

Chai~Lights



February 2017

5 Shevat - 2 Adar 5777

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Keys Jewish Community Center

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

February 2017

5 Shevat - 2 Adar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3 Dana Grace <i>Erica Lieberman-Garrett</i>	4 Film Fest Film 7 p.m. "The Band's Visit"
5 Sisterhood meeting 10 a.m.	6	7	8	9	10 Steve Hartz & Sydney Fields <i>Elaine Solas</i>	11 Rabbi Agler Torah Service 10 a.m. Film—"Lemon Tree" 7 pm
12 Board Meeting 10 a.m. Annual Meeting noon	13	14	15	16	17 Gloria Avner & Sam Vinicur <i>Beth Hayden</i>	18 "Bagels Over Berlin" film 7 p.m. with Alan Feinberg, Director
19	20 President's Day	21	22 Sam & Dave In Concert at KJCC 8 p.m.	23	24 KJCC Sisterhood <i>Susan Ellner</i>	25 Film Fest, "Remember" 7 p.m.
26	27	28				

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President's Message Sam Vinicur



It's thrilling, if but for a trice, to share an insight with one of the great minds. I'm talking, of course, about one of the great *Jewish* minds, perhaps the greatest pure Jewish mind of all: Albert Einstein. (A discussion of his personal behavior is for another time, or for rabbis.)

Time, Einstein famously said, is relative. Is it only bespectacled geniuses with electrified hair who understand this? No, we all do. We may not, observing the old photos, be able to fathom the equations written on the famous blackboard. The underlying concept, though, is one we've all lived: time spent doing something pleasurable goes much faster than time spent in hapless drudgery.

This is my last column from this chair, on this page, in this space. In less than a fortnight – how often does one get to unsheathe that ancient and lovely word? – KJCC will have a whole new configuration of officers and Board members. You'll be in very good shape with the new leadership. Those at the top – Beth Hayden and Gloria Avner – are capable and experienced, learned and versatile. And they not only love KJCC, they love the *idea* of KJCC, this unconventional and vital locus of Jewish life that together we've all imagined, tended and nourished.

This is not the least challenging job I've ever had. KJCC is a richly diverse assortment of educated and accomplished thinkers and doers. (And, yes, with a kibitzer or two and the inevitable mirror-devotee sprinkled in.) But in complex jobs, if you're lucky, you end up earning more than just a proficiency badge. You also find yourself, at some illuminating point, with something more important: perspective. Time is altered, not faster or slower but changed by an appreciation of colors.

I'd like to thank all of you for your trust and occasional indulgence, plus send special oak leaf clusters to my closest allies. I'd also like to ask you to join me in the quiet seat of perspective for a moment.

KJCC is at a special place in its history. Our founders began it with boundless energy and heart. But it's an adult now, no longer a searching and awkward adolescent. As I've said often, there's no "them" at KJCC. There's only "us." We have a rhythm here, and a vibrant culture. We have never been stronger, or as wonderfully active. Yet the future needs constant tending. Please consider how that future can be midwived (or husbanded, same concept) by you. Our KJCC is a living thing. It will always need an arm, an ear, a hand. And your love.

Nosh

Sam and Dave – The Concert

Is Wednesday, February 22nd, 8:00 p.m., circled in red on your calendar? Three years ago, when Dave Feder and Friends played here, the concert sold out. We're expecting a repeat, for a very different kind of performance.

Known and loved throughout our archipelago for his many years of fine entertainment and generous support of charitable causes of all description, Dave will be playing solo this year (with a few great exceptions). We'll get to hear his delightful



patter plus compositions old and new. His evolving versatility and virtuosity amaze us.

This year we'll have another renowned

solo artist sharing billing and the stage. Help us give a warm welcome to Sam Weis, nationally acclaimed 12-string guitarist whose original pieces feel like narratives of shifting landscape for the ear and mind. She brings an ethereal but substantive bell-like quality to her music. It's original and it takes you places. We like to hear her sing too.

None of us have any idea of what will happen when these two different types of music come together, but we can't wait. These two fine musicians and good friends can't, either.

Remember, it is not too late to become a supporting Sponsor (for a contribution of \$250) or an Angel (for a donation of \$500). Don't miss what will surely be a memorable evening. For information, tickets, details about the benefits of being and Angel or Sponsor and opportunities to

be special contributors, call or write Linda Kaplan at (305) 396-7000 or lk@lindakaplan.com.

