Chai~Lights

January 2009 5 Tevet - 6 Shevat 5769

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

January 2009 5 Tevet - 6 Shevat

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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CHAI-LIGHTS is the monthly newsletter of the **Keys Jewish Community Center**
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President's Message
Steve Steinbock

I hope you all had a Happy Thanksgiving and Chanukah. It seems the snowbirds are all here and season is in full swing. Welcome back. There are a few more coming down in January and we look forward to seeing them too, especially Elinor and Herb Grossman, our Canadian contingent.

What have we been up to in December? The KJCC Men's Club sponsored a trip to North Miami Beach to attend the 23rd Israeli Film Festival. We saw the U.S. premiere of "Lost Islands." The movie was touching and thought-provoking. I don't often see movies in another language with sub-titles and I was not sure I would enjoy this one but I did and I would recommend it to all of you. After the movie, we drove to the Lincoln Road Mall on South Beach, where we enjoyed people-watching and saw a seven-foot, sea-shell-covered dreidel and an even larger menorah, both designed and created by Roger Abramson. As it happened, while there we actually met Roger and his granddaughter Scarlett. We were all marveling at the creations (there are photos in Photo Gallery), while Roger was standing there eating ice cream and eavesdropping.

Happily, we found the Ghirardelli shop and enjoyed hot cocoa, ice cream, cookies and raspberry chocolate candy while seated at the outdoor café on a lovely December night. Carol and I certainly broke our diet that night. As I write, this Friday night is our Chanukah Shabbat dinner and children's play. Chanukah begins Sunday evening. I'm sure I will break my diet again.

I look forward to attending Gloria Avner's art class on January 21st and meeting future mishpocha at our annual membership dinner on Friday, January 23rd. Don't forget to bring anyone who might be interested in learning more about the KJCC.

This past year, 2008, was long and in some ways difficult. Thanks to all of you who helped to make it a little less so. Special thanks go to the editors of Chai~Lights and to all our members who contribute with articles, photos and responses to our requests. I know it is not easy to respond to deadlines and send material in (believe me, I know), but without you we would not have a publication that we all look forward to each month.

Carol and I wish you all a happy, healthy and peaceful 2009.

Steve

Nosh

A Rare Saturday Shabbat Service

On Saturday, January 3rd, we will again be honored by Rabbi Agler conducting a Shabbat Service. A few months ago we asked Rabbi Agler if he'd lead a Shabbat service for KJCC during one of his occasional visits to the Keys. He agreed.

Rabbi Agler led an informal service in his own special way. It was casual; he gathered us all around, told spiritual stories, and led a service that included prayer and song. We discussed the Torah portion for the week. Then we took the Torahs out and invited everyone up to the bimah for an aliyah. Approximately twenty people attended. Later on, everyone told me we should invite him back again. We have, and he's again accepted.

If you have not attended a Shabbat service in awhile, you will find this service educational, enjoyable, meaningful and perhaps even spiritual. Please join us on Saturday, January 3rd at 10 a.m. Shabbat Shalom and Happy New Year.

-Alan Beth

January Anniversaries

		Years
1st	Thomas & Leslie Dillon	12
4th	Steve & Amelia Kasinof	27
12th	George & Muriel Swartz	28
17th	Alan & Elaine Schulberg	15
26th	David & Pamela Marmar	23

Books for Veterans

I delivered our three boxes of donated books to the office of the Jewish Chaplain at the Miami VA Hospital. Thanks to all from the congregation that donated to the cause. I hope they have a warm feeling in their hearts knowing that their kindness will bring a bit of sunshine into the lives of some worthy veterans.

-Stuart Sax

YAHRZEIT PLAQUE

In Memory of

Peter S. Lubert

12/24/1941 - 7/14/2008

Loving Wife, Mary Lubert

The KJCC extends deepest condolences to

the Peckman family

on the death of Joyce's mother-in-law

Gertrude Peckman

KJCC Adult Education Series Begins

On Wednesday, January 21st at 7:30 p.m. with Gloria Avner's Expressive Art Class. DON'T FORGET TO RSVP ME at 305-619-0216 if you want to have an entertaining, satisfying, stimulating evening, being creative without fear of failure. You are guaranteed to walk out with at least one small frame-able gem of an India ink and watercolor painting. You will be proud to put your name to it. (Um, if you are interested in learning how to draw a straight line, this might not be the class for you. Otherwise, join us.) Open to both men and women. You need bring nothing but the eagerness to learn, experiment and have fun. Leave your day's worries behind.

-Gloria

Welcome Back, Snowbirds

We've missed you and look forward to seeing you on Friday nights. We have onegs in February and March that are open and awaiting your sponsorship. Wouldn't it be lovely if each member family paid for one *oneg* during the year! A basic *oneg shabbat* sponsorship is only $50. Please notify me as soon as possible, so that you can be appropriately thanked in Chai-Lights. My phone is 451-4665 or e-mail joyce@adoctorsbag.com.

-Joyce Peckman

The KJCC extends deepest condolences to

the Bloom family

on the death of Marc's father

Joseph Bloom

New Year, New Members

The KJCC is pleased to announce new members Ivan and Jean Bader of Pine Brook, New Jersey and Sunne Rego of Key Largo. Welcome! We hope to see all of you often.

BOOK PLATE

In Loving Memory of Stephen K. Cimkowski

By Carol and Steve Steinbock

YAHRZEIT PLAQUE

Dr. Sandra Samuels

A Most Courageous
Physician, Teacher, Humanitarian
And Beloved Wife
11/12/1934—11/15/1996
Loving Husband, Sid Samuels

Food Bank Request

We are collecting non-perishable food for the Burton Methodist Church food bank. This food bank services all people without regard to race, creed or color. The need has increased over 50 percent in the last few months. A box marked for the food bank is in the KJCC lobby. Please leave food there or at the door; we will deliver to the food bank. Your neighbors need your help. I and they thank you.

-Jim Boruszak

Ongoing Projects

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 Bea Graham, 852-0214.
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.

A Notice From Alan Beth On Yahrzeit

Rabbi Joseph Teluskin writes that there are several occasions each year when the dead are memorialized. The most significant of these is yahrzeit, the anniversary of the death, which is observed according to the Hebrew calendar. Most synagogues keep registries of the Hebrew dates of members' deaths and send out notices reminding family members of the yahrzeit date.

We at the KJCC are also maintaining such a database, but unfortunately it has some missing data and some missing dates. We ask your co-operation to please notify us of any corrections that need to be made. It is especially important that we get the spelling correct and of course the date of death.

There are three dates that we track: 1. The date of death (conventional calendar) 2. The Hebrew date of death (Hebrew/lunar calendar) 3. The Hebrew date converted to the current date on the secular calendar.

We will send you a letter to remind you of the Hebrew date and how that date converts to the current year's calendar.

As a congregation, we need to decide, during the Friday night service, which of the dates should be used, the secular date or the converted Hebrew date. So if, for example, you are remembering someone who passed away a few years ago on Jan 21st, 2000, the Hebrew date for that day was 14 Shevat 5760. Today, 14 Shevat in the current Hebrew year (5769) converts to February 8, 2009. So that is an example how the Hebrew dates and the standard calendar dates often differ, and can differ substantially.

If you are coming to Friday night services specifically for a yahrzeit please verify with that week's leader that your loved one is remembered during the service.

As a synagogue we are responsible for helping you to remember the converted secular date according to the Hebrew calendar.

If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact me: Alan Beth, Chair of the Religious Committee 240-1509 or send feedback to: feedback@keysjewishcenter.com

January Birthdays

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

Oneg Sponsors for January 2009

January 2nd—Amelia and Steve Kasinof for their anniversary.

