

# Chai~Lights



October 2017

11 Tishrei - 11 Cheshvan 5778

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**Keys Jewish Community Center**

P.O. Box 1332 • Tavernier, FL 33070 • 305-852-5235 • [keysjewishcenter.com](http://keysjewishcenter.com)

# October 2017

# 11 Tishrei - 11 Cheshvan

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Sisterhood Meeting 9:30 a.m. Sukkah Decoration 11:00 a.m.	2	3	4 Mindy Agler Counseling post-Irma 6 p.m.	5	6 Sukkot 7:30 p.m.  Ken Atlas  <i>Laurie Blum &amp; Gary Margolis</i>	7
8	9	10	11 Mindy Agler Counseling post-Irma 6 p.m.	12	13 Yizkor Service Simchat Torah Joyce Peckman & Bernard Ginsburg  <i>Linda Perloff &amp; Mitch Harvey</i>	14
15  KJCC Board Meeting 10 a.m.	16	17	18 Mindy Agler Counseling post-Irma 6 p.m.	19	20  Joe Shabathai  <i>Kathy and Joe Shabathai</i>	21
22	23	24	25  Mindy Agler Counseling post-Irma 6 p.m.	26	27  Beth Hayden  <i>Steve Steinbock</i>	28 Rabbi Agler's 1st morning service of the season 10:00 a.m.
29	30	31	<div>Names denote leaders of Friday services. <i>Italicized names are Oneg sponsors.</i> Services every Friday at 7:30 p.m.</div>			

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## President's Message Beth Hayden



*Shalom uvracha,*

And so we go on post-Irma. The KJCC building sustained no damage and never lost electricity. Grounds and trees suffered greatly but, all in all, we were very fortunate. While generally we pray for the safety of Israel, that was somewhat reversed this year. KJCC received a lovely letter of support from the Conservative Minyan of *Kfar Vradim* (Village of Roses) in the Galilee. You can read the letter yourself on page 3.

Despite everything, KJCC observed both the first and second days of Rosh HaShanah services so ably led by Rabbi Agler and Cantor Dzubin. We gathered in the social hall prior to services the first evening in order to enjoy apples and honey as harbingers of a sweet year. While attendance was not as high as in a "normal" year, the first evening and first day were well attended by around 60 congregants.

The second day services drew roughly 20 attendees who, among other things, learned about the "incomplete vav" in the word shalom as addressed in one of Rabbi's study sessions. If you were one of the unfortunates who missed that second day, try to find someone who was there and can tell you about this intriguing vav.

While we had to forego our traditional Rosh HaShanah

dinner because of Irma, as always, Sisterhood and our outstanding members rose to the challenge. We had onegs, snacks and luncheons. Many thanks to Susan Gordon, Sisterhood President, and all the wonderful men and women who ensured KJCC could offer food and beverages as part of the New Year celebration. Thanks to Barbara and Richard Knowles, Jane Friedman, Mary Anne Pearl, Kathy Shabathai, Marc Bloom, and Luz Levine. And many thanks to our own intrepid Carla who was always there, always smiling and always working. And more thanks to the gentleman who sees to the KJCC building and grounds, Lawrence Zischka, aka "Count", who performed a minor miracle clearing the parking lot of trees and debris in time for Rosh HaShanah. Last, but not least, thanks to Ken Atlas for providing security on a day "off" from ongoing 12-hour work shifts. Now we make ready for Yom Kippur, the most solemn day in the Jewish calendar year.

Hopefully, most KJCC members who evacuated will be back with us by then. May it be an easy fast for everyone and may 5778 be a wonderful year for all of us and a year in which each of us finishes with a "chatimah tovah".

*Gmar chatimah tovah, Beth*

# Nosh

## THE Holiday: Our Sukkot Ceremony

Because of Irma's aftereffects, we've had to make some adjustments to previously announced plans. Rich and Mindy Agler regret that they will not be able to host their Sukkot potluck this year. Nevertheless, you will still have the opportunity to perform the *mitzvah* of shaking the lulav and inhaling the scent of the etrog twice – at 11:00 a.m. Sunday morning, October 1<sup>st</sup>, when we decorate our Sukkah, and on Friday evening, October 6<sup>th</sup> in our own Sukkah after services. (Please see the Sukkot article on page 22.)

## Rabbi Agler's Monthly Services Resume

Our Resident Scholar has once again volunteered to offer a monthly Shabbat morning service in season. Mark your calendar. October 28<sup>th</sup> is the date, 10:00 a.m. (sharp) is the time. The *parashah* we'll be exploring is *Lech Lecha*, the beginning of Avram's journey from his home, a journey that will lead to his new name, Abraham, and creation of a monotheist nation. (That's us.) Join the group of eager members and friends who come to be engaged by the warm, informal, thought-provoking style of Rabbi Richard Agler. You'll be glad you did.

## Simchat Torah Celebration Plus

We won't just be unrolling and re-rolling the student Torah any more. We're moving on to something bigger. A few months ago we aired out our revitalized Holocaust Torah for the first time. It's a vow we made, to do our part to keep our Torah kosher. The new year, 5778, brings not just a new year but a new season of accepting responsibility. Come and be part of "holy rolling." Rabbi Agler will not give his seven-minute translation into English of the entire scroll. Instead, we will get deeper insights from him as we roll along. That night, October 13<sup>th</sup>, will also mark the observance of Yizkor. Bernie Ginsberg will lead us in this second mandated remembrance service of the New Year. But wait,

there's more. Celebration and sorrow ends with more celebration. We'll be dancing with our Torahs and there might just be a chocolate extravaganza oneg at the end of it all.

## KJCC's Israel Trip 2018

The KJCC is planning a trip to Israel next year. The trip will be led by the best tour guide possible — our own Rabbi Richard Agler. (Ask Joyce, Gloria, Medina or Barney what their experience was like, four who went on this adventure with Rabbi Agler in 2013 and waxed rhapsodic about it in Chai-Lights.) This journey will provide a unique opportunity not only to visit ancient historic sites and religious highlights, but a chance to LIVE the culture of modern day Israel. The details of the trip, dates and costs, are still being worked out as of publication time. We are trying to determine the extent of serious interest first. Non-KJCC members or family are welcome to join us at no cost premium. I've agreed to be the KJCC trip coordinator, so if you have ANY interest please send me an email at [smpearl@gmail.com](mailto:smpearl@gmail.com). After talking to a number of people during *Rosh HaShanah*, we can already see that the interest is strong. I'll be in touch with all who have spoken to or e-mailed me as soon as we have more information. Looking forward —  
*Scott Pearl.*

## Oneg Sponsors for October 2017

October 6th - Laurie Blum and Gary Margolis, in honor of Laurie's Grandmother's Yahrzeit.

October 13th - Chocolate Oneg Extravaganza sponsored by Linda Perloff and Mitch Harvey in celebration of Mitch's birthday.

October 20th - Kathy and Joe Shabathai, celebrating Joe's birthday.

October 27th - Steve Steinbock, in loving memory of Carol.



## October Birthdays

2nd.....	Michael Gilson
3rd.....	Natalie Dorf
4th.....	Michael Kanarek
4th.....	Michael Krissel
5th.....	Mathew Tainow
6th.....	Joel Bernard
6th.....	Mitchell Harvey
7th.....	Jordan Feig
11th.....	Olivia Landes
12th.....	Benay Krissel
13th.....	Richard Kaufman
14th.....	Paul Friedman
14th.....	Samantha Sherman
14th.....	Sidney Finkelstein
15th.....	Marcia Kreitman
15th.....	Matthew A. Silverman
15th.....	Michael Tallent
16th.....	Kiersten Persoff
17th.....	Jay Hershoff
17th.....	Stacey W. Seewald
18th.....	Payton Borisoff
20th.....	Barbara Knowles
20th.....	Sydney Faye-Davis
21st.....	Sammy Knowles
22nd.....	Daniel Tainow
22nd.....	Joseph Shabathai
22nd.....	Susan Roberts
24th.....	Stacy Temkin
25th.....	Landon Strasser
25th.....	Richard Wolfe
29th.....	Adriana Sherman
29th.....	Shyella Mayk
30th.....	Franklin Greenman
30th.....	Katie J. Schur
30th.....	Mark Hitzig
31st.....	Brittany Schur

### Sorry For the Brief Delay

You'll notice, we're sure, that this issue of Chai-Lights is delayed by a few days. Not to make excuses, but we did have a production glitch or two because of Dame Irma. (Not to mention no internet or power.) But we should be back on normal schedule for November.

## October Anniversaries

	Years
2nd	Paul & Barbara Bernstein.....23
6th	Sue Sigel & William Pomenti.....27
15th	David & Toby Goldfinger..... 58
16th	Jerry & Barbara Herson.....18
22nd	Scott & Mary Anne Pearl..... 29
22nd	Steve & Luzviminda Levine.....5
28th	Michael & Suzanne Gilson.....16
31st	Harvey & Judith Klein.....63

*From halfway around the world (or almost) in Israel's Galilee, good friends of Beth Hayden sent the following post-Irma letter of support to the KJCC community:*



19 September 2017

Dear Beth and Members of the KJCC,  
HaMinyan HaMishpachti HaMasorti in Kfar Vradim, Israel, is thinking of you.