Thanks to Michael & Lorena

Let's have a standing ovation. KJCC is teaming up with Michael and Lorena Kaufman – a brand new movie production partnership. In memory of their moms, Lucy Kaufman and Celeste Bravo Mendez, their family is generously underwriting our new *First Annual KJCC Moms Memorial Winter Film Fest*, an exciting array of well-directed and engaging movies with diverse Jewish-content-related themes. From drama to documentary to thriller to laugh-out-loud comedy, the series, put together by Adult Education Chair Medina Roy and her committee, will assure that you never lack for stimulating weekend entertainment this season. (Please see the poster with February's schedule on page 30.) Get ready now for the first February film, set for Saturday, the 4th, at 7:00 p.m., a delightful saga about the hidden gifts of getting lost in strange terrain titled "The Band's Visit." It has sub-titles, so bring your glasses. (You really don't want to miss any of these movies. Date night should not be a conflict. Bring your date, apologize for not being able to offer popcorn in the sanctuary, stress our great a/v system and tell them we are famous for fabulous treats afterwards). See you at the flicks.

New Members

KJCC warmly welcomes our newest members, Jeff and Cheryl Margulies (no relation to Stan and Jenny), from Homestead. We hope we'll enrich you as much as your presence enriches us.

"Bagels Over Berlin"

In a season full of special events, and terrific films, one somehow stands out above the others. On Saturday evening, February 18th, at 7:00 p.m., KJCC will be offered a special screening of "Bagels Over Berlin," a film by Alan Feinberg about American Jews who joined the Army Air Corps in World War II to fight the Nazis. And Mr. Feinberg himself will be here to screen the film and lead a discussion afterwards. How often do any of us get the chance to discuss a film with its producer/director?

February Birthdays

1st.....	Libby Shapiro
1st.....	Roy Pollack
2nd.....	Jackson Brandon Lebofsky
3rd.....	Dick Bromwich
3rd.....	Leslie Janowitz
5th.....	Rebecca Smith Strasser
6th.....	Evan Harvey
6th.....	Martin Field
7th.....	Erica Lieberman-Garrett
7th.....	Larry Jacobs
9th.....	Linda Pincus
9th.....	Ron Garrett
12th.....	Johnny Knowles
12th.....	Paul Roberts
13th.....	Jerrold Benowitz
14th.....	Debbie Madnick
15th.....	Judith Weber
18th.....	Beth Hayden
21st.....	David J. Marmar
22nd.....	Harry Friedman
22nd.....	Tomar Gross
23rd.....	Sienna Rose Lebofsky
24th.....	Muriel Swartz
24th.....	Suzie Greenman
25th.....	Rita Conklin
26th.....	Jim Williams
26th.....	John D. Schur

Oneg Sponsors for February 2017

February 3rd - Erica Lieberman-Garrett to celebrate her birthday.
February 10th - Elaine Solas
February 17th - Beth Hayden in honor of her birthday.
February 24th - Susan Ellner in honor of the Sisterhood Service.

Contact Renee About Onegs

From now on, new Sisterhood co-president Renee Salant will be the one to contact regarding sponsorship of KJCC's weekly onegs. (Beth is about to have a big new job.) Renee's phone is 206-730-8002, e-mail reneesam@mac.com.

February Anniversaries

	Years
9th Uri & Liliam Kamely.....	25

Rabbi Agler's Service and the Evening Film

February 10th through 12th will mark a big weekend at KJCC. Friday night we will have services led by Steve Hartz and his niece, Sydney Fields.

Saturday morning, starting promptly at 10:00 a.m., a Torah service will be led by Rabbi Richard Agler, our incomparable and stimulating Resident Scholar. You won't want to miss a minute of this two-hour period of engaging discussion, Torah chanting, and warm Shabbat interactive learning. (Have a friend or neighbor who hasn't joined because they think rabbis are boring, or that the Torah is just fairy tales and unfathomable "thou shalts?") Bring them along with the promise that another world awaits.)

On Saturday evening, at 7:00 p.m., the next feature in KJCC's Film Series will present "Lemon Tree," a dramatic, well-acted Hebrew film (with English subtitles) which echoes the themes of *Tu B'Shvat*, the Birthday/New Year of the Trees. (See the review on Page 41.) A short sweet Havdalah service will be held before the film and there will be refreshments afterwards.