January 9th—Linda Rutkin to honor her grandson's 2nd birthday.

January 16th—Franne and Barry Alter for Barry's birthday. Patricia and Henry Isenberg for Henry's birthday. Meredith A. Cline for her birthday.

January 23rd—Carol and Steve Steinbock for Carol's birthday. Pamela and David Marmar to mark their anniversary.

January 30th—Arthur Feinberg for Mark's birthday.

YAHRZEIT PLAQUE

In Memory of

Richard "Papa Dick" Jacob

Loving father and grandfather
Pat and David VanArtsdalen

Adult Classes at the KJCC

President Steve Steinbock is starting a series of Adult Education classes at the KJCC. In addition to the art class that will be offered by Gloria Avner in January, he is also planning a talk and question-and-answer session on Powers of Attorney, Living Wills and Health Care Surrogate Designations. The talk will be given by Carol Steinbock, a former nurse who was also a practicing attorney for almost 20 years in New York and the Keys. The class is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, February 4th, at 7:30 p.m. in the Ruth Richardson Hall.
If you have any questions, or ideas for future classes and subjects, you can contact Steve at 305-394-0143 or at president@keysjewishcenter.com.

BOOK PLATE

In Memory Of Toby Mitchell
Sister of Linda Pollack

By Esta Jo and Paul Busker

A Message From Joan and Sisterhood

As of this printing I will have served out a two year term as President of the Cathy Kaplan Sisterhood. The new President , Joyce Peckman , will be lead us in 2009. She will be ably supported by Sofy Wasser as VP , Nancy Kluger as Treasurer, Candy Stanlake as Secretary and Beth Kaminstein as Officer At Large. I know they will all continue to do great work, as always. I 'd like to thank everyone for all the support and advice as I made my way along a path , following the lead of those before me. Take a look at the new blue plaque at the entrance to the Social Hall. We established a Mission Statement this year which serves as a reminder of what the Sisterhood hopes to achieve. My experience as President has been a great learning experience with responsibilities and fun intertwined. But that's what it is all about, no? I think the biggest thought I would like to leave is defined by the true essence of the Sisterhood. We are a sum of our parts. It is every little thing that each and every one of us do, that contributes and makes us whole. Every time an event or holiday needs to be planned, I always wondered "how will we put this together"? Sure enough, one by one, you step up and do your share. So, keep up those big steps or baby steps and stay involved with the Sisterhood. You'll feel good.

Remember January is filled with fun:

Sunday, January 4 - Sisterhood Meeting 2009
Welcome New Officers!
Wednesday, January 14 - Fashion Show Luncheon at the Outback hosted by Angelika
Contact Nettie
Sunday, January 18 - Miami Bombshells - Theater
Contact Bea
Friday,January 23 - Membership Drive Shabbat Dinner –

Special Shabbat Dinner

DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO MAY HAVE AN INTEREST IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT OUR TEMPLE/CONGREGATION? INVITE THEM TO COME AND SPEND AN EVENING AT THE KJCC! WE WANT TO REACH OUT TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN THE KEYS AND MEET MORE OF OUR MISHPOCHA.

ON FRIDAY, JANUARY 23, 2009, WE WILL OPEN OUR TEMPLE TO JEWISH ADULTS AND THEIR FAMILIES TO COME AND MEET MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION, JOIN US FOR A BUFFET DINNER, AND ATTEND A SERVICE WITH US.

DATE: FRIDAY, JANUARY 23, 2009

TIME: DINNER AT 6:30 PM FOLLOWED BY A SHABBAT SERVICE AND THEN BY AN ONEG.

INFORMATION: JOYCE PECKMAN 451-0665

In Memoriam January 2009

In Memory Of

CAROL SIPERSTEIN

By Robert Jay & Gloria Auston

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

In Memory Of

MARCUS WEISS

By Janice Gorson

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

In Memory Of

SYLVIA EMSIG

By Lawrence & Pearl Jacobs

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

In Memory Of

JOSEPH COHEN

By Jules & Nettie Seder

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

In Memory Of

SAMUEL NEUBAUER

By Jackie LePree

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

In Memory Of

ABRAHAM RAIJ

By Salomon & Mary Terner

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In Memory Of

CLARA GOLDSTONE

By Robert Jay & Gloria Auston

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In Memory Of

BERNICE BERNSTEIN

By Paul & Barbara Bernstein

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

In Memory Of

WALTER HANKIN

By Richard & Barbara Knowles

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

In Memory Of

HYMAN SAMUELS

By Sid Samuels

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

In Memory Of

RALPH BERNSTEIN

By Laurence & Renee Green

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

In Memory Of

SYLVAN OSER

By Marjorie Present

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

In Memory Of

EMMA KOHLENBRENER

By James & Joan Boruszak

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

In Memory Of

ERNEST ISENBERG

By Henry & Patricia Isenberg

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

In Memory Of

GOLDIE SCHWEITZER

By Richard & Barbara Knowles

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

In Memoriam January 2009

In Memory Of

MIRIAM S. MARKS

By Meredith Cline

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

In Memory Of

HARRY STOLER

By Randy & Eileen Kominsky

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

In Memory Of

ANN NETZMAN

By Alan Netzman

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

In Memory Of

CAROLYNNE H. CLINE

By Meredith Cline

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

In Memory Of

BETTY WEINSTEIN

By Jerry & Sheila Olsen

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

In Memory Of

JUDY LOMBARDI

By Marilyn Greenbaum

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

In Memory Of

BETTY WEINSTEIN

By Eric Grace & Ruth Schrader-Grace

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In Memory Of

ETA BROWNSTEIN

By Pauline Roller

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

In Memory Of

NATHAN WEISBERG

By Gerri Weisberg

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

In Memory Of

MARVIN GREENBAUM

By Marilyn Greenbaum

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In Memory Of

BETTY WEINSTEIN

By Dick & Rita Bromwich

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In Memory Of

LOUIS HARTZ

By Steven Hartz

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

In Memory Of

BERNARD KAMINSTEIN

By Ron Levy & Beth Kaminstein

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

In Memory Of

ANNA SAVAGE

By Marjorie Present

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

In Memory Of

SYDNEY ZINNER

By Donald & Nancy Zinner

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YEDA VE'TORASHA

Yardena Kamely

Miracles: Maccabees to Ben-Gurion

Chanukah resonates with many of the founding "myths" of Zionism – the few against the many, the weak against the strong, a small nation against a mighty empire. But it is not just a national military festival. It is about *nes* (miracle) and *tikvah* (hope). It is about rededication to the values that are central to our existence as a people in covenant with God. It is about survival. *Chanukah* reminds us that we need to continue to believe in miracles and do our part to cooperate with God in making miracles happen. This is the essence of Zionism. The creation of the State of Israel in our lifetime, after the Holocaust, was indeed a modern miracle. But it would not have happened without the Jewish men and women who believed in this possibility and made it happen with their own hands and hearts and minds. One of those men, a Zionist leader, was David Ben-Gurion (born David Gruen—David Green—in Plonsk, Poland in 1886).

Every fall the leaders of Israel head south to the *Negev*, to the burial plot of the architect of the rebirth of Israel, David Ben-Gurion. There, on a cliff overlooking the ancient vista of *Nachal Tzin*, the "big shoulders of a generation," as the poet Natan Alterman so beautifully put it, chose to be buried.

At the memorial ceremony last year, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said: "The cases are rare in the history of a nation in which there was such an accurate and miraculous synergy between the right man and the right time. It is only at those crossroads at which the right leader meets the elusive, historic, opportune moment, and the leaders know to strongly grasp the horns of history and divert it from its path."