As closely as possible from 5,000 miles away, we followed the harrowing days of Irma's approach and watched as the storm broke over the Caribbean and Florida. Now, as we reflect during the Tishrei Holidays, we wish you strength as you begin rebuilding.

May this Rosh Hashanah bring a year of creation and restoration. May it offer opportunities to correct and strengthen our relationships with nature and our fellow man, as we strive towards understanding and peaceful co-existence. May our collective goals bring us together for the betterment of our common existence, and may nature's beauty overcome her wrath.

L'Shana Yoteir Tova,

Judith and Avery Jochnowitz,  
on behalf of HaMinyan HaMasorti HaMishpachti

## The Margulies Family Sanctuary

In January of 2017, Stanley and Jenny Margulies made a very generous gift to the Keys Jewish Community Center. In their honor and in the spirit with which the gift was given, our sanctuary, by vote of the KJCC Board in February, was renamed "The Margulies Family Sanctuary." That name is now installed above the doorway, along with the beautiful and appropriate blessing approved by Stan from Deuteronomy 28:6: "Blessed are you for having come and blessed are you in your going forth." It arcs in beautiful brass Hebrew letters over the new name and a plaque stating:

*Named to Honor the Support and Generosity  
of Stanley and Jenny  
For Helping Assure the Future of the KJCC.*



Once again, we thank the Margulies family for their commitment to Jewish values, culture, and an ongoing active Jewish Community here in our inclusive Florida Keys home.

## A Sephardic Service

We don't often get a whole new service experience. Dana Grace gave us that by bringing us a host of new melodies and insights. Now, Joseph Shabathai will bring us his tradition of a Sephardic service. We already know one difference: they get to eat corn, beans and rice on Passover. (They also have different traditions for Sukkot.) Let's see what this service is like. Thank you, Joe, for another new experience. (Please see Joe's article on page 20 about his Jewish experience growing up in the British Colony of Aden, in today's Yemen.)

## Hurricane

*A poem by Gloria Avner*

Princess Moonfeathers  
said hurricanes are necessary  
to pull earth's hair  
Turtle Island's  
tropic swamps coral reefed and rocky  
need the scalp massage  
weed the weak trees  
make room around the others' roots  
to let nutrition in

full-blooded 96 year old Cherokee Indian  
done with hiding in the white man's world  
away for Labor Day  
1935  
buying supplies in Miami  
rides out the big one  
in her little boat

sees the ruins first hand next day  
men dead in trees  
clothes blown off  
bones black with blood  
two hundred WWI veterans  
grateful to be working  
gone

twisted iron rails  
spikes in turquoise waters

key deer visit her  
a miniature six point buck  
a doe two fawns  
in rapt communication  
vibrations of our drums  
and one coral rock  
mark the spot

### **Our Garden Survived Intact**

There aren't too many places in the Keys showing no damage from Irma. The grounds of KJCC are a mess of debris and downed tree limbs. (The building is fine.) But one place that suffered no damage at all was our beautiful and precious Meditation Garden. No bricks, memorial trees or even benches were uprooted or overturned. It is as it was before the storm, though it does admittedly have some areas that need a little raking. The Beth/Stanlake gazebo, which is

currently serving (as it does each year) as the KJCC sukkah, is undamaged, as is the orchid pergola. Even the sign welcoming everyone to the Garden is fine. We can't know for certain, but we're told that we're also the only place in the Upper Keys where flowers are blooming, in the landscaped portion of the parking lot. (Okay, maybe they're wildflowers, but honey gets made from them, too.) Also, Count tells us that no water washed onto the property, unusual for anything Oceanside. Thank you, mangroves.

## **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 Beth Hayden 305-773-0067.

**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 OR DINNER SPONSOR:** To schedule your special date with Sisterhood, call Joyce Peckman, 732-447-5225 or e-mail her at [joycepeckman@gmail.com](mailto:joycepeckman@gmail.com).

**KJCC TREE OF LIFE LEAVES and ROCKS, SANCTUARY SEAT PLATES, YAHRZEIT MEMORIAL PLAQUES:** Call Sydney! Faye-Davis, 305-613-3010 to arrange your donation.

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

**CHAI-LIGHTS MITZVAH:** Place a greeting or notice in Chai-Lights. Call Linda Kaplan, 305-978-6256, to make your donation.

**ADVERTISEMENT IN CHAI-LIGHTS or DIRECTORY:** Your business ad will appear in every issue of Chai-Lights. Call Linda Kaplan, 305-978-6256, for annual rates.

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

**TIKKUN OLAM PROJECT:** Bring your empty prescription and vitamin bottles to the KJCC and place in the collection box. We are assisting Burton Memorial to provide them to Haiti, where they are desperately needed.

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.

# KJCC Gift Shop



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



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







*In Memoriam October 2017*

In Memory Of

Herbert S. Weihl

By Alfred & Sue Ann Weihl

## In Memory Of

**Sarah Wernicoff**

By Donald Zinner

## In Memory Of

**Doran David Zinner**

By Donald Zinner

## In Memory Of

## Audrey Bloom

By Marc Bloom

## In Memory Of

## Harriet Feder

By David & Suzi-Sara Feder

## In Memory Of

**David Frank**

By Linda Pollack

In Memory Of

## Perren Gerber

By Gloria Avner

In Memory Of

## Michal Kamely

By Yardena Kamely

In Memory Of

**Carol Steinbock**

By Stephen Steinbock

## MISHEBERACH – A PRAYER FOR HEALING

When the Torah is read, we are granted an especially opportune moment to invoke blessing for those in need of divine intervention. So for hundreds of years it has been a tradition, before the Torah is returned to the ark, to recite the names of those who are ill, asking that Hashem, who blessed our founding ancestors, also bless those in need of healing. The person is not called by the standard Hebrew name (ex: *Moshe ben {son of} Amram*). Instead the mother's name is invoked (*Moshe ben Yochebed*.)

When the Reform movement moved the major Shabbat service from Saturday morning to Friday night, the prayer for healing, often in the form composed by Debbie Friedman, became an important element of their Friday night service.

The KJCC is non-denominational, but we too have incorporated the *Misheberach* prayer into our Friday evening service, after the *dvar Torah* (Torah talk.) We maintain a list of long-term and short-term names, as well as inviting names to be called from the congregation. There are even post cards at the back of the room to be used by anyone who wants to inform a friend or family member that they have been the subject of our community's prayer.

If you have someone that you wish to add or remove from KJCC's *Misheberach* list, please, 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 305-852-5235. The website, which accepts e-mail, is [keysjewishcenter.com](http://keysjewishcenter.com).

# **KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER**



## **SISTERHOOD SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES: ONEG \$60**



## **SHABBAT DINNER \$300**

**YOUR ONEG OR DINNER SPONSORSHIP WILL BE  
PUBLISHED IN CHAI-LIGHTS AND KJCC EMAILS  
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Honor a loved one or celebrate a special event such as a  
yahrzeit, birthday, anniversary, new baby, graduation,  
bar/bat mitzvah, safe return or any other occasion of your  
choice.

For Onegs, Sisterhood will purchase challah, wine, coffee/  
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You, the Sponsor.

Please send your donation with accompanying information to:.

KJCC Sisterhood

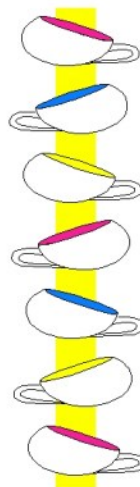
PO Box 116

Tavernier, FL 33070

We truly appreciate your generous support.

For further information contact Joyce Peckman

joycepeckman@gmail.com - (732) 447-5225



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## Sisterhood

Susan Gordon



In ordinary times, KJCC Sisterhood would have had our monthly meeting as planned on Wednesday, September 6<sup>th</sup>. But the times during that first week of September were anything but ordinary. After days of watching Irma's march towards South Florida and preparing emergency supplies, the day on which we were supposed to have our meeting turned out to be the day we received notice of mandatory evacuation. The women of KJCC Sisterhood soon scattered, with families and pets, to head in many different directions, our primary goals then being personal and family safety while securing homes and belongings as best we could. I wanted more than anything for everybody to be safe. We all stayed in touch by phone and text and e-mail as best we could. No one knew how badly our homes or our synagogue would be affected or how long the after-effects would last. We had long-distance discussions about what we would do if the synagogue was damaged or had no power. How could we possibly have a dinner or even a service if we had no lights or air-conditioning? We could only make decisions moment by moment, and from a distance. One decision made early as the storm approached was to cancel Shabbat and *Selichot* services.