KJCC Luncheon Meets Tu B'Shvat

When KJCC has a lot going on, we get creative. Especially when all that is going on is happening at the same time as one of our favorite Jewish holidays (and last of the four New Years'). On Sunday, February 12th, at 10:00 a.m., there is a Board meeting at which the new slate of officers for 2017-2018 will be presented for the mandated second time. At noon there is meeting of the full KJCC membership to vote on the slate and to install the officers. After installation, which will be conducted this year by Susan Ellner, we will reassemble in the Social Hall for our customary Annual Installation Luncheon.

Now here comes the "but." Yes, but Sunday, February 12th is also *Tu B'Shvat*, the day we ordinarily celebrate the New Year of the Trees by blessing every kind of fruit that grows in Israel. (The format we use, re-enacting a seder, was initiated by the mystics of Tzfat in the 16th century.) It's the day we usually all celebrate with our children in the schoolroom, and it's the day they (with our help) typically plant trees. We love *Tu B'Shvat* and just can't bring ourselves to omit this treasured activity because there's too much going on. Instead, we adjust. We will have a brief but meaningful mini-seder right before the lunch

eon. We will sing *Shehechyanu*, bless the fruits, honor the earth, drink wine, share a short story, and then have a great lunch thanks to Sisterhood.

When lunch is over, whoever wants to can go outside and help water the trees planted by Mort Silverman. We can even sing and dance to the water song: "Mayim." And our children will still have their seder, but earlier during class time; if any virtual *sabas* and *savtas* want to join them, speak to Randy Klein-Gross or Susan Gordon. It will be a very full, organic kind of day, and will last just the right amount of time. See you there.

Ongoing Projects and Mitzvah Programs of KJCC

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

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

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

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

ONEG SHABBAT SPONSOR: To schedule your special date with Sisterhood, call Renee Salant at 206-730-8002 or email her at reneesam@mac.com.

KJCC TREE OF LIFE LEAVES and ROCKS, SANCTUARY SEAT PLATES, YAHRZEIT MEMORIAL PLAQUES: Call Linda Pollack, 305-852-8575 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 Pollack, 305-852-8575, to make your donation.

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

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

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

In Memoriam February 2017

In Memory Of

Sara J. Cohen

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In Memory Of

David C. Willner

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

In Memory Of

Ann R. Kapulskey

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

In Memory Of

Morris Feinberg

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

In Memory Of

Morris I. Estrin

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In Memory Of

Samuel Wolfe

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MISHEBERACH – A PRAYER FOR HEALING

The 18th Century Jewish Mystic Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, wrote:

God of wholeness,
God of healing,
Hear our words,
Accept our prayers; Send a special blessing
Of healing
To (name) son/daughter of
(mother's name),
among all those of Your children
who are in need of
Your healing blessing

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.

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Sisterhood

Sam Weis and Renee Salant



Renee and I want to get to know you all better, and want you to get to know us. Sometimes it seems like we just dropped out of the sky and landed in Is-lamorada. It may well have happened just like that. But we have all been having very interesting lives, and it would be wonderful to learn about them. Sisterhood offers many opportunities to get to know each other. Preparing for a dinner or an oneg, tidying up the kitchen after a meeting, or driving someone to errands, all create a chance to chat and laugh and learn. We'll talk more about all that later. Right now let's take a look at February.

If you look at the calendar, February looks pretty tame, but those few events are large and wonderful. Working backwards, let's start with the 24th. Sisterhood will be leading services that Friday. Hopefully, this will inspire more Sisterhood members to lead a service at another time, too.

I am compelled here to briefly mention February 22nd. This is not a Sisterhood event. However, one of Sisterhood's co-presidents is a major part of that event. That is the KJCC Fundraiser Concert featuring David Feder and me, Sam Weis. This is an opportunity to hear and see two important composers/guitarists on their home turf. David and I offer you extremely different musical styles, which will make for a lively evening. Be an Angel (of the sponsorship sort) and you will get to attend the pre-concert soiree being putting together. The prosecco and cassis alone is worth it.

We will also have some delightful onegs this month. February 3rd is sponsored by Erica so we can properly celebrate her birthday with her. February 10th is being sponsored by Elaine Solas. And Beth Hayden, our incoming KJCC President, will sponsor February 17th, celebrating her birthday.