Olmert said that the time was too brief to list fully the great deeds of Ben-Gurion as a leader who guided the Zionists and shaped it all — the rebirth of Israel in its land, the War of Independence, the establishment of the IDF, the ingathering of the exiles, the very foundation for the State and its institutions. "Therefore," said Olmert, "I will make do with noting two points, two fateful decisions, without which the State of Israel would not be what it is today, and it is doubtful if it would even exist.

"On May 12, 1948, two days before the end of the British Mandate, the members of the People's Administration - the embryonic Government - gathered to discuss and decide on whether to declare the establishment of the State or to avoid doing so.

"In the background, there was the certainty that, immediately upon the declaration of the State, five enemy armies would immediately invade with the stated goal of drowning it in blood; in the background was the memory of the Holocaust just three years previously, and the danger of losing the last safe haven for the Jewish people; in the background was the fate of all that was built and established in the Jewish settlement of the Land of Israel through hard labor, sweat and blood over 50 years of Zionism; in the background was the severe warning made by the American Secretary of State, General George Marshall, to the head of the Department of

Foreign Affairs, Moshe Sharett, that there was no chance for a Jewish state, if declared, to survive the attack by the regular armies surrounding it; in the background was the opinion of the representative of the General Staff, the Operations Officer Yigal Yadin, that there was a fifty-fifty chance, but that the enemy had a great advantage; and in the background, during the meeting itself, the cries of despair were heard from a besieged Gush Etzion under attack, which was conquered and fell with a heavy cost in blood.

"The second fateful decision made by Ben-Gurion was regarding Jerusalem. During the War of Independence, Ben-Gurion granted supreme importance to ensuring the contiguity and totality of Hebrew Jerusalem in the borders of the State of Israel, in opposition to the UN Resolution. His decision to launch a complex and dangerous military operation to break through to Jerusalem is only part of a long list of fateful decisions regarding the future of Jerusalem."

When the UN tried again in December, 1949 to rend Hebrew Jerusalem from the State of Israel in a second resolution regarding internationalization of the city, Ben-Gurion faced the world head-on. He immediately pushed through a Knesset Resolution declaring Jerusalem the eternal capital of the State of Israel. He declared: "Jewish Jerusalem is an organic and inseparable part of Israeli history, its faith and of the soul of our people. Jerusalem is the heart of the State of Israel. The international response was furious; there were threats; there were boycotts; but Jerusalem the Jewish capital was an unshakeable and decisive fact.

And Olmert continued at the memorial ceremony: "Fifty-five years ago, David Ben-Gurion spoke of the obligation of the Prime Minister - all Prime Ministers - of Israel to exhaust all chances for peace, but to maintain security. He said: "I would think it would be a grave sin not only towards our generation, but towards the following generations, if we would not do everything possible in order to reach mutual understanding with our Arab neighbors, and if the following generations could accuse the Government of Israel of missing some opportunity for peace. I would not want to be the man whose grandchildren or great-great grandchildren accuse that there may have been a chance for Jewish-Arab peace and he missed it. However, together with the necessity and spiritual ability to lie in wait for every opportunity for peace, we command - because our lives depend on it - constant readiness for war."

Prime Minister Olmert ended his speech sharing some personal thoughts: "Sometimes, late at night when the formal obligations of the role of Prime Minister are over, at that same intermediate time in which agonizing thoughts of what to do and how to act and what to decide pass through my mind, I allow myself, from the distance of time and changed circumstances, to think about David Ben-Gurion's loneliness during those days and hours in which he had to make decisions when faced with the weight of history, against the advice of his good friends and colleagues, when no one stood beside him except his conscience, his sense of responsibility and his G-d. As we stand here today at the graves of David Ben-Gurion and his loyal wife Paula, we will cherish, remember and recognize with gratitude the greatest leader of the State of Israel."

In the *Al Hanissim* prayer, which is traditionally recited in the *Amidah* prayers during the eight days of *Chanukah,* we specifically ask God to perform new miracles not only "in those days" (*ba'yamim ha'hem*), but also in our times (*ba'zman ha'zeh).* I think the State of Israel is still in need of the miracle of peace. Sadat coming to Jerusalem in 1977 was such a miracle. Ben-Gurion said: "In Israel, in order to be a realist you must believe in miracles." He also said: "Courage is a special kind of knowledge: the knowledge of how to fear what ought to be feared and how not to fear what ought not to be feared." At this time, we are in need of a miracle and of courage – the transformation of the ideal of peace into reality. One wonders what David Ben-Gurion thought of the prophecy of Zachariah, which we read on *Shabbat Chanukah*: "Not by might and not by armies but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts." ◊

World Jewish Report

Medina Roy

A Possible Oscar

Among the fifteen films in contention for a best documentary nomination at the next Academy Awards is "Blessed Is the Match: The Life & Death of Hannah Senesh." The film tells the story of Senesh, the Holocaust heroine who was captured and killed by the Nazis after she parachuted into her native Hungary in an attempt to rescue Jews. It's the first time a feature-length documentary has been made about her. The film uses her poetry, diary and personal correspondence to explore her ill-fated rescue operation and is narrated by three-time Oscar nominee Joan Allen, noted for her performances in "Nixon" and "The Crucible". (*The Forward, 11-26-08*)

A Cure for the *Yom Kippur* Headache?

Dr. Zev Wimpfheimer, of Jerusalem's Shaare Zedek Medical Center, and Dr. Michael Drescher, of Hartford Hospital in Connecticut, are evaluating a recently conducted study testing a pill which, taken before a fast, could prevent headaches. Every year when Jews fast for 25 hours to atone for their sins, a significant number of them suffer from headaches. The doctors consulted with rabbis who agreed, saying that headaches caused by fasting take away from the objective – to focus on the spiritual. Should the pill prove effective, the researchers say it could also be of value to Muslims who fast during the 30 days of Ramadan. (*Dateline: World Jewry, December 2008 / January 2009*)

A Trash Dump Worth Visiting

On the outskirts of Tel Aviv, there was a huge, 2,000-acre garbage dump named *Hiriya* and at the center was a 230-foot mound of trash, with daily loads arriving from garbage trucks from around Tel Aviv. But after an intensive national revitalization effort, the trash heap has turned into an eco-tourism attraction and has become *Ayalon Park,* complete with footpaths for hiking. The incoming waste is now sorted by a state-of-the-art recycling facility. When the project is completed, it will rank as one of the largest metropolitan parks in the world and is expected to become a 24-hour destination for recreation in Israel, as well as a learning center designed to educate visitors about recycling and other ecologically friendly practices. Thousands of visitors a day are expected. (*www.treehugger.com, 11-16-08*)

Chronicler of Music Dies

Joza Karas, a Christian Czech musician who collected music composed by Jewish inmates at the Terezin concentration camp, has died. He was 82. He found and salvaged 50 pieces of music; in 1985 he published "Music in Terezin 1941-1945." The book chronicled the musical life at Terezin where as many as four concert orchestras, an opera company and four chamber groups were featured. The camp held more than 140,000 prisoners and the Nazis used the music as a propaganda tool. (*www.jta.org, 12-8-08*)

Another Historic Victory for Israel

For the first time ever, Israel's national chess team medaled at the Chess Olympiad held in Dresden, Germany in late November. The team won the silver medal after a nerve-wracking win over the Netherlands. Armenia took its second consecutive gold medal. "This is a very respectable achievement," Israel Chess Federation President Aviv Bushinsky

said. "Over 140 teams have participated in this Olympiad, that is held once every two years, and during the games, we even beat Armenia, the team that won the gold."(*www.ynetnews.com, 11-26-08*)