While I was gone, some people started returning. I felt it was important to have a Friday night service at the KJCC for those people who stayed throughout the storm or who had managed to come back despite the curfews. We had canceled activities before we knew what damage might occur. Amazingly, KJCC did not lose electric power, and that suddenly made things possible that we could not have foreseen when we canceled. I want to thank all the people responsible for opening the synagogue, conducting services and carrying on our Jewish KJCC traditions. You tried to bring normalcy and comfort back to us with Shabbat observance and continuation of the onegs we love so much and are so important to our functioning as a Jewish community. We needed the opportunity

to come together in gratitude. I am sorry that we were not able to have the homemade brisket dinner we have become accustomed to enjoying on Erev Rosh HaShanah, but these were unusual and stressful circumstances.

Still, it was a delight to get together before services that night in the social hall and see everybody hugging, sharing stories of where they were during the storm, and wishing each other a sweet new year as we blessed and ate our apples dipped in honey.

I would also like to thank all who contributed to the two excellent Rosh HaShanah luncheons and snacks in the break between services on such short notice. Sydney! Faye-Davis and Kathy Shabathai were tireless in their organizational abilities and in the kitchen. Mary Anne Pearl came through at the last minute with all sorts of food preparation and help for Carla. Barbara and Richard Knowles did much shopping as well as major food preparing. Marc Bloom, honorary Sisterhood member, made his famous herring and sour cream. Jane Friedman, our amazing Sisterhood Vice-President, made sure we had a variety of healthy and delicious foods. Thanks to the efforts of many Sisterhood members, the whole Rosh HaShanah experience was a nourishing as well as spiritual success.

With Erica Lieberman-Garrett back from Toronto to coordinate Sisterhood's efforts for our break-the-fast feast at the end of Yom Kippur, we will have created a fitting conclusion to a holiday season unlike any other. The beginning of 5778 will be locked into our collective memory as a completely unique experience.

Whether we are praying together, socializing, making food, or breaking bread, it is this spirit of helping one another and loving one another, even in a time of crisis and confusion, that gives my heart joy, knowing that I and all of KJCC Sisterhood are part of something greater than ourselves. *L'Shanah tovah* to all. ♦

# Photo Gallery

The top three photos here were taken at the oneg on August 18th. Top left shows Jan Price offering a perfect view of the homemade brownies she had baked that day and brought to be consumed (they were) that evening. The other two photos are of Barbara and Richard Knowles, sponsors of the evening's oneg.



Steve Smith joined Jonah Gross (above and right) as trumpeteers with the Coral Shores Pep Band at the football game on Friday, September 1st.







Our Bernie Ginsberg has decided to retire again. (He thought he'd done it once before, right before he moved to the Keys.) He's holding a cake given to him by Rich and Mindy Agler, at left.



In the photo above, Linda Pollack poses with Luigi Price, Jan Price's service dog and the newest KJCC celebrity. In the photo near left, Dave, Nyan and Suzi Feder



(Suzi's in the back seat) wave while on summer musical tour in the southeast. Unfortunately, Hurricane Irma changed those plans. She also did in Dave's office/trailer at home (at far left), though he says nothing irreplaceable was lost. The photo below shows a group of LDS Church members from Boca who fanned out all over the upper Keys to help with debris clean-up for anyone who



asked. Kathy Shabathai snapped this photo when the group appeared at her house in Islamorada. They were also looking to help anyone who needed food.



# KJCC Meditation Garden

Our extended brick walkway is in place. Come and spend some time walking around our peaceful and beautiful Meditation Garden. Bricks and benches can be purchased as honorariums or memorials and as gifts. Trees line the walkway and are available for dedication to our loved ones or to memorialize a happy occasion.

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

Information regarding pricing for orchids, bricks and benches can be obtained by visiting our website, [keysjewishcenter.com](http://keysjewishcenter.com).





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# World Jewish Report

## Medina Roy



### An Historic Decision

Israel's High Court recently issued a groundbreaking ruling, finding in favor of Batya Kahana-Dror, an Israeli lawyer, to become the director of Israel's rabbinic court, a position that up until this ruling was available exclusively to men. In 2014, Kahana-Dror applied to become the rabbinic court's director but was rejected. She was told that the position was open only to candidates who have served as religious court judges or who are qualified to be municipal rabbis – both jobs currently available to men only. She, along with two civil rights organizations, petitioned Israel's High Court. In mid-August the Court found in her favor, saying that while religious jobs are exempt from anti-discrimination laws, the director's position was an administrative one and as such must be open to both men and women. The Court felt that the job should be open to anyone experienced with arguing before the rabbinic court or any lawyer with a relevant background in Jewish law. Kahana-Dror said that the ruling was "...an important achievement in the struggle for the rights of women in the Rabbinical Court system" and that this decision would also "strengthen the values of Judaism and democracy." ([www.tabletmag.com](http://www.tabletmag.com), 8-17-17)

### In the Aftermath of Charlottesville

Bryn Mawr College, a private college located in suburban Philadelphia, announced that it is placing a year-long moratorium on the use of the name of M. (Martha) Carey Thomas, a founder and past president (1894-1922) who was a known racist and anti-Semite. Both the library and the great hall are named for her. During and before her tenure as college president, Thomas actively worked to bar Jews from entering Bryn Mawr, both as faculty members and as students. At the end of August, College President Kim Cassidy wrote a

letter to the Bryn Mawr community saying that Thomas "had a profound impact on opportunities for women in higher education, on the ... identity of Bryn Mawr, and on the physical plan of the campus." Cassidy went on to say that "[Thomas] also openly and vigorously advanced racism and anti-Semitism as part of her vision of the College." A working group of faculty, students, staff trustees and alumni was formed to review and make a determination as to what to do about the name on the buildings. Bryn Mawr has 1,346 undergraduate students. Two hundred – some fifteen percent – are Jewish. ([www.forward.com](http://www.forward.com), 8-29-17)

### United Hatzalah's "Wonder Woman"

Despite resistance from her ultra-Orthodox community, Jerusalem family therapist Miriam Ballin became a medic. Following that, she started a psychological first aid unit. At the end of August, the Houston-born native – she still has family and friends there - left her husband, a family physician at Hadassah Medical Center, in charge of their five young children as she headed to southeast Texas. Ballin, 33, and six other Israeli mental health professionals went there help locals cope with the flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey. They are experts in their field and have lots of experience responding to local emergencies, including dozens of terrorist attacks. Ballin is head of the Psychotrauma Unit of *United Hatzalah*, a mostly ultra-Orthodox volunteer emergency service based in Jerusalem. She spearheaded the creation of the unit in 2016 during a wave of Palestinian violence to provide psychological support to those experiencing traumatic events. The unit has some 200 members, made up of medics, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers who have been trained by Israeli experts on the psychology of crises. They have responded to

dozens of situations, including terror attacks, wartime trauma, severe injuries and car accidents, suicides, forest fires and other natural disasters. Hurricane Harvey is their first experience with flooding. There are many first responders and medical professionals on the ground, but with so many people displaced, psychological support is sorely needed. "The provision of psychological support in the acute stages of trauma, from incident to seven days, is something we're leading the world in," said Dov Maisel, *United Hatzalah's* vice president of international operations. Ballin and her team coordinated with local and federal officials on the ground as well as leaders of the Jewish community, which has been especially hard hit. American Jewish donors – many in Houston – funded the trip. Ballin's group is not the only Israeli rescue team in Houston. Members of the Israeli humanitarian NGO group *IsrAID* rushed to Texas to provide supplies, remove debris and lead stress relief and recreational activities. ([www.jpost.com](http://www.jpost.com), 8-31-17)

### ***AclarTech's Motto: "Know Your Fruit"***

Avi Schwartzter was extremely disappointed with the fruit he picked from his backyard. As a computer scientist working as R&D manager at Hewlett-Packard in Israel, he was sure there was a tool or an app to be able to determine, on the spot, a fruit's quality and ripeness. Doing some research, he discovered many scientific instruments, each providing little pieces of this puzzle, but not quite what he was hoping to find. So in 2016, he and partner Ruby Boyarski founded *AclarTech* in Ness Ziona, a suburb of Rechovot. Together they developed the *AclaroMeter*, a device welcomed especially by farmers, wholesalers and retailers. The two men combined two unique made-in-Israel tools: *AclarTech's* proprietary algorithm plus *Consumer Physics' SciO* handheld molecular sensor in order to create the *AclaroMeter*. "We put a software layer on top of the *SciO* hardware. You could compare it to GPS and WAZE; you cannot build WAZE without GPS," explained Schwartzter. (WAZE is the Israeli-produced free traffic and navigation app.) *SciO* reveals internal attributes of

the fruit such as sweetness and dry weight. The device "crunches that data, along with smartphone camera images of external attributes such as color and size, to display a quality and ripeness 'grade' for the fruit (or cluster of fruits) instantaneously." All data, as well as additional statistical information and reports, are available online for analysis. Schwartzter believes that inaccurate information as to when to pick produce leads to a yearly loss of half of all fruits and vegetables grown commercially. *AclaroMeters* are now being used by Carmel Wines, the national fruit-quality regulation board, the Ministry of Agriculture and agricultural research at the Volcani Institute – which supports Israeli agriculture research, focusing on plant sciences, animal sciences, plant protection, soil and environmental sciences, food sciences, and agricultural engineering. (The Institute was founded in 1921 by Yithak Elazari Volcani, for whom it is named.) *AclarTech* plans to market the *AclaroMeter* all around the world. "Our vision is to improve the efficiency and quality of fresh agricultural produce along the food chain, from the farmer to the table of the consumer," said Schwartzter. "Our goal is to be the standard for fruit quality and ripeness." ([www.israel21c.org](http://www.israel21c.org), 8-30-17)

### **In Honor of Elie**

A bipartisan bill, named for the late Elie Wiesel, whose purpose is to improve the United States' response to emerging or potential genocides, was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives at the end of June. *The Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2017* was introduced by Representatives Joe Crowley (D-N.Y.) and Ann Wagner (R-Mo.). If it becomes law, it will ensure that the official policy of the United States is to consider the prevention of genocide and other crimes a matter of national security.