The month of *Shevat* brings us *Tu B'Shevat*, traditionally a celebration of trees. Does

this give us a clue as to the importance of trees? Ironically, I am writing this column from the farm Renee and I have in Western Washington State, where I am working for two weeks pruning our orchards. The trees in our care are nine apple varieties, five pear varieties, and figs. Cherries, plum, and Asian pear require less work, but do like an admiring eye. Right now, as I look up from my computer, I see towering sixty-foot cedar trees, eighty-foot hemlock trees, ninety-foot fir trees and six-foot-diameter vine maple trees. This really does demand celebration. And all around us in the Keys are the buttonwoods and mangroves, protecting our wee bit of land from the wind and water. But, additionally, in modern times *Tu B'Shevat* has also become a celebration of ecology and environmental awareness. This is a perfect time to consider the impact on our environment that each of us has. Maybe using less plastic. Maybe riding a bike to do errands instead of driving the car. Maybe buying an electric car when it's trade-in time. Pick up litter when you see it. Plant a tree, compost your kitchen waste, water your flowers with air-conditioner condensate.

What does this have to do with Sisterhood? Frankly, I'm having a bit of jet lag, and my mind may be wandering a little astray. But, here's the thing. It is to consider that being a member of Sisterhood gives one the opportunity to do something bigger than oneself. You get to help feed your larger family. You get to serve by participating in services to whatever degree you are able. The KJCC Sisterhood is mindfulness and compassion in action. Renee and I are so glad to be part of this, and we hope you feel that way, too.

Have a healthy and happy month. Do good work. Shalom. ♦

A Siman Tov, A Mazel Tov: *Mitch and Linda Get Married*

All weddings have back-stories. There are prior relationships, engagements, months and sometimes years of planning, reservations to be made, parents – or children – to be assuaged, sampling of venues and dresses and menus, oh my.

But this one, Mitch and Linda's wedding, was one beyond the bounds of predictability and formality, a match made in heaven, *bashert* (Yiddish for "meant to be"), heartbreaking and heartwarming, all at the same time, with no time to waste. They spoke to Rabbi Zucker, the Kabbalah teacher totally responsible for their meeting and getting to know one another. With his guidance, they began a ten-day plan of preparation, the minimum required for a traditional Jewish wedding. (Linda speaks in a tone of awe when she says how new and yet how meaningful both the intensely detailed cleansing process and the ritual ceremony itself, including circling the groom seven times, was for her.)

What do we do when we hear this? We rejoice – for them, and for the marvelously serendipitous fact that Dave Mason's band bus got stuck in the snow on its way to play their concert in Key West, the concert that had given Mitch Harvey, Linda Perloff and a few close friends,



Sydney! Faye-Davis among them, the idea to drive down to Key West that day in the first place.

And when your initial reason for being in



Key West is cancelled? You say *thank you*, Dave Mason, and you get some extra rest before your big moment. Rabbi Zucker takes charge and manifests a cohort of Israeli *minyan*-makers. An assortment of oldest and dearest friends magically appears. Bring on the *chuppah*, gold rings, the *ketubah* (a beautifully calligraphied traditional – and ancient – marriage contract written in Aramaic), a bouquet of white flowers and a wine glass to crush. The "something borrowed"

is a skirt of Linda's dear friend Sherry. The rest is all smiles, wild dancing, hugging and kissing, and of course there is *bobka*.

KJCC friends and well-wishers, know that there will be a party in the near future. In the meantime, let's wish our newlyweds a hearty *mazel tov* and *siman tov*! Remember the words we read with Rabbi Agler at the beginning of every one of his Shabbat morning services. Celebrating with bride and groom is one of the *mitzvot* that you cannot do too much of. May your days and nights, Mitch and Linda, be many and filled with the joy of being together. We love you. ✧

—Gloria Avner



World Jewish Report

Medina Roy



“A Moral Need to Reveal the Truth”

From 1948 to 1954, Israel’s early years as an independent state, hundreds of babies of families – most of them from Yemen – mysteriously disappeared during the massive wave of immigration at that time. In the majority of cases, the parents were told in the hospital that their children had died. The parents never saw the bodies of their infants, never received any type of official confirmation that the children had died and were never able to locate the graves. For decades, about 1,000 of these immigrant families have lived with doubts and deep distrust of Israeli authorities. They believe that their children were the victims of a systematic scheme to kidnap babies from Israeli hospitals and put them up for adoption to childless couples from elite Ashkenazi families both in Israel and abroad. For the most part, these claims by the parents were dismissed by the authorities. But at the end of December, the Israeli government opened an online database from the state archives of some 200,000 pages of declassified documents – just half of the 400,000 documents generated by three investigative committees – about the missing Yemenite children of the 1950s. The archives opened thousands of case files containing original background materials collected by the committees, among them hospital records, death certificates, photos and personal testimonies. “Today, we right a historic wrong,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on the day of the release of the documents. “For close to 60 years people did not know the fate of their children.” Tzachi Hanegbi, Israel’s Minister for Regional Cooperation, approved the declassification of the documents after Netanyahu charged him with reexamining the evidence presented in the three previous inquiries. (Which had concluded that there was no systematic abduction of children for adoption