Israeli Company Protects the Vatican

Ioimage, an Israeli company and a pioneer and leader in the field of intelligent video appliances, has won a contract, estimated at $4 to $5 million, to protect the Vatican from intruders. The Herzliya-based company took three years to examine the city and determine its needs. "As one of the world's most important sites, the Vatican presented unique challenges," said Boaz Harpez, CEO of Picksec International Group, the system integrator. "The security system had to be extremely reliable 24/7 in very crowded surroundings and under varying weather conditions…After extensive testing of a number of different video analytics products, we found that Ioimage offered the optimal solution for this critical site." (*Press release, www.ioimage.com, 11-18-08*)

***YALDAH* Magazine**

A $100,000 grand-prize in the Wells Fargo Bank "Someday Dreams" contest was awarded to *YALDAH* magazine founder and publisher, 17-year-old Leah Larson and her mother, Evelyn Krieger. The magazine is published by and for Jewish girls. *Yaldah*, the Hebrew word for "girl," is a 48-page quarterly glossy magazine that includes works of fiction, recipes, artwork and mitzvah projects all written, edited and designed by teenage girls. It received more than 28,000 online votes in the final portion of the contest. *YALDAH* has 700 subscribers and a circulation of 1,500, which includes distribution in hundreds of independent bookstores across the country. (*www.jta.org, 12-11-08*)

Another Groundbreaking Medical First

A team of Israeli physicists at Tel Aviv University has come up with an efficient and safe way to close incisions in the skin. Led by Professor Abraham Katzir, the team found a way "to maintain laser heat at the correct temperature so that the incision is sealed to minimize the risk of infection and scars and speed healing." Katzir said that the technology could also be used quickly and easily on the battlefield, at road accidents, and also by plastic surgeons and other surgical specialties. A few months ago, the Health Ministry gave the go-ahead for the first clinical trials in ten gall bladder surgery patients and the results appear to have been successful. The team will now see how the welding technique works on longer incisions, such as Caesarean sections and inguinal hernias. Back in the 1970s, surgeons used a laser to fuse together two flaps of skin but it caused burns and disrupted the skin's ability to heal. "The technique of sewing the human body with needle and thread is an old one that has existed for thousands of years," Katzir said. "Now the time has come to upgrade one of the most common and important procedures in surgery – sealing the two sides of an incision." The medical breakthrough has aroused world interest and can be seen on the MIT website. (*The Jerusalem Post, 11-25-08*)

Presidential Citizens Medals

A solid 25 percent of the recipients of this year's Presidential Citizens Medal, awarded on December 10th, were Jewish men and women. According to a White House news release, the medal was created to "recognize U.S. citizens who have performed exemplary deeds of service for the nation and is one of the highest honors the president can confer upon a civilian, second only to the Presidential Medal of Freedom." The honorees included Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin, co-founders of the "Knowledge is Power" program, a network of college-preparatory public schools in underserved communities; Wendy Kopp, founder of "Teach for America"; Dr. Mitchell Besser, creator of "mothers2mothers," an organization that strives to reduce mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS in Africa; Samuel Heyman, whose "Partnership for Public Service" aims to inspire federal government workers, and Arnold Fisher, creator of the "Intrepid Fallen

Heroes Fund," an organization that provides financial assistance to families of military personnel killed in the war on terror. (*www.jta.org, 12-10-08*)

No Excuses Anymore….

Does the thought of having a colonoscopy scare the living daylights out of you? Or is it the cost of the procedure that keeps you away? Nadir Arber, professor of medicine and gastroenterology at Tel Aviv University's Sackler Faculty of Medicine, says he has developed a "simple, early warning, painless and inexpensive blood test" that detects colon cancer. According to Arber, the blood test can detect cells of colon polyps -- the precursors to colon cancer -- in the blood with a high degree of accuracy. He says that biomarkers emitted by polyps in the colon can be seen in the blood at very low levels, and he refers to recent studies where the test can correctly identify the polyps that convert to colon cancer at a success rate of more than 80 percent. Arber's procedure is being prepared for market by Bio Mark Ltd., and should cost between $50 and $100 per test. (*www.upi.com, 11-21-08*)

A Roll With a Hole

The cement donut, a Jewish English muffin with personality, a roll with a hole – call it what you will, the bagel's history spans three centuries and two continents. In her book, "The Bagel: The Surprising History of a Modest Bread," Maria Balinska details the evolution of what has become an all-American breakfast food. Balinska points out that, contrary to legend, the bagel," was not created in the shape of a stirrup to commemorate the victory of Poland's King Jan Sobieski over the Ottoman Turks in 1683. It was born much earlier in Krakow, Poland, as a competitor to *obwarzanek,* a lean bread made of wheat flour and designed for Lent. In the 16th century and first half of the 17th, a 'golden age for Poland's Jews,' the *bajgiel* became a staple in the national diet." Balinska covers how the bagel has played an integral part in Jewish life. Manhattan's Lower East Side had 70 bakeries in 1900 and, in the 1970s, the Lender brothers built the country's largest bagel factory in Mattoon, Illinois. Today, as customers prefer fresh products, bagel making has become profitable again. (*The Forward, 11-5-08*)

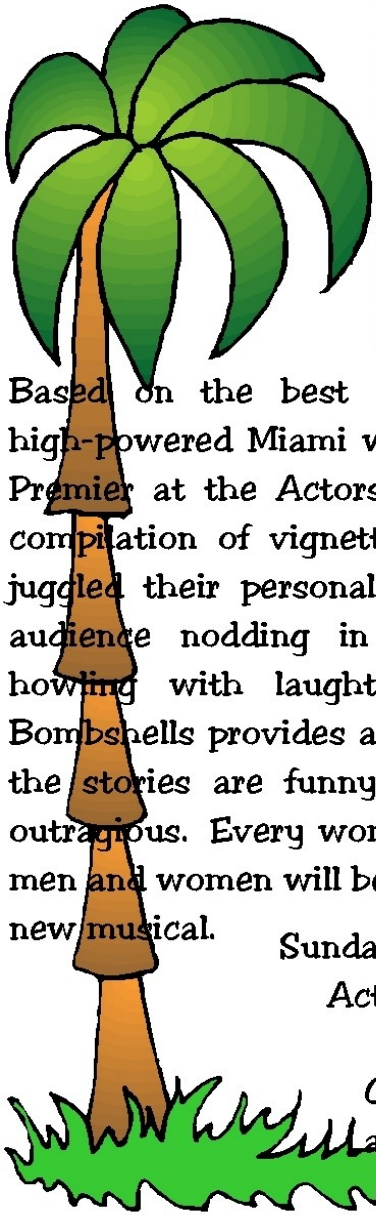
A Special Gift

George Khoury, an Israeli Arab student, was killed by an armed terrorist in 2004 while on his routine evening run through a Jerusalem neighborhood. The murderer mistook him for a Jew. Now, the Khoury family, also from Jerusalem, is memorializing George in a spirit of coexistence. They are funding the translation from Hebrew into Arabic of the Zionist-themed autobiographical novel, "A Tale of Love and Darkness," by Amos Oz. The book is scheduled to be sold in the Israeli-Arab sector with eventual distribution in Egypt and other Arab countries. Oz's works have been favorably received in the Arab-speaking world. (*Dateline: World Jewry, December, 2008 / January 2009*)