The bill also establishes an interagency Mass Atrocities Task Force and encourages the Director of National Intelligence to include information on atrocities in the annual crime report to Congress. "From the Holocaust to South Sudan, from Burma to Syria, the world has witnessed far too many geno-

cides and mass atrocity crimes,” Wagner said. “...the fact that over 65 million people are currently fleeing preventable crises makes clear that the U.S. government must improve its response to these conflicts.” ([www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org), 6-22-17)

### In Memoriam

★ Yisrael Kristal, a Holocaust survivor from Haifa who was recognized in 2016 by the *Guinness World Records* as the oldest man in the world, died in August, a month before his 114<sup>th</sup> birthday. Born in Zarnow, Poland, Kristal moved to Lodz in 1920 to work in his family’s candy business. He maintained the business after the Jews of Lodz were forced into a ghetto by the Nazis, where his two children died. In 1944 he and his wife were deported to Auschwitz, where his wife was killed. Kristal moved to Haifa in 1950 with his second wife and their son and continued working as a confectioner. When he turned 113 in 2016, he along with about 100 members of his family, celebrated his bar mitzvah, 100 years after he missed it due to World War I. ([www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org), 8-11-17)

★ Sheila Babs Michaels, feminist and social justice activist who is credited with popularizing the title *Ms.*, died in July. She was 78. In 1961, 22-year-old Michaels was living with a roommate in New York and happened to notice a piece of mail addressed to her roommate using “Ms.” Michaels, thinking it was a typographical error, had been looking for an alternative title to “Miss” and “Mrs.,” as she hated having her identity defined by her marital status. “I was looking for a title for a woman who did not ‘belong’ to a man,” she is quoted as saying. Gloria Steinem popularized the term and in 1971 used it as the title of the progressive feminist magazine she founded along with Dorothy Pitman Hughes. Michaels did not coin the term “Ms.” According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “Ms.” appeared as far back as 1901.

Michaels attended the College of William and Mary but was suspended for her political and racial opinions while she was on the college newspaper’s editorial board. She was one of the first women to run the field office

for the Congress of Racial Equality and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during the volatile 1960s. In 1963, she worked to organize the historic Civil Rights March on Washington, helping to write the speech for iconic civil rights leader John Lewis, now a Congressman from Georgia. Over the years she interviewed many civil rights leaders, leading to the establishment of an oral history archive that is currently stored at Columbia University. During her lifetime, Michaels also worked as a New York City cab driver. ([www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org), 7-11-17)

★ Margaret Bergmann Lambert, Jewish athlete who was barred from the 1936 Berlin Olympics because she was Jewish, died at the end of July. She was 103. Known as Gretel, Bergmann became a superior athlete in the 1920s and 30s, excelling in the high jump. A month before the Olympics, she won a meet against some of the best German high jumpers; her best of 5 feet, 3 inches tied a German record and was good enough to win the top spot on the Olympic team. The Nazis insisted that she compete in the trials to impress foreign dignitaries, who suspected that the party’s anti-Semitic policies would tarnish the competition. But just a few weeks before the opening ceremonies, Bergmann was bounced from the team, keeping her out of the games. She left Germany in 1937 and settled in New York, where she began to compete again. But she never forgot the disappointment of what happened in Germany. She won the U.S. women’s high jump and shot put championships in 1937 and the high jump again in 1938. Bergmann was inducted into the Jewish Sports Hall of Fame at the Wingate Institute in Israel in 1980. In 2004, HBO aired a documentary about her called “Hitler’s Pawn.” ([www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org), 7-26-17)

### Did You Know...

★ Helen and Maurice Kaye, a British Jewish couple – he’s 105, she is 104 – recently celebrated their 83<sup>rd</sup> wedding anniversary, becoming what is thought to be the country’s longest married couple. The two met when Maurice was a traveling salesman for his father’s clothing business. They have been together for 87 years. ([www.forward.com](http://www.forward.com), 9-1-17) ◇

# THE UNEXPECTED SHABBAT

By Gloria Avner

**W**hat do you do when the strongest hurricane in more than half a century comes barreling toward your island community with winds over 100 mph and projected storm surge of 10 feet, where most everything is not much higher than sea level? You get out of harm's way. You hunker down. If you're president of KJCC, you send out a notice that that coming weekend's activities will be cancelled, including Shabbat services. People in our congregation had intelligently fled to safety in places as far away as New York, the Carolinas, Illinois, Georgia, Texas and Alabama. We were our own diaspora.

But then, slowly, unusual things started to happen.

Midweek, before any residents were allowed to return to their homes, Count's son Chris, an FKEC Electric Co-op lineman, was allowed in to the Keys to work. He called his dad to tell him the news: "Dad, KJCC has power!" The phrase "a light unto the nations" came immediately to my mind. (As did *Ner Tamid*, the everlasting light, and that cruse of oil which prompted the eight-day Chanukah miracle.) Our synagogue was being looked after. We had power: lights, air conditioning, refrigeration and running water. The next day, Upper Keys residents were allowed back in. Count cleaned the ceiling insulation bits and iguana gifts from the sanctuary



floor, cleared the driveway of fallen palms and tree debris, and suddenly we had choices. A conversation between Susan and Gloria in diaspora led to a decision to re-open the synagogue for Friday night services despite the cancellation. We did it because we could and should. At our core, we are a Jewish house of worship. We had power and we needed to be open to our community, a place for prayer, refuge



and mutual comfort. Sam Vinicur, who stayed, agreed to open the building and prepare for the service. Late Thursday night e-mails and text invitations were sent to members we thought might be back. It was listed on Facebook. Sam called Kim Chesher, who with several colleagues was running a pirate radio broadcast out of the Sun103 station to help the community with vital information, to ask that she announce that KJCC would be open for services and that all were welcome, and she did. The response was beyond lovely. Thirty-six e-mails were sent out. Fifteen people came – more than a *minyan*, more than we expected.

Sam led the impromptu, informal service, with lots of help from Rabbi Rich Agler. (He and Mindy had returned the day before.) Jeffrey Schocket brought cake, fruit and challah. Our wonderful friend Carla also shopped for oneg treats and came to help. Rabbi and Mindy Agler, along with Mitch Harvey and Linda Perloff, Scott and Mary Anne Pearl, Steve Steinbock, Marc Bloom, Richard and Eve Knowles, Jane Friedman, Jan Price, and Kathy Shabathai were all present. The *mish-pocha* was able to say Kaddish. Our record of saying the final Kaddish in honor of those who originally owned our Holocaust Torah remained intact.

Rich Agler handled the impromptu *d'var Torah* in the manner of one of his informal Saturday service discussions. He started the discussion by asking two questions: What had made people want to come? And did they have any different feelings once they actually were present? Almost universally, our members talked about gratitude. Everyone knew things could have been much worse. They wanted to say thank you in community, to feel the strength coming from this group gathered to observe our most important and family-centered holiday.

To the second question they replied how good it felt to have a feeling of normalcy, to be, despite the wreckage and work that lay ahead, sitting together on *erev Shabbat* and celebrating the completion of creation and observing

God's designated Day of Rest. Everyone was happy to be there. With living through danger and suffering came a vulnerability that forged strong bonds. Rabbi Agler talked for a few minutes about the *parashah* for that Shabbat. "Choose life" was the theme. Everyone knew that next up would be the High Holidays. We may in retrospect experience the 5778 rituals as more normalcy, but in our minds and hearts they will forever be deeper, more profound, steeped in gratitude for the simple gifts of life, our Jewish heritage, our Jewish community, and each other.◊

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*"Almost universally, our members talked about gratitude."*

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# A Lifetime's Passage to Judaism

## *From Aden to the Keys and Memories of an Orthodox Father*

by Joseph Shabathai

Anyone who has been to Sephardic service will know that it sounds chaotic compared to the Ashkenazim services you are probably familiar with. The congregation all seem to be praying at once and individually at the same time and the noise level is often quite surprising. Men are separated from women and they are the ones who lead the service, the women being relegated to a secondary role. The tunes are often quite different and some may say not very melodious compared to the often operatic quality of the Ashkenazim chants.