and that most of the children had simply died, but the families did not believe them. This new investigation and public release of documents also overturned a 2001 decision to seal the documents until 2071.) This issue has recently resurfaced because a new generation – including many siblings of the missing children who have grown up in Israel and are better educated than their immigrant parents – are demanding transparency, and Israel’s *Mizrachi* Jews, who come from North Africa and Middle Eastern countries, are demanding a more thorough accounting. (The *Mizrachim* make up about half the population of Israeli Jews.) According to Hanegbi, the next step is to establish a DNA bank where people who suspect they were unofficially adopted as children can search for matches with the missing children’s families.

(www.nytimes.com, 12-28-16)

(www.jpost.com, 12-28-16)

You Can Call Her Ruchie

Brooklyn native Rachel Freier – known to those close to her as *Ruchie* – is believed to be the first Chasidic woman in the United States to be sworn in as a judge. Freier, 51, was sworn in as the Civil Court judge in Brooklyn’s 5th judicial district, which encompasses the heavily Chasidic community of Boro Park, plus Bensonhurst, Coney Island, and many other portions of Kings County. Even in Israel, it’s rare for an ultra-Orthodox woman to hold any elected position. (According to a 2013 *Pew Research Center* study, ultra-Orthodox groups make up only six percent of America’s estimated 5.3 million adult Jews.) Freier is a mother of six and a former lawyer who practiced commercial and residential estate law. After she graduated from high school, Freier worked as a legal

secretary and paralegal to support her husband while he studied Talmud. She is a graduate of Touro College and completed her studies at Brooklyn Law School in 2005. In 2011, Freier founded *Ezras Nashim*, a network of Orthodox Jewish female volunteer EMTs serving women in New York's Orthodox community, where she still takes her turn on call. (By law, they will assist anyone who calls for their service regardless of gender and race.) At her swearing-in ceremony Chasidic performer Lipa Schmeltzer sang "God Bless America" in Yiddish. (www.ap.org, 1-2-17)

A Well-Earned Promotion

Rabbi Alvin Kass, a New York Police Department chaplain, was promoted to three-star chief, making him the highest-ranking chaplain ever in NYPD history. He was hired in 1966 as the department's third Jewish chaplain. Kass, 80, received the promotion in honor of his 50 years with the department. He has a deep affection for the NYPD and the men in uniform return those feelings. Kass provided needed comfort after the attacks of 9/11. Currently, he serves as NYPD's chief chaplain, leading a staff of nine clergy of various faiths and serving about 34,000 police officers. In 1981, Kass successfully negotiated with a Jewish man who had taken a woman hostage, convincing him to agree to turn over his guns in exchange for two pastrami sandwiches from the famed Carnegie Deli. (For another Carnegie Deli story, see next entry.) On the day of his son's bar mitzvah, Kass was called away to be with the family of a Jewish police officer who had been shot and killed in the line of duty. During his tenure, Kass has served seven mayors and sixteen police commissioners. He is the rabbi emeritus of the East Midwood Jewish Center in Brooklyn, having served as its spiritual leader for 36 years before his retirement in 2014. (www.tabletmag.com, 12-22-16)

The End of an Era

After 79 years of artery-clogging, oversized and overpriced pastrami sandwiches, knishes, matzah ball soup and cheesecake,

Manhattan's famed Carnegie Delicatessen closed its doors for good on December 30th, 2016. (Yes...it served dairy products, making it about as unkosher a deli as you can imagine.) The iconic restaurant, favorite of celebrities, tourists and locals alike – which got a starring role in "Broadway Danny Rose," Woody Allen's 1984 film – had become too much of an operation for Marian Harper-Levine, the deli's president, to handle. Upper East Side restaurateur Sammy Mosovic, who started his career as a dishwasher at the Carnegie Deli in the 1970s, offered Harper-Levine \$10 million to buy the place. She turned down the offer, saying she wanted to retain the Carnegie name and expand wholesale and retail operations. She also wanted to focus on licensed locations such as Madison Square Garden, places in Las Vegas and elsewhere. (www.nytimes.com, 12-31-16)