Leading Orthodox Thinker Dies at 98

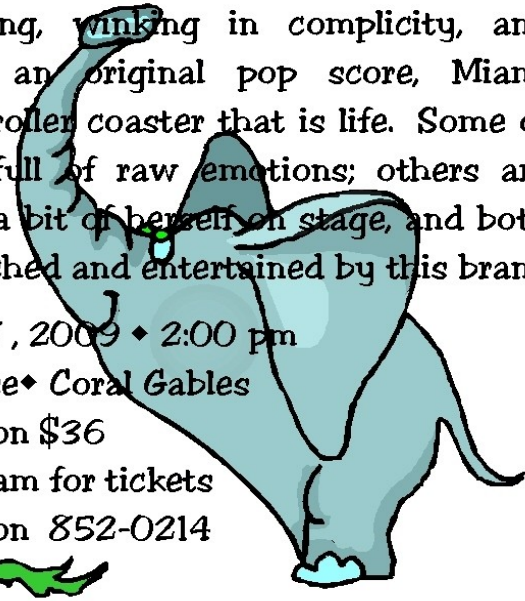
Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, a leading figure in the Orthodox Jewish community, has died at the age of 98. One of his greatest and most controversial achievements was in the area of Jewish law. He was a pioneer in that he was one of the first Orthodox rabbis to take on the plight of *agunot, the* "chained women," whose husbands denied them a *get,* the religious bill of divorce. Rackman was also an early supporter of interdenominational dialogue and was one of the first rabbis to travel to the Soviet Union to bring attention to the plight of Jewish refuseniks. Rabbi Rackman was a military chaplain in the U.S. Air Force during World War II and was president of both the New York Board of Rabbis and the Rabbinical Council of America and became provost of Yeshiva University. In his later years, he was named president of Bar Ilan University in Israel. Moshe Kaveh, president of Bar Ilan said, "The University and the Jewish world have lost a giant of a man whose greatness was derived not only by his intellect, but his passion and sense of social justice." (*World Jewish Congress, 12-4-08*) ◊

Keys Jewish Community Center



MIAMI Bombshells The Musical

Based on the best selling book "Dish and Tell" written by 6 high-powered Miami women, Miami Bombshells celebrates its World Premier at the Actors Playhouse. The musical, like the book, is a compilation of vignettes based on the stories of how the women juggled their personal and professional lives, which will leave the audience nodding in understanding, winking in complicity, and howling with laughter. Set to an original pop score, Miami Bombshells provides a look at the roller coaster that is life. Some of the stories are funny, some are full of raw emotions; others are outrageous. Every woman will see a bit of herself on stage, and both men and women will be moved, touched and entertained by this brand new musical.



Sunday, January 18 , 2009 ◆ 2:00 pm
Actors Playhouse◆ Coral Gables
Donation $36
Call Bea Graham for tickets
and information 852-0214

November 29, 2008

Dear KJCC,

Greetings from chilly Boston! I hope you all are enjoying the beginning of your Holiday Season. As the ground begins to freeze, I look forward to the onset of another beautiful winter, along with the inevitable pounds of clothing that accompany it everyday.

Another semester is winding down here at MIT. This semester, although challenging, was another successful learning experience. I am getting ready for my final exams in German III, Introduction to Neuroscience, Probability and Statistics for Brain and Cognitive Sciences, and Physics 2: Electricity and Magnetism. This semester I was really able to throw myself into my major, Brain and Cognitive Sciences, and began classes that I truly enjoy. My Intro to Neuroscience class covers everything from action potentials of neurons to how senses work and has completely changed the way that I view the world surrounding me.

In addition to my book studies, I have the opportunity to work in Earl Miller's Lab as an Undergraduate Research Assistant with a Post-Doc Primary Investigator on his Memory Capacity Limitation Project. I am training a monkey called Sid. By asking the monkey to memorize a number of objects on a computer screen, we will be able to find out about memory capacity, where short-term memory is stored, and then apply it to the human brain. This learning experience has been invaluable in showing me a possible future path in research.

As much as I enjoy my time at the lab, I have decided to pursue a career in medicine. I'm hoping to be able to utilize my education to help people overcome brain deficits, such as damage due to strokes, using brain plasticity. Although I realize that I still have a ways to go to achieving this goal, I am taking baby steps in that direction. I am hoping to find an internship this summer in the Boston area working at a stroke rehabilitation center. I will keep everyone updated as I make progress on my educational journey.

As Thanksgiving comes and goes, I am reminded of how thankful I am to have the Keys Jewish Community Center, yet again, helping me further my educational aims. I appreciate all of your support. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Enjoy the Holiday Season (as well as the warm weather.)

With much gratitude,

Suzie Greenman

Suzie Greenman

Photo Gallery

Thanksgiving, KJCC-style.

Top, Gloria Avner and Linda Perloff at Linda's sister's beach condo on the Florida west coast. Center and left, Mark, Sofy and Cory Wasser in Gatlinburg, TN, in the Great Smoky Mountains. (Hello? you purposely went and got *cold*?) Right center, Roy Pollack brings the southern-cooked turkey to awaiting parents Linda and Joel. Right bottom, a scene from the extended Steinbock family after dinner.

The Sunday School class took time out from its Chanukah preparation to celebrate Jeri's dad's birthday. If you've never seen a seven-foot, shell-encrusted dreidel or menorah (well, actually a Chanukiah), they're on Lincoln Road on Miami Beach through the end of Chanukah. They were discovered after a Men's Club trip to North Miami Beach to attend the 23rd Israeli Film Festival, where we saw the award-winning "Lost Islands" and then headed for an outdoor café on South Beach. Carol Steinbock is standing next to the dreidel (it actually rotates) with Roger Abramson, the designer and builder. Below left and just above, scenes from a day of creating and experiencing art with Gloria Avner. (Another is upcoming this month. See the notice in Nosh.) Below right, an actual, non-Photoshop photo of Andrea Kluger while home during the Thanksgiving holiday. She's with old friends Taylor Walsh and Shay Danzig. And, yes, they returned the sailfish to its proper home in the water.

Keys Jewish Community Center

Fashion Show Luncheon

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

11:30 am

Outback Steakhouse

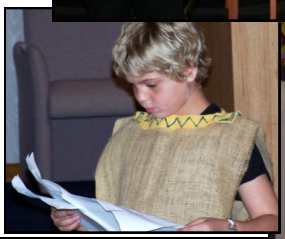
MM 80 Oceanside

Fashions by Angelika

Donation $25

Contact Nettie for information & tickets 852 7283

nseder@bellsouth.net



I wonder what any of us would say if someone asked us today "what did you learn in Hebrew school?" I trust that our students, some years down the line, will remember the language, the prayers, the stories, and the ceremonies, but I also trust that their strongest memories will be of the intangibles, of creativity, confident expression, cooperation, and that something seemingly difficult can be transformed into a delight.

If this year's Chanukah play, Meredith Shaw Patera's *The Chanukah Visitor*, *(which was adapted and VERY patiently directed by the amazing Gloria- -Ed.)*, is any indication, our students will remember they could take their learning, transform it into theater, and outshine their own expectations of themselves. They had fun, improvised, got themselves out of trouble, sang their hearts out, and made laughter ring throughout our sanctuary.

I am confident that "Internal our God" will live long in our memories. Thanks to the brave Stuart Sax, who stepped into the part with little time for rehearsal, to Cory Wasser, who played a wonderful grouch, totally against type, to delightful Rachel Bloom, who made a swell boppin' Ghost, along with Lisa Rutherford, our Chai-lights Editor, as Mom Debbie, and Jane Friedman, Harry's Mom, as Ghost of Chanukah-yet-to-be. Max did a great job with sets, props, and keeping us located with his sign-carrying antics. Hannah, Lili, Harry, Jeri, Moira, Joshua and Zach put their hearts and voices into all they did with infectious enthusiasm. Linda Rutkin and Joyce Peckman were terrific stage managers. And our nearly packed house loved it. It was anything but "mishugas." *-Gloria Avner*

Thanks also to Barbara Knowles, who lent her professional photography skills to some of the pictures you see here.