My family originated in Aden, a British colony that is now a part of Yemen. Aden had a bustling Jewish community through the ages from Biblical times. They would be considered Jews of the *Mizrahim* – the East – as opposed to Sephardic Jews who originated in Spain and North Africa. The community's lives there were centered on Jewish tradition and there were many synagogues to serve the community of several thousand. Girls were matched to their future husbands and married soon after puberty, their essential duties being to produce children and raise them in the Jewish tradition. I recall my mother teaching me the Shema and insisting that it was recited at bed

time. My mother married at the age of 15 and my father was 20. Well, you can see what the result was (along with my three sisters)!

When I attend Chabad services in Zurich (which I do most Friday evenings and Saturday mornings while I am in Switzerland), I am reminded of how my parents and the communities of the East prayed for centuries. The Rabbi (and his large family) at the Chabad in Zurich is actually from New York – a New Yorker – and the congregation is a mixture of many origins. There are Jews from Israel, Turkey, Iran and other parts of the Middle East and Africa as well as Ashkenazim Jews from Germany, Europe and of course Switzerland. All pray in unison, the service is entirely in Hebrew and follows the Orthodox "Siddur," reading of the parsha and haftarah.

Since my father's death almost two years ago I have attended services and Jewish life has become more important for me. In the first year after his death there was of course Kaddish to recite. In a typical service at

the Chabad Kaddish is recited maybe 4 or 6 times during the service, not just once. When my father was alive I would attend services with him from time to time. He laid *tefillin* every morning and observed traditional customs such as Friday night dinner with the family and going to shul on Saturday morn-

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ings with me in tow. We kept kosher in the house and kept the Shabbat. However I was not very interested and to some extent I ridiculed the whole thing, especially after I had completed my bar mitzvah and discovered other attractions in life facing a young man in his teens.

I would have liked my father to now see how observant I have become since his death and I hope he would be proud of me as I actually have done something he would approve of. I can hear him now as I recite many of the prayers he would have recited himself.

While the experience is somewhat different, Kathy and I enjoy coming to shul in the Keys. We enjoy being part of the community and feel "at home." There is no pretentiousness, as they say we are all *mispacha*. Some of the tunes to the prayers are similar to the Orthodox services, while the general composition of the service is similar, especially at the festivals, with minor adaptations. The prayers have been the same for centuries and whether it's Sephardic or Ashkenazim the essentials are very similar.

A good *Yom Tov* to all and *Shana Tova*. ♦

## The Great Synagogue of Aden

The Magen Abraham ("Shield of Abraham") Synagogue, sometimes referred to as the al-Milama'l-kabira ("the Great Synagogue"), was built in 1858. The synagogue was financed by Menahem Messa, a leader in the Jewish community in Aden and David Sasson, a Jew from Bombay. The floors of the building were made of alabaster marble stone, the ceilings and windows of breathtaking stained glass. The central section of the synagogue contained a marble bima. The Torah Scrolls, kept in a huge Ark, were decorated with crowns and gold or silver pomegranates. Silver lamps hung from the ceiling in front of the Ark. The synagogue was built to hold around 2000 worshippers, and by tradition faces north, looking toward Jerusalem. By the end of WWII, after several pogroms in the city, only 1,100 Jews remained in Aden. By the mid-twentieth century the population had shrunk to 830.

Jews had been among the earliest settlers of Aden, a major commerce port and hub



on the southern part of Red Sea, astride the trade routes to India and the far east. In 1489, in Jerusalem, Rabbi Obadiah di Bertinora met Jews from Aden. He wrote archly to colleagues that they knew nothing about Talmud,

but were well versed in the writings of Rabbis Alfasi and Moshe ben Maimon (Maimonides). Records in Israel show that Jews had settled in Aden as early as the Mishnaic period, the second and third centuries C.E. Tombstones have been found in Jewish cemeteries in Aden dating back as far as the twelfth century. In the same period Jews in Aden became important in international trade. The wealth they developed enabled them to support yeshivas in Babylonia, Egypt and even for hardy types willing to brave the hardships of living in the backwaters of Palestine. Occasionally numbering as many as an estimated 8,500, the Jews of Aden lived there in relative tranquility, supporting as many as seven synagogues, until Arab riots upon the founding of the State of Israel in 1947. ♦

# Sukkot:

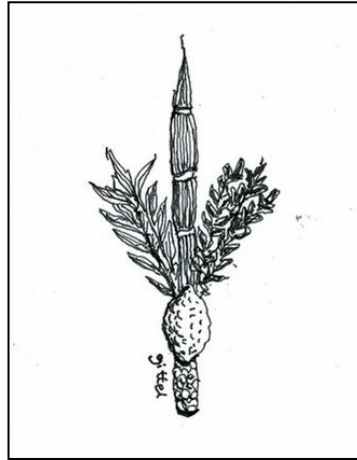
## *Seeing Stars Through a Temporary Roof and Feeling the Fragility of Material Comfort*

by Gloria Avner

If by some minor secular miracle you are reading this on October first (yes, there were a few production challenges), you know today is the day after Yom Kippur, the Sunday before Sukkot, the day we at KJCC traditionally take our many-years'-worth of decorations, student-made posters and plastic fruit out from under the *bimah* and string them up in Alan Beth and Candy Stanlake's pergola, the one in our Meditation Garden they dedicated to their respective parents, transforming it magically into our lovely, livable KJCC Sukkah. Ladders and hammers and scissors, oh my.

Palm fronds (*schach* in Hebrew – Rabbi Agler's favorite throat-clearing word) are laid on the roof for sporadic see-through ceiling cover. Fruit, coffee, baked goods and a test-run of our three species *lulav* and aromatic *etrog* blessings – while we shake all of them together in the seven sacred directions (the four cardinals, above below and within) – will complete the morning. Children come to help us, the adults enjoy the “doing” of it, and we always like to tell the story of our ancestors living in these open-walled “booths.” But there is something more this year, a *Mah Nishtana* moment. Yes, something big is different.

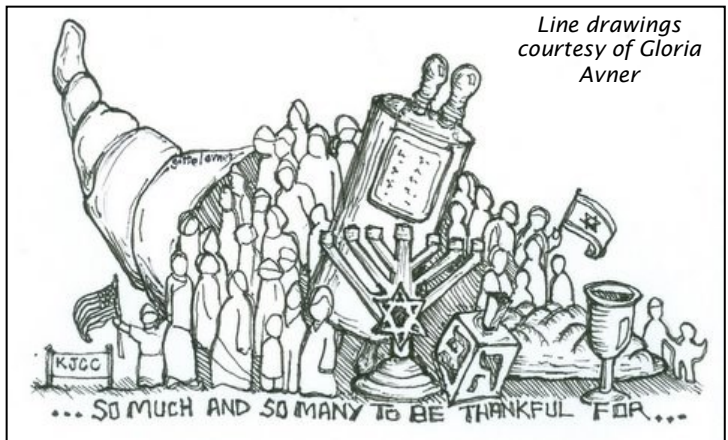
I am writing this just as the big physical difference is about to make itself known, but even before the big winds and waves hit. I feel it in my core, the non-pretend knowledge that we humans are much more vulnerable than we think, no match for the power of nature. As you are reading, we will have just finished hours of Yom Kippur recitation specifying “who by fire and who



by water,” the many ways of meeting our maker. As we are hunkering down, before and during the storm, most of us many miles from home because we have been told and shown that

our homes, solid as they appear, all brick and glass and stone and steel, with solid roofs that do not allow the starlight in, might not be strong enough for the wind and rain and waves that are to come. Material security is overrated, God tells us. As you read this, you know in your bones how true it is.

By building and dwelling in fragile huts for eight days, we are reminded both of the huts lived in by agricultural workers during autumn's harvest season in Israel and the make-



Line drawings  
courtesy of Gloria  
Avner

shift temporary dwellings of our biblical ancestors as they wandered in the desert for 40 years after fleeing Egypt. The structures remind us of our journey to nationhood, a time when we were totally dependent on God for guidance, safety, and nurture. The holiday is known as both The Holiday and *z'man simchateinu*, the time of our rejoicing. It is one of the three pilgrimage festivals mandated in the Torah when the best of the harvest was to be brought to the Temple as sacrifice. This year our sacrifice will be our prayer of gratitude for survival. (Prayer being the Judaism-saving replacement for sacrifice the rabbis gave us when, courtesy of the Romans, there was no longer a Temple in Jerusalem to journey toward.)

We re-enact a time when we were homeless wanderers. This is not ordinarily a reality we would wish upon ourselves. And yet we celebrate this as a time of supreme joyousness. This year we get it, from the inside out. We are happy to be alive, despite the work of cleaning up after Irma, after lost power, lost possessions, struggle with insurers and the myriad challenges of life not as it ever was. And yet we *are joyous. We are here.*

"Sukkot returns us to a time in Jewish history when the entire nation was homeless and wandering. In the desert, the ancient Israelites often asked neighboring nations for assistance in their travels, but were often turned down. To show that we have learned from the travails of the past, it is traditional to invite others to share a meal in our sukkah as we remember how central compassion must be in a world where material things so easily come and go." (A quote from the web site *My Jewish Learning*.) There is also a commandment in the Torah for each person to take the fruit of a "goodly tree," later interpreted to be an *etrog* (citron). To-

gether with it, one must collect certain tree branches and rejoice before God. We take a palm branch and connect to it myrtle twigs and willow branches. There are beautiful narratives in rabbinic literature that discuss the symbolic images of *etrog* and *lulav* (as the combination of the palm, myrtle, and willow is collectively known). They include parallels to the Jewish matriarchs and patriarchs as well as to the body and soul of each individual Jew.