In Memoriam

★Vera Rubin, a U.S. astronomer known for her pioneering work on invisible dark matter in the universe, died recently. She was 88. Rubin discovered the first direct evidence of dark matter while studying the rotation of galaxies. At the time, she was working at the Carnegie Institution – no relation to the New York deli – in Washington D.C. (Dark matter has not been directly observed but has been inferred through work by Rubin and other astronomers and physicists.) Rubin, along with spectrograph designer Kent Ford, found that material at galaxies' edges rotated at the same rate as material in the center. This discovery contradicted a law of physics saying that the greater mass in the center, such as dust, stars and gas, meant it should move faster than the edge, where there was less mass. (Many of Rubin's colleagues felt that she should have received a Nobel Prize, since the discovery of dark matter had revolutionized astronomy and the understanding of the universe.) Rubin graduated from Vassar College in 1948 with a degree in astronomy. She went on to earn a master's degree from Cornell followed by a doctorate from Georgetown. Rubin received the National Medal of Science from President Bill Clinton in 1993. (www.forward.com, and www.reuters.com, 12-26-16)

★ Marion Pritchard, a Dutch social work student who rescued dozens of Jews during the Holocaust, died in late December at the age of 96. Pritchard is said to have brought many Jews to safe houses; hiding others under floorboards; plus feeding, clothing or aiding some 150 people, many of them children. Pritchard – then known as Marion Philippina van Binsbergen – was 19 when Germany invaded the Netherlands in 1940. Her father, a Dutch judge, despised the Nazi ideology and her mother instilled in her a sense of morality and justice. Nazis arrested and jailed her for seven months in 1941 after she was caught at a meeting where students were transcribing Allied radio broadcasts for circulation. In 1942, while bicycling to the University in Amsterdam where she studied social work, Pritchard witnessed the liquidation of a home for Jewish children. She saw two women attempting to stop the soldiers; they ended up in the truck with the children. At that moment she committed herself to fight Nazi persecution in whatever way possible. She worked with ten of her friends to obtain false identity documents and hiding places to help Jews dodge arrest. They managed to find extra ration cards and provisions despite severe food shortages. Pritchard herself found host families to take in Jewish children. One time, a Dutch policeman came to search a house where Pritchard was hiding and caring for a Jewish man with his three young children. He discovered the hideout and before he could make an arrest, Pritchard fatally shot him with a small revolver. “I would do it again, under the same circumstances,” she later said, “but it still bothers me.” After the war, Pritchard became a United Nations social worker in Displaced Persons Camps, where she met her husband, a former U.S. Army officer. The Pritchards would later settle in the U.S., where she continued helping refugee families. (The deportation of Jews from the Netherlands began in 1944. Some 107,000 Jews were taken away. All but 5,200 would die. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, less than 25 percent of Dutch Jewry survived the Holocaust.) Pritchard’s wartime story was chroni-

clined in “Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust,” by Eva Fogelman, a copy of which is in the KJCC library in the Holocaust (HOL) section. “Most of us were brought up to tell [the] truth, to obey the secular law and the Ten Commandments,” she once said. “By 1945, I had stolen, cheated, deceived, and even killed.” (www.washingtonpost.com, 12-20-16)

★ Henry Judah Heimlich, the Jewish doctor who developed the technique credited with saving thousands of choking victims, died in mid-December at the age of 96. A thoracic surgeon, Heimlich came up with the life-saving technique in 1974 after reading about the high rate of deaths in restaurants, at the time attributed to heart attacks but later found to be caused by people choking on food. At the time, common practice was to repeatedly slap a person’s back who was choking. However, Heimlich believed that method only forced the blockage deeper. To prove his method, he anesthetized laboratory dogs, blocked their windpipes with large pieces of meat attached to pieces of string in the event of an emergency and developed his technique. The “Heimlich Maneuver” as it came to be known, requires no equipment, no great strength and only minimal training. It took over ten years for the medical establishment to adopt the maneuver, partly because there had been no official human trials. In 1985, C. Everett Koop, then U.S. Surgeon General, said Heimlich’s technique should be the “the only method” to use on choking victims. Heimlich damaged his credibility when he claimed that the high fever of malaria stimulated the body’s immune system enough to fight AIDS, cancer and Lyme disease, assertions discredited by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He also thought that his technique should be used to clear mucus from the lungs during an asthma attack and that it was better than cardiopulmonary resuscitation for drowning victims; these claims were dismissed by the Red Cross and the American Medical Association. Heimlich is also credited with inventing a valve that is used to prevent air from filling the chest cavity in trauma cases. (www.forward.com, 12-18-16) ◇