Keys Jewish Community Center

The most celebrated musical of all time and the longest running musical worldwide, Actors' Playhouse proudly produces the first regional production of Cameron Mackintosh's 3-time Tony Award winning musical theatre masterpiece at the Miracle Theatre. Les MisÈrables is an epic saga of social injustice. Full of passion and the triumph of the human spirit, Les MisÈrables recounts the struggle of the French people during the late 1800's. No matter how many times you've seen Les MisÈrables, its heart-wrenching ballads and powerful ensemble will make for an extraordinary experience for the entire family.

Sunday, March 15, 2009 ◆ 2:00 pm

Donation $40

Call Bea Graham for tickets

and information 852-0214

Chai-Lights Advertising Form/Order sheet

As the only official monthly publication of KJCC, Chai-Lights reaches an exclusive Keys audience. Every effort is made to offer KJCC members a stimulating and informative read. Please consider placing an ad for your business or professional service. If you know of any other business that could benefit from advertising in Chai-Lights, please give them a copy of this form.

Date_____

Sizes available – Check one. Prices posted are for *one full year* of advertising.

1/8 page $120 ____ (business card size) 1/4 page $240 ____

1/2 page $420 ____ Full Page $600 ____

Issue to start ad in Chai-Lights _____

Ad approval given by _____

Information for billing purposes:

Contact Name/title _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ E-mail_____

KJCC Member who submitted this ad _____

--Enclose advertising copy plus any artwork with this form and your payment--

Chai-Lights is published ten times a year. Thank you for your support.

_____

Keys Jewish Community Center, P.O. Box 1332, Tavernier, FL 33070 305-852-5235
E-Mail: chailights@keysjewishcenter.com
For further information on rates or advertising, contact Linda Pollack, 852-8575

A Righteous Gentile in the White House

Earlier this year tapes made by Lyndon Baines Johnson during his White House years were made public. A public presentation of these Oval Office tapes was made at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Surprised? You shouldn't be. Because these tapes provide some of the first public evidence of what a personal and emotional connection this particular president had with Israel.

Johnson may be best remembered as the man who took over when Kennedy was assassinated. Or perhaps people remember him as the president who escalated and got us deeper into the war in Vietnam. But these new tapes help highlight the role LBJ played in laying a strong foundation of U.S. support for the fledgling state of Israel.

The main quote from the tapes that so many find amazing comes from March of 1968, when President Johnson says in a conversation with his ambassador to the United Nations, Arthur Goldberg: "I sure as hell want to be careful and not run out on little Israel." On June 25th, 1967, just about three weeks after Israel defeated three Arab armies (Egypt, Jordan and Syria), one of Johnson's recorded conversations hears him state that Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin questioned his support of Israel. Said Johnson, "He couldn't understand why we'd want to support the Jews, three million people, when there are one hundred million Arabs. I told him that numbers do not determine what was right.

"I sure as hell want to be careful and not run out on little Israel."

We tried to do what was right regardless of the numbers."

It turns out with further research that Johnson would continue to "do what was right" regardless. He was a life-long friend and ally to the Jewish people, and his support went well beyond the bureaucratic and into the very-hands-on saving of Jewish lives during the Second World War. Historians have begun to uncover proof of Johnson's loyalties and actions back to his childhood.

Johnson's inherited his concern for the Jewish people from his family. His aunt Jessie Johnson Hatcher, who was a major influence on LBJ, was a member of the Zionist Organization of America. Johnson's paternal grand-

father and several of his other relatives were Christadelphians – fundamentalist Christians who believed the Jews would return to Palestine and create a new Jewish state. His grandfather "Big Sam" and his father "Little Sam" would seek clemency for Leo Frank, the Jewish victim of a false rape charge in Atlanta. In one of the most famous cases of overt anti-Semitism in America, Frank was eventually lynched by a mob in 1915, and the Ku Klux Klan in Texas threatened to kill the Johnsons for their loyalty to him. Later in life Johnson would often cite Frank's lynching as the source of his opposition to both anti-Semitism and isolationism. He has been quoted as remembering his grandfather admonishing him to "Take care of the Jews...consider them your friends and help them in any way you can."

In 1934, four years before Chamberlain's Munich sellout to Hitler, a young Johnson was courting Claudia Taylor, who would become "Lady Bird." Lyndon gave her a book as an engagement present: "Nazism: An Assault on Civilization." Maybe it wasn't the most romantic of gestures, but it was a clear indication that Johnson cared about what was transpiring in Depression-era Europe.

In 1937, just five days after taking office as a Congressman from Texas, Johnson supported an immigration bill that would naturalize illegal aliens, mostly Jews from Lithuania and Poland. In 1938 he learned that Erich Leinsdorf, a young Austrian Jewish musician, was about to be deported from the United States. In a move that was a bit under the radar, Johnson sent Leinsdorf to the U.S. consulate in Havana to obtain a residency permit. (Leinsdorf credits Johnson for saving his life.) That same year Jim Novy, a Jewish friend of Johnson's, says that LBJ warned him that European Jews were facing annihilation. Novy says that Johnson gave him a stack of signed immigration papers that were then used to get 42 Jews out of Warsaw. And according to historian James Smallwood, that was just the beginning. As a congressman, Johnson used legal and also somewhat shady means to smuggle "hundreds of Jews into Texas, using Galveston as the entry port. Enough money could buy false passports and fake visas in Cuba, Mexico and other Latin American countries." Smallwood says that Johnson smuggled boatloads and planeloads of Jews into Texas, and then hid them in the Texas National Youth Administration. He says that by his count, Johnson saved at least four to five hundred Jews this way, and possibly more he cannot account for.

"You have lost a very great friend, but you have found a better one."

On June 4th, 1945, Johnson visited Dachau. Lady Bird later recalled that when he returned home, he was "shaken, stunned, terrorized and bursting with an overpowering revulsion and incredulous horror at what he had seen." For the next decade, as he served in the Senate, Johnson consistently blocked anti-Israeli initiatives and continued to show concern for the Jewish people. In 1963, soon after taking office as President, Johnson told an Israeli diplomat that he "had lost a very great friend," (meaning Kennedy), but that "you have found a better one." Just one month after succeeding Kennedy, Johnson attended the dedication of the Agudas Achim Synagogue in Austin. Lady Bird would later recall of the day that "person after person plucked at my sleeve and said 'I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for him. He helped me get out.' Jews had been woven into the warp and woof of all Lyndon's years."

It seems as though the rest of the world is now finding out just how much Johnson meant to the Jewish people and to a fledgling Israel during his political career. The annual Jerusalem conference announced in September that it intends to honor Lyndon Baines Johnson in February of 2009. ◊

Our thanks to Marc Bloom for suggesting this article.

The Best Things in Life are Free?

Well, Maybe Just This One Thing…

by Liati Mayk

Liati's June 2008 group enjoying the Haas Promenade in Jerusalem.

Most of us believe that nothing in life comes for free—and if something does, we are skeptical about it and ask: What's the catch? How can this be possible? Who can afford to give something away? And 99.9 percent of the time these are valid questions; their answers usually prove our initial assumption—that nothing, certainly nothing of great or lasting value, comes for free.

Then came Taglit-Birthright Israel: FREE 10-day peer group, educational trips to Israel for Jewish young adults ages 18-26 from all over the world. These complimentary, fun-packed and eye-opening group tours even have a variety of trip themes to accommodate different personalities, interests, streams of Judaism and levels of observance.