One of the more poignant images involves seeing the *lulav* and *etrog* as symbolic of different kinds of Jews within our community,

each of value yet each expressing their Judaism differently. On Sukkot we metaphorically unite all Jews and celebrate the fact that although we are different as individuals, as a nation of shared values we are strong and unified. "Come join us," we say to the *ushpizim*, the strangers who visit us. There is a tradition that those who come are actually our forefathers as well as Moses and King David. But we must welcome all strangers who come to us and invite them to share a meal in our temporary house under the stars. Come to services Friday night, October 5<sup>th</sup> and walk out with us to our Sukkah to participate

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What a way to  
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ancestors  
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wandering."*

in ceremony (ironically heralding the beginning of the rainy season, but in Israel, thank goodness). Eat a handful of olives. Then go inside for an even more nourishing repast, all thanks to Sisterhood, who also provided a wonderful feast at the end of Yom Kippur.

It is new to some of us to feel so vulnerable. What a way to be transported back to the daily reality of our ancestors over forty years of desert wandering. And yet we are filled with gratitude. As we give thanks for the true abundance which is ours, our human resilience, compassion for others and the strength of our Jewish community, let us joyously share our celebration with God. ◇

# On Tribes:

## A Rosh HaShanah 5778 Talk

### by Rabbi Richard Agler

*As everyone who has ever attended one of Rabbi Agler's services or presentations knows, his style is to engage everyone with a variety of approaches — humorous, pointed, historical, ethical — but there are always serious ideas underneath being conveyed. We didn't expect to be publishing this October issue on quite the schedule that emerged. But one benefit was that part of the High Holidays — Rosh Hashanah — had happened. For topicality, and because not all of you had the opportunity to hear Rabbi Agler's talk on the first day of Rosh Hashanah in person, we asked him if we might reproduce the text here. He agreed.*

**I** want to take a little survey here. If I were to ask, "Are you an M.O.T.?", how many know how to answer? If you don't, M.O.T. was once, and maybe still is, slang for "Member of the Tribe." The question means, "Are you, or is he or she, Jewish?"

Tribes are an important part of life and most of us belong to several of them. Besides being part of *Am Yisrael*, the Jewish people, we may be "members of the tribe" of our home city or state. Are there any proud NY'ers here? Washingtonians? Chicago-landers? Bostonians? Floridians? All tribes. We may be members of our favorite sports teams' tribes, too: Mets, Red Sox, Cubs, Dodgers, Giants, Heat, Dolphins. We have tribal identity based on where we

live. As we tell everyone when we go off the rock, "We're from the Keys!" There's some cachet there. (Though I'm not so sure since last week.)

We are members of our professional tribes: teachers, doctors, accountants, therapists, attorneys, salespeople, shopkeepers, artists. And we belong to other tribes too: fishermen, musicians, sailors, Facebook friends, Mah Jongg players, book clubbers, volunteers, people in recovery, etc. We are M.O. *many* tribes. And we wouldn't have it any other way.

Tribes are important in the Torah. There are the 12 tribes of Israel, but also Ammonites, Hittites, Girgashites, Jebusites, Edomites, Hivites, and that's just in the holy land. According to the Bible, each of seventy nations is allotted a parcel of tribal land. Today those seventy are over 190 countries, and though there are exceptions, and it may be changing somewhat, most of them still look at themselves as a tribal homeland.

Tribes are a source of identity, but they are also a source of conflict. In the Middle East there are Sunni, Shia, Kurd and Alawite — enmeshed in what seems like endless war. In the Balkans, Orthodox Serbs, Bosnian Muslims and Croatian Catholics have been nursing grudges and spilling blood since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In India, it's Hindu versus Muslim.

Today in much of Western Europe, it's the natives vs. the newcomers. In Israel there is not only the tribal conflict with the Arabs, but also Ashkenazim vs. Sephardim, Religious v. Secular, Left v. Right, and more. In Kenya, tell someone what tribe you belong to and they can probably tell who you voted for. Believe it or not, it's similar in America. Give a political consultant your age, occupation, education, address, the make and model of the car you drive, and they can predict pretty accurately

who you voted for.

All this is because we are tribal creatures. It's Rosh Hashanah, the time for new beginnings. And my sad prediction is that we will not stop many, if any, of the tribal conflicts that currently consume our world—though that remains our Messianic hope. But perhaps we, in this room, can distance ourselves from the negative tribal behavior we engage in that causes us harm. For starters, maybe we can be less suspicious of members of other tribes, at least when we don't know very much about them.

The hurricane may have taught us a lesson on this. Everyone in America who watches a news or weather channel thinks they have a fair idea about what happened in the Keys. But many of us heard from dear ones who saw those accounts and, to be honest, were more worried than they needed to be, especially about us in the Upper Keys. We're grateful that they care, but thankfully for most of us, it was not that bad. The reason they think it was, is that their impressions came from the media, mass media and now social media. And the reason it looked so bad, as we all know, is that the worse it looks, the more people will pay attention.

In situations like this I like to remember the words of Will Rogers: It isn't what we don't know that gives us trouble, it's what we think we know that just isn't so.

And we can apply this bit of wisdom to our tribal relations. When we get most of our information about them from the mass media, social media, or even the government, there is a good chance that much of what we think we know just isn't so. I'm a proud M.O.T., but I've spent a good amount of time

crossing tribal lines. And maybe the most important thing I've learned is while there are bad people everywhere, most members of other tribes, even those we may be suspicious about, are for the most part no less decent than we are, and want the same things from life that we do: to raise a loving family, earn a decent living, fulfill their God-given potential and live in peace with their neighbors.

My experience is that this is true locally, nationally and internationally. But so often when we encounter a tribe, or a member of a tribe, who is different, either ethnically, religiously, politically or sexually, we do not respond

as if that were the case. We do not respond with higher human or Jewish values, such as, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19: 18). All too often we respond with prejudice, resentment or even hostility. And this is a sin — it is a sin against them, it is a sin against us, and it is a sin against God. We understand that acting tribally is natural. Tribes are our comfort zone.





“Birds of a feather” and all that. But going tribal can also hurt us. And sometimes we go there because we are being played. Political demagogues and their partners in the media love to pit tribe against tribe, not for our betterment or edification, but for their power and profit. They are masters at pushing our tribal buttons and firing up our lizard brains. And way too often, we fall for it. We are not stupid, but we are susceptible. We may not fall for everything but we manage to fall for plenty.

And if you’re thinking, “No not me,” there are several multi-billion-dollar corporations, to say nothing of political parties, who are more than happy to let you continue to think so. The purpose of the High Holydays is for us to become more than we have been and better than we are. If we are going to accomplish that, we may need to rewire some of those tribal circuits.

How to do this? Many people say the answer is to teach tolerance and understanding. If only we can educate people, goes the refrain, they will learn to think differently, and better. I am a believer in education and also in better thinking. But in this case, they’re not enough. When it comes to changing attitudes and behavior, *doing* different is much more effective than thinking different.

As it happens, Judaism teaches that it is actions that shape character, more than the other way around. Of the 613 commandments very few of them deal with what we should, or shouldn’t, believe or think. The overwhelming majority are about what we should do—or not do.

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way around.*

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For example, we will never appreciate how meaningful it is to give *tzedaka* – charity – until we actually give it. We can think about it all we want; we can imagine it feels nice, but until we reach down and extend ourselves on behalf of another human being, we will not understand the power it has to transform us. Likewise Shabbat. Until we actually rest on Shabbat, however we understand the term – and there are many, even entry-level ways to understand it – we

will never appreciate what a great gift Shabbat can be.

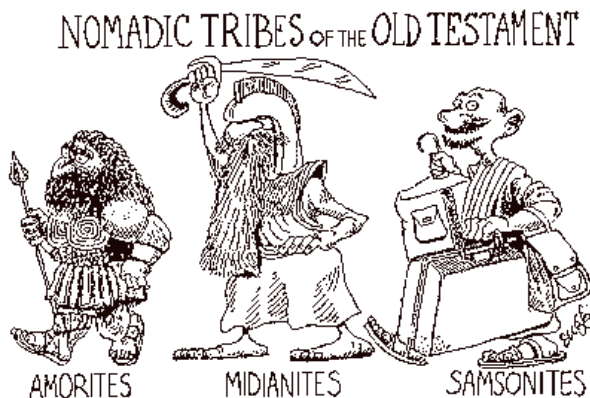
Similarly, until we study Torah, it may sound like a decent enough thing to do, but we will not be able to grasp how it can uplift us.

