation called itself "Yeshuat Yisrael" (Salvation of Israel) and so it must have seemed to them as they began new lives in a colony promising freedom of belief for all.

Newport, unlike New Amsterdam, welcomed its Jews, and over the next one hundred years Newport's Jews prospered and increased their numbers. The Jewish Cemetery had already been purchased in 1677; in 1758 a Dutch Jew named Isaac Touro became the religious leader of the community and in 1759 the congregation purchased land in order to build a synagogue. The synagogue was formally dedicated in 1763. Peter Harrison, architect of this second synagogue to be built in the New World, was a Newport merchant and sea captain. A British-American who returned to England from 1743 until

1745 to study architecture, he is still remembered, not only for the Touro Synagogue but also for the design and construction of such buildings as Christ Church in Cambridge and King's Chapel in Boston. His buildings remain among the finest examples of Palladian architecture from colonial times.

Harrison, a non-Jew, had little experience to guide him in designing a synagogue and, in fact, from the outside there is little that

identifies the Palladian-style Touro as Jewish. The small interior, however, is quite striking. The women's balcony is supported by twelve ionic columns symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel; each column is carved from a single tree. The building itself is oriented to face east towards Jerusalem.

The ark containing the Torah is on the east wall with a mural above it, painted by the Newport artist Benjamin Howland, representing the Ten Commandments. The bimah is railed in and on the north side of the building are raised seats reserved for the synagogue president and guests.

Fittingly, the Yeshuat Yisrael congregation dedicated their new synagogue on December 2, 1763, as they celebrated Channukah, the Festival of Lights, which marks the restoration of freedom for Jews to worship as Jews. The Touro dedication was a regional celebration attended by other clergy and dignitaries from the community, including Ezra Stiles, who studied Hebrew with Isaac Touro and



who would later become the President of Yale University.

With the onset of the American Revolution, Newport was occupied by British troops. Many residents, including Jews, who supported the American Revolution left Newport. During the British occupation, the Touro was used by the British as a hospital for wounded British troops and as a public meeting place. The fact that this small building proved useful to the British miraculously saved it from the fate that met many other Newport buildings dismantled during the winters of occupation for firewood. In 1779 the British evacuated Newport and within a year or two many of the Jewish residents returned to pick up their lives and businesses. The Jewish Sephardic community, however, never regained its former position in numbers and wealth.

Following the Revolutionary War, Touro was used as a meeting place for the Rhode Island General Assembly, Rhode Island Supreme Court and the town of Newport. George Washington visited Newport in 1781 to plan the final battles of the Revolution. He met with his generals in the Touro Synagogue.

While one might think that Touro's place in Jewish and American history was now se-



cure, its place was ultimately won by Moses Mendes Seixas and George Washington. In August of 1790, following Rhode Island's ratification of the Constitution, George Washington chose to visit Newport in order to rally support for the Bill of Rights. As had happened so often throughout history, changes in governments, laws and policies even in the New World were spreading unease throughout the Newport Jewish community. Moses Mendes Seixas, President of Yeshuat Yisrael, had the courage to directly address the issue of "Liberty of conscience" with none other than the president of the newly created United States of America, George Washington (original spelling, punctuation and capitalization retained in letters on the following page) in a now-famous correspondence.

As an interesting footnote, Longfellow's poem (*The Jewish Cemetery at Newport*, Dec. 2009 Chai-Lights) inspired a response from Emma Lazarus (*In the Jewish Synagogue at Newport*) and, ultimately, a friendship developed between the two. Emma grew up as a member of Shearith Israel in New York to which the Newport synagogue's Torah scrolls and artworks had been sent for safeguarding. How appropriate that her words, the words of a descendent of Portuguese Jews who fled the Inquisition, are carved upon the Statue of Liberty's pedestal to welcome all who enter the United States of America in search of "Liberty of conscience" and a better life. ◇



To the President of the United States of America.
Sir:

Permit the children of the stock of Abraham to approach you with the most cordial affection and esteem for your person and merits — and to join with our fellow citizens in welcoming you to NewPort.

With pleasure we reflect on those days — those days of difficulty, and danger, when the God of Israel, who delivered David from the peril of the sword, — shielded Your head in the day of battle: — and we rejoice to think, that the same Spirit, who rested in the Bosom of the greatly beloved Daniel enabling him to preside over the Provinces of the Babylonish Empire, rests and ever will rest, upon you, enabling you to discharge the arduous duties of Chief Magistrate in these States.

Deprived as we heretofore have been of the invaluable rights of free Citizens, we now with a deep sense of gratitude to the Almighty disposer of all events behold a Government, erected by the Majesty of the People — a Government, which to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance — but generously affording to all Liberty of conscience, and immunities of Citizenship: — deeming every one, of whatever Nation, tongue, or language equal parts of the great governmental Machine: — This so ample and extensive Federal Union whose basis is Philanthropy, Mutual confidence and Public Virtue, we cannot but acknowledge to be the work of the Great God, who ruleth in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth, doing whatever seemeth him good.

For all these Blessings of civil and religious liberty which we enjoy under an equal benign administration, we desire to send up our thanks to the Ancient of Days, the great preserver of Men — beseeching him, that the Angel who conducted our forefathers through the wilderness into the promised Land, may graciously conduct you through all the difficulties and dangers of this mortal life: — And, when, like Joshua full of days and full of honour, you are gathered to your Fathers, may you be admitted into the Heavenly Paradise to partake of the water of life, and the tree of immortality.

Done and Signed by order of the Hebrew Congregation in NewPort, Rhode Island August 17th 1790.

Moses Seixas, Warden

Below is George Washington's reply:

To the Hebrew Congregation in Newport Rhode Island.

Gentlemen,

While I receive, with much satisfaction, your Address replete with expressions of affection and esteem; I rejoice in the opportunity of assuring you, that I shall always retain a grateful remembrance of the cordial welcome I experienced in my visit to Newport, from all classes of Citizens.

The reflection on the days of difficulty and danger which are past is rendered the more sweet, from a consciousness that they are succeeded by days of uncommon prosperity and security. If we have wisdom to make the best use of the advantages with which we are now favored, we cannot fail, under the just administration of a good Government, to become a great and happy people.

The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent national gifts. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

It would be inconsistent with the frankness of my character not to avow that I am pleased with your favorable opinion of my Administration, and fervent wishes for my felicity. May the children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy.

G. Washington

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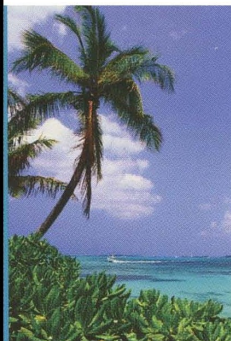
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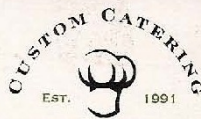
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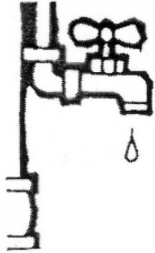
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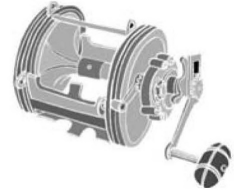
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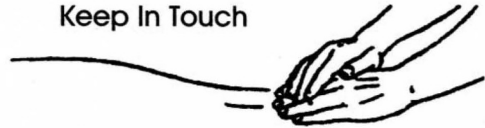
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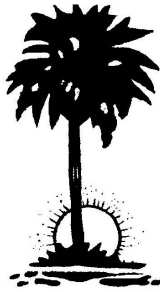
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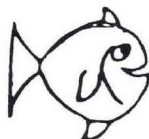
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