Contributions to KJCC

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

General Fund

Barrick, Bruce & Marcy

Ellner, Susan

Margulies, Stanley & Jenny

Roberts, Paul & Susan

Meditation Garden

Steinberg, Richard & Sheila in memory of:

Joel S. Cohen, Sara J. Cohen, Mollie Z. Cohen,

Saunders G. Cohen, Meyer Z. Cohen,

James Nobil, Erik S. Persoff, Peter F. Steinberg,

Rose T. Steinberg, Wally Steinberg,

Sally Sussman, Erwin (Babe) Wainer,

Rose Wainer, Sam Wainer, Samuel Wainer

In Honor of

Rabbi Agler –

with appreciation and love

Sisterhood General Fund

Wolfe, Larry & Dorothy

Dr. Rubin Salant

Sisterhood Onegs

William & Heather Corrigan

Mr. & Mrs. Eisenstein

Beth Hayden

Barry Neumann & Ellen Ecker

Yahrzeits

Cohen, Nancy

Harvey, Mitchell

Olsen, Gerald & Sheila

David M. Cohn

Daniel Harvey

Betty Weinstein

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

Yahrzeit Plaques: KJCC has six special, Israeli-made boards in the sanctuary for yahrzeit memorial plaques. Each plaque is accompanied by its own light, which is switched on for both yahrzeit dates and on Yom Kippur; names are also read aloud in memory from the bemah each yahrzeit and published annually in our Yizkor Book. The cost for eternal synagogue memory is \$400.

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

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

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

EYE ON THE ARTS/Joyce Peckman

*Living in the Keys seems to energize the creativity in
all of us, and beckon creative folks to come on down.
Add snowbirds to the mix, and a vibrant February results.
Here are some possibilities to enliven your month:*

Thursday, February 2: Connections Project Grand Opening.

The Florida Keys Council of the Arts is launching its fourth annual Connections Project road show with a grand opening reception at the Murray Nelson Government & Cultural Center in Key Largo (MM 102), on Tuesday, February 2nd, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The show features a vibrant 24-foot mosaic mural created by local artists and art lovers (some of them KJCC members). The reception, with wine and hors d'oeuvres, is open to the public. The mural will remain at the Center for two weeks, then open in Is-lamorada's Ocean Sotheby's Gallery on February 24th. Money raised will support local art projects.

February 2-4: Marathon Community Theatre presents *The Hallejulah Girls*.

Tickets for this comedy, from the authors of *The Golden Girls*, are available for \$25 at their website: www.marathontheatre.org.

February 3-5 and 9-11: The Key Players present *Midlife! The Crisis Musical*.

Performances are 7:30 evenings, or 3:00 p.m. Sunday, at the Murray Nelson Center, MM 102. This lively community group has been around for 37 years and is always looking for volunteers. Tickets cost \$20 and are available at the door or online at www.thekeyplayers.org

Saturday and Sunday, February 4 & 5: The 23rd Annual Pigeon Key Art Festival.

There will be over seventy vendors at this juried event, in addition to local cuisine, period entertainment and an auction by Wyland, the celebrity marine life artist. Held at Mara

thon Community Park, MM49, the event benefits historic Pigeon Key. Admission is \$7 for both days.

Monday and Tuesday, February 6 & 7, 7:30 p.m.: Rising Star Trio.

Monday at Marathon's San Pablo Church, MM 53, and Tuesday at Island Community Church, MM 83.3 bayside. Enjoy classical music performed by three dynamic 17 and 18-year-olds – pianist, cellist and violinist. These talented youngsters are at the beginning of exciting careers. Tickets are available for \$25 at the door or at www.floridakeysconcerts.com. Contact Joyce Peckman, Gloria Avner, Mary Lee Singer or Marcia Kreitman for information about the FLKCA series.

Monday and Tuesday, February 13 & 14, 7:30 p.m.: Amernet String Quartet.