And as a final example, take swimming. We can stand by the side of the pool, listening to the instructor all day long, but if we don’t get in the water, we’ll never learn how to swim. I like that last one because according to the Talmud, parents have three responsibilities to their children:

- 1) To teach them right from wrong;
- 2) To give them the skills and education they need to earn a living; and
- 3) Teach them to swim. (*Kiddushin* 29a)

Okay, the first two we get, but seriously, swim is #3?! The commentators wondered about that, too. They ultimately said that the

Talmud wasn’t talking about learning to swim in a river or the ocean. It was saying that a child needs to be taught to swim through life. And just like in the pool, the only way to do it, is to be immersed in it. Again, most of the time in Judaism, it is good action that leads to





better thinking,  
not the other way around.

So let's go back to our tribes, and for the moment, to Charlottesville. Charlottesville raised a lot of critical issues but I'm going to focus on just one. As we remember, neo-Nazi and other racists marched through town, brandishing their Tiki Torches from Pier One, chanting anti-Semitic and other hateful slogans. I cannot prove, but I am willing to bet, that the wannabe storm troopers shouting, "Jews will not replace us" did not know many, if any, Jews. I feel safe saying this because it would be in keeping with the well-known pattern. Where Jews live in free societies, our neighbors, as a rule, are happy to have us alongside them. It's in the places where we don't live, where people don't know us, that anti-Semitism is highest.

This tells us something important, namely that most of our neighbors abandon the tribalistic teachings that may have taught them to think less of us after they get to know us. This did not happen because of more education or better thinking. It happened because the act of living with us gave birth to new understanding. It also happened because Catholic and Protestant leaders got to know our leaders as people instead of as religious or theological abstractions. And this happened because of programs of outreach and dialogue, sponsored by groups like the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, the World Jewish Congress and others. Nationally, internationally and locally, lived experience enabled our neighbors to overcome their tribal prejudices and allowed them to accept that we are every bit the mostly decent human beings they are, thank you very much. So good for them. But this is our holy day, not theirs. What about us? What actions can we take that will help us break free from our tribal prejudices? And let's not pretend that we don't have them.

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---

We do, religiously, socially and politically. We are grateful that most political leaders in America no longer stand in front of anti-Semitic mobs and flatter them in order to gain power. But many of them do demonize other tribes. And sometimes, I'm sorry to say, we go along with it. Especially when we don't know better or, sometimes, thank you Will Rogers, when we think we do but really don't. As people who have been on the receiving end of this equation far too often, we Jews should understand better than anyone how

dangerous this is societally and how wrong it is morally. Just as it is true that most people who get to know Jews like Jews, most people who get to know (insert the name of any minority tribe here) get to like them too. As someone recently put it, people who know Juan and Muhammed generally like Juan and Muhammad.

Or at least they don't hate them simply for being Juan or Muhammad. If Juan or Muhammad is a jerk, fine, we can hate them all we want. (No, sorry I can't say that. We can hate their jerky behavior all we want.) Similarly, people who

know people with alternative gender orientations generally overcome whatever prejudice they may have towards people with alternative gender orientations. All told, in places where there are many Juans, Muhammads, and LGBTQ communities, people vote to welcome other Juans, Muhammads and LGBTQ communities. And where there are few or no Juans, Muhammads or LGBTQ communities, people more often try to keep them out.

We can understand it. Fear of the unknown and dislike of the unlike are always with us, ready to be exploited. And when they are, back to tribal conflict we go. The Prophet Malachi said it as well as anyone ever has, "Have we not all one Father, has not one God created us all?" (Malachi 2:10) Those words are inscribed on the walls of countless synagogues. Probably because we realize that we

need them staring us in the face. When we lose sight of the fact that we are all children of the One God, when we act as if we are only members of tribes, whether those tribes are religious, political or social, we are cheating ourselves and our fellow human beings. And yes, that's a sin, too.

Reb Shlomo Carlebach, you may know the name, was a Hasidic rabbi and also a singer, musician and guitar player. He passed away in 1994. Synagogues around the world make use of his melodies. As do we. One of the ways in which Shlomo was unique, and there were many, is that he could cross any tribal boundary. Not only in the Jewish world, which is difficult enough, but in the wider world as well.

Once he was visiting a prison, somewhere in America. There might have been a Hasidic Jew or two inside, but the overwhelming majority of the population were members of other tribes. What should he say? What would he do? How could he connect? His repertoire was basically Hebrew folk songs and prayers from the *siddur*. Not exactly the playlist for this congregation. He played a little music but then stopped. He got off the stage and went to one prisoner after another, and offered a hug. Just like that. And after overcoming some suspicions, tribal and otherwise, they started hugging back. In short order everyone was into it. Picture the scene. I don't know that I could have pulled this off. But I know Shlomo could.

As he continued on his way down the line, one of the prisoners whom he had hugged a few moments earlier, ran back to him. He told Reb Shlomo, "If someone had hugged me like that ten years ago, I wouldn't be in here today." Reaching beyond our tribes and seeing one another's full humanity, in a world that all too often encourages us to deny it, is not only powerful, it can be life-changing. For all of us. We need to be able to do it – better than we do now.

We'll continue the theme next week.

*L'shana tovah.*

—*Rabbi Richard Agler, DD*

### ***Some Information about tribes you might not have at your ready disposal:***

In January of 2015 the U. S. Government's Federal Register listed 566 names of tribes that are officially recognized Indian "entities." In July that number increased to 567 with federal recognition of the Pamunkey tribe in Virginia.

Think language is tribal, or that tribes always speak the same language? Well, American Indian (Amerindian) languages do not belong to a single language family, but to 25-30 small ones. Research is difficult because so few true native speakers remain. But we do know that there are some 25 million native speakers of more than 800 surviving Amerindian languages. The majority of these live in Central and South America. In Canada and the U.S., only about a half million speakers of a native tongue remain.

Okay. Now you know how many official tribes there are in this country. How many do you think there are in India? (Forget how many languages they speak. Unlike in this country, there are many official languages of India.) The Constitution of India recognizes 645 distinct tribes. In Kashmir alone, a name many of us recognize, here is a small sampling of the tribal names: Bakarwal, Balti, Beda, Bot or Boto, Brokpa, Drokpa, Dard, Shin (no, not that Shin, probably), Changpa, Gaddi, Garra, Guijar, Mon, Purigpa, Sippi.

# ROSH HASHANAH 5778:

## A Very Different New Year

The *machzorim*, our High Holiday prayer books, were ready. The Margulies Family Sanctuary was sparkling clean, and Torahs, tables and flower vases were clothed in traditional white. Then our people started to arrive, more than 60 of them. You'd think we had not seen each other in years. The grins were huge. Hugs were intense, and many eyes were filled with tears, not of sorrow, but of gladness and gratitude. *Mishpocha* greeted *mishpocha* as long-lost best friends and family, even though most of what was lost was, in Rabbi Agler's words in one sermon, "just stuff." There had been the possibility of human loss, of course, and our hearts hurt for the islands not so far from us where true life loss was huge, but it did not hap-



**At left, Cantor Michael Dzubin, in his third year alongside Rabbi Agler on the High Holiday bimah, offers our first L'Chaim of the new year.**

pen among us, and that was enough for the people present, most of whom had just returned to the Keys a few days prior to services, to feel a touch "melted"



with gratitude to be together.

When we moved past the hugging into the Social Hall for our symbolic ritual beginning the new year with sweetness, we first lit our *Yom Tov* candles to mark the official begin-



**Our deepest thanks to potter extraordinaire Beth Kaminstein, shown at left surrounded by daughter Brieze and Dot Brooking, for the gift of KJCC's beautiful new custom candlesticks, shown at right on the Erev Rosh Hashanah table.**



ning of the first day of Rosh HaShanah, 5778, the only one of our holidays to begin in the dark, at the exact moment of New Moon. The room erupted with singing during the lighting of candles, more full and with more participating voices than ever before. And oh, the light!

Beth Kaminstein arrived just in time with her gift of two tall white-and-rose beautifully handmade candlesticks that will usher in our *chagim* from this day forward. Each of us then dipped a slice of apple in honey and tasted the auspicious start to 5778, the New Year. We admired and sampled the other symbolic foods that start our New Year celebrations off just right – pomegranates with their seeds emblematically numbering 613, the number of *Mitzvot* in the *Torah*, as well as dates, figs and carrots, all having significant meanings beyond the foods' actual names. Though Hurricane Irma had caused us to cancel our traditional *Erev* Rosh HaShanah dinner, it could not dampen the sweet-tasting enthusiasm of our attendees. We were all glad to be there, listening to the comforting words of Rabbi Agler, differentiating

between “stuff” and what was truly precious to us – family, community, and our Jewish heritage. Rabbi Agler had confessed to us the previous

about with nature, needed some fine-tuning at the least and possibly major overhaul. He said, while laughing, to please prepare to be dealing with “a rabbi on roller skates.” Fast forward to Wednesday night, *Erev* Rosh Hashanah. Though he did somehow manage to keep his main themes intact over the next few days, Rabbi Agler did address what was by then on everyone's heart and mind and what was tugging at everyone's emotional stress level. He invited

**Cole Silverman, shown at left with mom Jane, seems to have grown eight inches since last Rosh Hashanah.**



between “stuff” and what was truly precious to us – family,

community, and our Jewish heritage.