For the past three years, I've had the wonderful opportunity to volunteer for one of the Taglit-Birthright Israel trip organizers, Israel Outdoors. Each summer, for ten days, I pack a suitcase and join a group of forty young Jews, 18-26 years old, to guide them through Israel as their American peer leader. In addition to an Israeli tour guide, bus driver and medic/guard, each Birthright trip usually has two or more American peer staff members who serve as liaisons between the Israeli staff and the participants. Our job is to bridge the American-Israeli religious, social, cultural and linguistic gaps—to make the trip run as smoothly as possible and to make sure that we don't lose anyone along the way.

Staffing these trips has been an enriching experience for me. Not only do I have a means to share my knowledge and passion about Israel and Judaism, but witnessing the participants' "firsts" in Israel also gives me the chance to re-encounter and re-evaluate my country, history and faith with new eyes.

Who goes? More accurately, who doesn't? Sometimes it's just college kids, but the older trips are full of lawyers, journalists, grad students, businessmen and women, social workers, and med students. (Actually, there's a special trip for med students. Insert your favorite Jewish doctor joke here.)

Like its name suggests, Israel Outdoors is geared towards the active, fresh-air-loving type, and our trips try to spend as much time in the open air as possible. From North to South and East to West, the Birthright trip is packed with opportunities to encounter the many faces of Israel and offers enough diverse options for each participant to find a favorite place, experience or activity. For example, in only ten days we would likely (sample itinerary) kayak on the Upper Jordan River, go wine tasting in the Carmel, take a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee, hike *Nachal Jilaboun*, ride camels in the desert, visit *Yad Vashem*, listen to a Holocaust survivor's testimony, stroll through the Old City of Jerusalem, sleep at local kibbutzim, shop on Ben Yehuda Street, hike and watch the sunrise on Masada, float in the Dead Sea, wade in the *Ein Gedi* natural freshwater pools, eat and sleep in a Bedouin tent, become friends with Israeli soldiers (who join our group), dig for archeo-

On a 2007 hike in the Banyas Nature Reserve, with fellow staff members.

logical artifacts at Beit Govrin, pay our respects to late luminaries such as Rabin, Herzl, and the poet Rachel, learn about and celebrate Shabbat and finally, my favorite, enjoy a night on the town or a day at the beach in Israel's cosmopolitan center, Tel Aviv. (All in ten days.)

If our tight schedule allows, sometimes I get to play tour guide for a few hours and share my academic research with the group, leading them on a historical journey through *Neve Tzedek,* one of the first urban settlements outside of Jaffa (1887) that became a building block for the city of Tel Aviv. And, once again, it's all for free!

What is the hidden agenda? Taglit-Birthright Israel is hoping to achieve a few fundamental goals. This quote on their website summarizes the grand vision of the program's founders (I share this vision) and donors: to diminish the growing division between Israel and Jewish communities around the world; to strengthen the sense of solidarity among world Jewry; and to strengthen participants' personal Jewish identity and connection to the Jewish people.

For more information about the Birthright Israel experience, please visit: www.birthrightisrael.com

Registration for Summer 2009 trips begins in February. Be sure to register as early as possible since the trips fill up quickly. Not the outdoor type? There are trips for many different interests: political, environmental, photographic, art, and many more. (One last time: *it's free*).

Now, you may be thinking: "I can barely afford the cost of my daily commute—who can afford to pay for the hefty travel costs of thousands of Jewish teens and twenty-somethings each year?" The answer is that the funding of Taglit-Birthright Israel is a joint effort of the following people, organizations and governmental bodies: private philanthropists through the Birthright Israel Foundation; the people of Israel through the Government of Israel; and Jewish communities around the world—United Jewish Communities (UJC), *Keren Hayesod* and the Jewish Agency for Israel. Do the last names Bronfman, Lauder, Steinhardt, or Wexner ring a bell? Well, if you ever cross paths with one (which is very likely in Manhattan), remember to say thank you for making this amazing experience possible.

Fittingly, the Hebrew word "taglit" means

discovery—it is an invitation to discover the wonders of the country of Israel: its history, archeology, geography, topography, religions, language and culture. It is a chance to discover over forty new friends. It is also an opportunity for invaluable self-discovery. But, tell me, is it really free? Well, I guess it would be more correct to say that the experience of Birthright is actually priceless. Oh—and like any other service you enjoy, tipping your staff is always recommended. ◊

Liati Mayk is a Ph.D candidate in Jewish literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and also runs the Jewish Feminist Research Group. Her previous article for Chai-Lights was about the historic Jewish presence in Vilnius, Lithuania, in our November 2007 issue.

KJCC Annual Second Passover Seder

Reservations will be taken for members only until March 30th at which time they will be opened for others. Send your check early to confirm your place. Call Leslie at 852-3654 for information and reservations.

Thursday, April 9, 2009

6:30 pm

Islamorada Fishing Club

Adults $40

Children 12 and under are our guests.

In One Year... And Out The Other

(Unless You Are Jewish--And Then There Are Four)

by Gloria Avner

We humans have a predilection for novelty. We tire of the known, even as we resist change. Time gives us markers to hang our behavioral hats on, to gather energy, to make note of changes around, within, and outside ourselves. In other words, it orients us and calls for response. In the secular world, the marker happens once a year, with great fanfare and noise. Some of us use that global energy to support resolutions for behavior modification, intending to improve. Some just like to party.

The Jewish take on New Year is different; we observe *four* of them every single year. Each has its own energy and purpose and points the way to our time-bound *mitzvot*. Here is some food for thought (it won't cause weight gain or the breaking of resolutions).

In the beginning (*bereshit*), Jewish time emerged, as God imposed order on chaos. Light was differentiated from darkness and we had the unit "day" (*yom*). With the completion of creation, we were gifted with Shabbat and the time unit "week" (*shavuah*). After Exodus from Egypt, God commanded through Moshe that the Israelites mark the new moon of Nissan as the first month, observing and creating a monthly and yearly cycle. Marking the exact beginning of the new moon required witnesses and regulation. All else depended upon it.

Jewish law is nothing if not comprehensive, inclusive, and complex. We have to know when holidays are to be observed so that time-bound obligations are appropriately fulfilled, so that laws and contracts and cyclical uses of land and ownership are controlled for the greater good. We needed boundaries and markers for all of it and one size did not fit all. In the Talmud, *Mishnah Rosh HaShanah* 1:1 specifies the Four Jewish New Years as *1 Tishrei, 15 Shevat, 1 Nisan,* and *1 Elul.*

The first of *Tishrei*, *Rosh HaShanah*, marked the beginning of the civil year and the reckoning of foreign kings' reigns for calculating legal documents. This New Year, celebrating the "Birthday of the World," best known to us as the time for the blowing of the *shofar* and all the prayers and introspection that go with it, is also the time for setting the *Shemida* year, the Sabbatical for the land in which no cultivation is permitted. From here is also where the Jubilee year is determined and with it the freeing of slaves.

Then comes *Tu B'Shvat*, a favorite here among our students. We honor the "New Year for the Trees" with celebration of the seasons, growth, and gratitude, by eating the new fruits and saying blessings over them. Many of you have celebrated the mystical tradition of the *Tu B'Shvat seder* with us.

The third celebrates "Sanctification of the New Moon" (*Kiddush Ha-Chodesh*), the first *mitzvah* given to *B'nei Yisrael*, *Nisan*. It truly *was* our first month, our first as a "people," who up until then were really proto-Jews, not yet having the Torah or the *mitzvot* as tribal glue and guide.

And then there is the last New Year, *Elul 1*, calculating tithing of cows, sheep, and goats. I used to pass over this one, thinking it irrelevant. However, knowing how much meaning I have begun to find in *parshot* and laws that I had previously skimmed, I looked for what I had overlooked, and found it. Here is where I

begin to see why I care about the Jewish New Years.