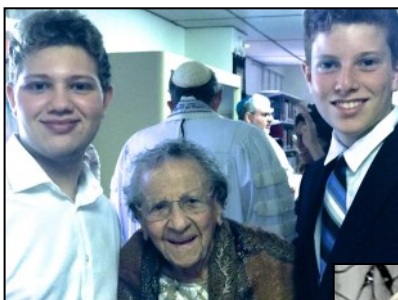
Rabbi Agler had confessed to us the previous



*Erev* Shabbat, at our first (and somewhat impromptu) post-Irma gathering on September 15th, that the themes he'd been preparing to talk about over the High Holiday period suddenly, in the wake of our overshadowing

about with nature, needed some fine-tuning at the least and possibly major overhaul. He said, while laughing, to please prepare to be dealing with “a rabbi on roller skates.”

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surprised us and drove all the way from Texas to help. My grandsons made sure I was comfortable. They checked on my husband in the nursing home. They cleaned my property. They showed me the

meaning of family. Thanks to them, I have no regrets. I am even able to commute back and forth to work. I should feel homeless, but I don't."

Our matriarch, Pauline Roller, at 102, wouldn't have missed being there for the world. She loved her embraces by the Silverman



everyone there to strike up a conversation with God. (He began with "Dear God," and then paused. Looking around the congregation, he then resumed. "Now take a minute and fill in your own blank." Then he invited anyone who wished to share aloud what they'd just said privately. The results were both predictable and startling. Many spoke of their gratitude, for life and family and surprisingly habitable dwellings. Others spoke with compassion for those who had not fared well. There were a few humorous comments, too, which interestingly I can't remember, though many spoke of fleeing the storm only to find that it managed to follow them.

And then Rita Bromwich raised her hand. "I lost my house. It was destroyed. But, dear God, thank you for all that happened after that. My daughter's family took me in. My son



boys - Westley and Cole - both *B'nei Mitzvot* here some years ago, and by Susan Horn, KJCC's first female president and daughter of past president Ron Horn, along with her wife, Dot. Susan and Dot were pleased to do

the first Ark opening on *Erev Rosh HaShanah* and even more thrilled to have an *aliyah* on Day One, which Susan felt was a special honor to her parents. The hugs to Pauline went on and on, including one from a one-time member we had not seen in twenty years.

On Day One, by Torah service time, we were happy to have almost as many people in seats as the evening before. We knew that many people were not back from their "exodus" yet and we knew that many had to be at home to meet with insurance adjusters. We had no prob-



lem having enough people to accept the honors of *aliyahs*, ark openings, readings of blessings for Israel, the United States, and on our congregation and calling out *shofar* notes. We thank all who generously took part. We



offer special thanks to those who went beyond the call of duty. Bernard Ginsberg not only



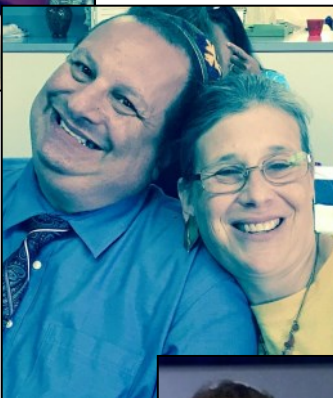
chanted the *maftir* on both days but also served as *gab-bai* to Cantor Dzubin as he chanted the *Parashah* for all *aliyahs* and also blew the *shofar* at all times it was needed. Sincere thanks to Mitch Harvey as well for being our *Kohey*n on *Rosh HaShanah* Day One and Day Two, not just reciting Torah blessings for the first *aliyah*, but for delivering the blessings of the *Kohanim* to the con-





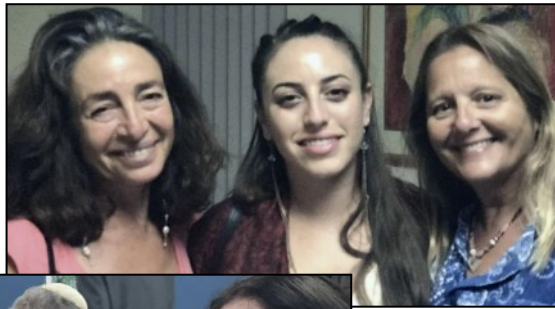
gregation on both days as well.

And speaking of blessings, one of the greatest during this initial period of *Rosh HaShanah* is the hearing of the *shofar* blast. It is meant to wake us up! And thanks to our two *shofar* blowers we were all supremely blessed to hear the sounds so clearly and movingly. Bernie has been blowing shofar for us for years. And for the last three he has been joined by one-time Bar Mitzvah boy from our own Hebrew School, Jonah



Gross. No one in the sanctuary for Day One or Day Two will ever forget that seemingly endless mournful but exhilarating blast our trumpet-playing High School student Jonah gifted to us on *Tekiah G'dolah*.





Rabbi Agler's sermons were poignant, particularly his rabbinic examples



contrasting the angry zeal-ousness over unimportant things that leads to destruc-tive behavior and creates a hardness that is impenetra-ble to reason, with an atti-tude of love and kindness which opens the way to lis-



tening and righteous behavior. The theme of behavior being more important than belief



would come up again and again throughout the *Yamim Noraim*, the 10 Days of Awe.



Sisterhood may have cancelled our *Erev Rosh HaShanah* brisket dinner to avoid causing stress to our members without power and water and energy to cook, but they more than made up for it with the juice and cheese snacks on both days and the very elaborate, beau-tifully staged, delicious and filling lunch-eons on both days after *Musaf* services. Special kudos to Richard Knowles for his beautifully rolled lox platters and the tuna salad made to Barbara Knowles's exact



specs. Keep healing, Barbara. Richard is a treasure. We also treasure the super hard-working Jane Friedman, Mary Anne Pearl, Sydney! Faye-Davis, herring man



Marc Bloom, Linda Perloff (maker of a million *rug-geleh*), Luz Levine and her famous



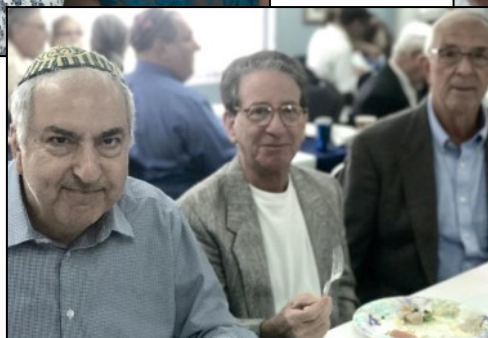
mandelbrot, and the tireless Kathy Shabathai. By the time you read this,



Susan Gordan's wonderful Sisterhood team (yes, Marc is an honorary member) will have produced equally



spectacular results for the post-Yom Kippur fast feast. Seriousness and joy, study and celebration, sorrow and delight, follow one another in Judaism as the night the day. ♦



**We love the symbolism of the round challah used only at Rosh Hashanah time, above. A year is round, with cyclical seasons...**



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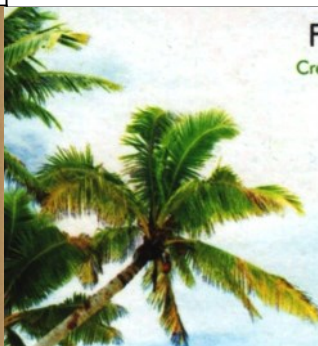
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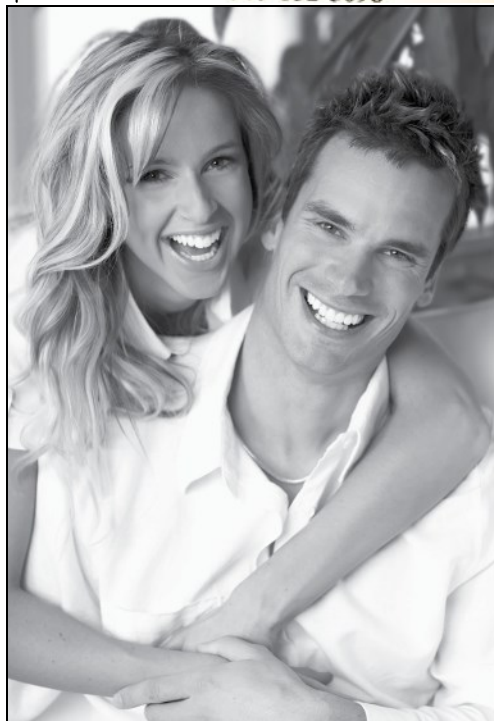
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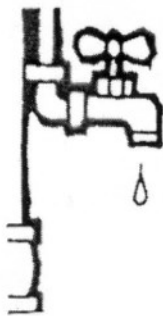
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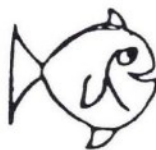
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