Jewish people take care of their own. We have been doing it for millennia. The laws, the time-bound celebrations, simply insure continuity by formalizing and formula-izing. Some of our tribe(s) owned land and grew crops. Some kept herds. Some were artisans. And some, the Levis and the Cohens, kept ceremony. Teachers had no land. They traveled to where they were needed. They performed the rites that kept the world in balance while the rest of us did what we needed to do to feed our families and prosper. So we tithed in days of old; today we pay salaries. (When stock markets related only to livestock, the recipients may have been better off.) And of course we give *tzedakah*.

Here is one reason why I care about our succession of New Years: The ancients knew great secrets and they carefully passed them down, in ever-deeper layers hidden beneath the words. They knew that the energy associated with a specific season and biblical event could be accessed again when the time came around.

The energy associated with spring and Passover, for example, is always about freedom. This is the time when universal energies can help us free ourselves from that which enslaves us, be it bad habits or stultifying situations. *Tisha B'Av*, on the other hand, will always be a time of mourning, destruction, and sorrow, the time when both Temples were destroyed and countless other afflictions occurred.

Heraclitus said you cannot step into the same river twice. But he was not Jewish. Our calendar is linear but also cyclical. Time is a river of endless possibility. It flows eternally, always new, and yet it flows in cycles. Most cultures, especially modern ones, don't learn much from, or even remember, their history. We know to what they are condemned.

I, for one, am grateful that our ancestors noticed what they noticed, and noted it in ways that we, treading slippery ground millennia later, can, if we choose, say "Yes! This is happening for me as well. And this is how I can make the best of it, for myself, my tribe, and all around me."

All the tribal cultures that lived close to the earth noticed how the elements of nature affected them. They did their best to mollify nature and derive the most harmonic existence possible by prayer, ceremony, and sacrifice. Their rites are still with us, at least nominally, in the form of solstices and equinoxes. But we, the Jewish people, are the only ancient, tribal, earth-based culture still intact

Why should I, or you, or anyone else, care that Jews observe 4 or 5 New Years' as opposed to the secular world's mere one? The Dalai Lama cared. He invited an assortment of Jews to Dharamsala, India, some 20 years ago, so that he could find some insights on how to keep a culture in exile intact and viable. (Recommended reading: "The Jew in the Lotus" by Mark Kamanetz.)

I love that we have not lost the primal awe of nature's cycles, that we have brought much of what was the best of tribal culture into a world our ancestors could not have imagined, and that the rules laid down for us in sacred oral transmission and writings still give us access to that primal world, to the energies of each season, and still provide a guide to repairing ourselves and the world.

That which sometimes sounds so dry--the emphasis on numbers, calculations, rules, and rite-related minutiae--is, I believe, the equivalent of the dew and the rain and the sun in proper season, proper measure. It is a life jacket. It allowed us, unlike any other culture of ancient times, to walk into a future of constant, unimaginable change, hatred, and obstacles, and remain identifiable as a people with both gifts and responsibility, a *mishpocha* with faults and foibles, all of which are never too late to be corrected. In fact, that is our mission.

As we raise champagne glasses and pucker up on December 31st, let's make all the resolutions we desire, but let's also drink a toast to Torah, Talmud--the priceless wisdom to which we have eternal access--and to the New Years yet to come.

Nu? ◊

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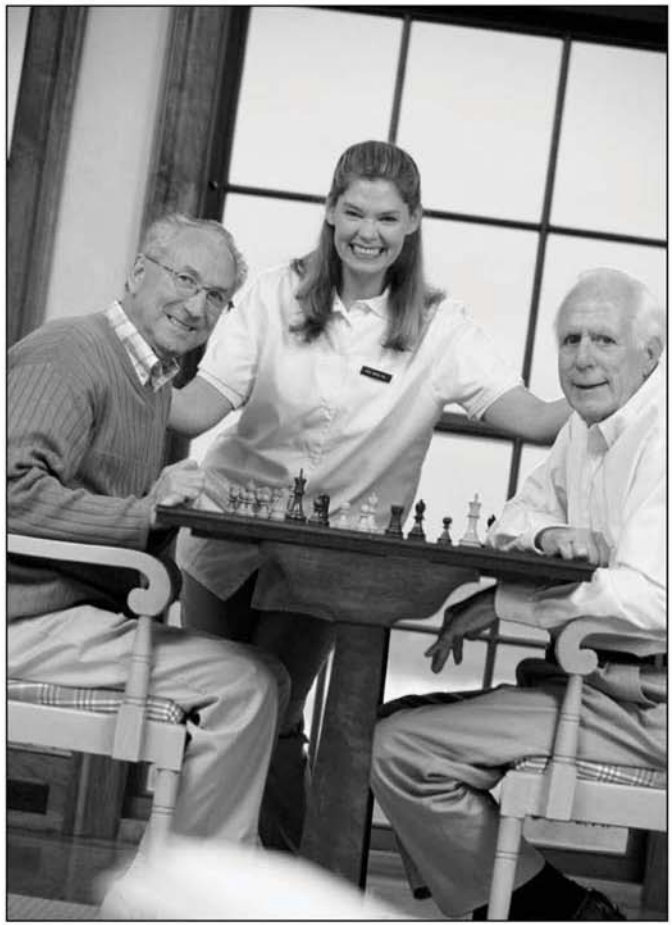

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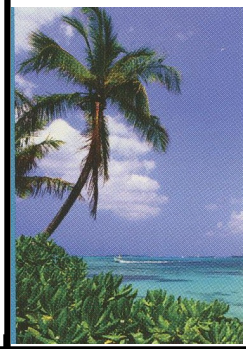

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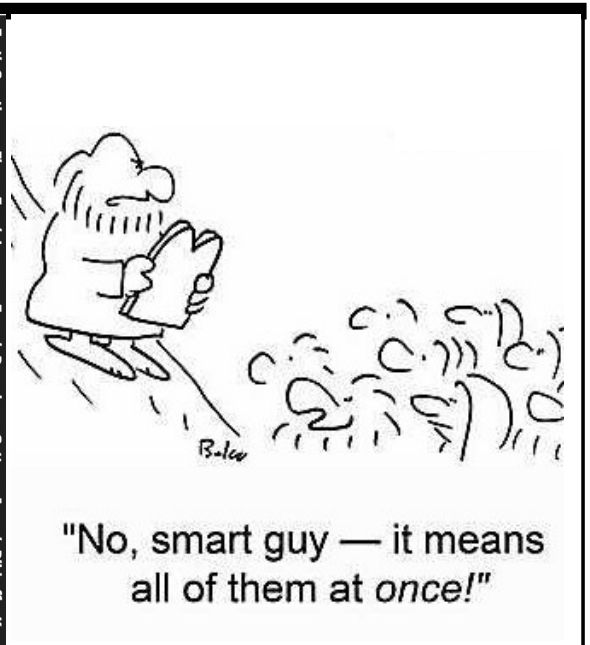

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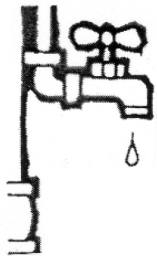

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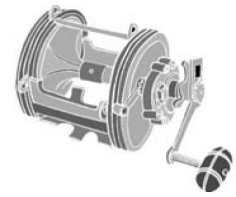

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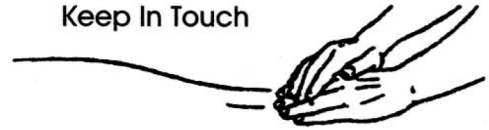

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