Monday at Marathon H.S. and Tuesday at Island Community Church. This group is the ensemble-in-residence at Florida International University. They will play a modern work by F. Kaufman, as well as quartets by Franz Joseph Haydn and Edvard Grieg. Tickets are available for \$25 at the door or at www.floridakeysconcerts.com.

Friday and Saturday, February 17 & 18, 8:00 p.m.: Marathon Theatre presents *The Last Train to Nibroc*.

Tickets to this Gallery Reading are available for \$12 at the door or www.marathontheatre.org

Monday and Tuesday, February 20 & 21, 7:30 p.m.: Trio Voronezh.

Monday at Marathon's San Pablo Church,

MM 53 and Tuesday at Island Community Church, MM 83.3 bayside. Three young Russian folk artists will perform classical and folk music from around the world, playing Domra, Balalaika and Bayan – Russian folk instruments. Tickets are available for \$25 at the door or at www.floridakeysconcerts.com.

Wednesday, February 22, 8:00 p.m.: KJCC presents 18 Strings & Attitude

This is the one you can't miss! Dave Feder and Sam Weis will bring a mountain of talent and attitude to the sea-level Keys. Three years ago we had a full house when Dave played with friends, and we expect to be even fuller, so get your tickets, \$25.00 each, early. There are still opportunities available to be a sponsor for \$250 or an Angel for \$500, which will entitle you to 2 tickets, a CD and a

rollicking, tasty good time with the artists at a VIP Champagne and *hors d'oeuvres* reception before the concert.

Sunday, February 25, 4:00 p.m.: Pops in the Park presents *Creature Feature*

Bring your dog for the pet parade, and stay for the spooky music. This fun, family event, held at Islamorada Founders Park, is free. Just bring a blanket or lawn chair.

Monday and Tuesday, February 27 & 28, 7:30 p.m.: Pianist Frederick Moyer

Monday at San Pablo Church, MM53 and Tuesday at Island Community Church, MM83.3. At FLKCA's final concert of the series, Fred Moyer will play classical and jazz. Tickets are available for \$25 at the door or at www.floridakeysconcerts.com. ♦



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.



Photo Gallery



On December 21st, the shortest day of the year, KJCC once again participated in the Memorial Service for the Homeless who had passed away during the past year. The service was led by Rev. Pam Feeser, with participation by a number of Upper Keys clergy. The name of each homeless person is called out, with a candle lit in their name, the idea being to give each one a final moment of human dignity. It's also significant to note that, of about thirty in attendance, fully half were members of KJCC. Prior to the Ceremony of Blessings, our own Sam Weis played a gentle original composition on her 12-string guitar.



Scenes from the December 23rd oneg (on Erev Erev Chanukah). It turned out to be the largest Friday crowd of the young season.





The photo above, of Stella Goldfinger delivering the Goldfinger family Chanukah greetings, seemed like something to share. At immediate right are Gene and Mort Silverman's daughter Robin, in Los Angeles for Chanukah with daughters Elissa and Michelle. (Gene was there, too. She took the photo.)

The three photos at bottom were taken on Tuesday, January 3rd, during a fairly impromptu talk to KJCC by Natalie Sopinsky, the daughter of KJCC members Roger and Danna Levy. Natalie was raised in Delaware, but made the decision as an adult to make Aliyah. She not only lives in Israel, she lives in Susya, a settlement just across the Green Line. But, following KJCC policy, this night wasn't about politics. It was about the amazing and principled life she leads there.



Keys Jewish Community Center

Saturday, February 18, 2017 at 7 PM

The story of Jews who fought in the Army Air Corps in WWII



Relive the experiences of Jewish members of the United States Army Air Corps during World War II.

Hear the stories of men who came of age and volunteered amid anti-Semitism in the 1930s - while prominent Americans urged the US to stay out of "Europe's war." Meet the men who served in the branch of service with the highest mortality rate of the war.

Documentary **Produced and Directed by** **Alan Feinberg**

Mr. Feinberg will be here to screen his film for us and lead a discussion afterwards.

No charge - Guests are welcome



On January 6th, a Friday afternoon, the new officers of KJCC's Sisterhood were sworn in, led by new co-presidents Renee Salant and Sam Weis. Susan Gordon and Erica Lieberman-Garrett are co-vice presidents. Geri Smith is Recording Secretary, and Michele Riley is Corresponding Secretary. (They have to find a new treasurer, because Beth Hayden is about to become president of KJCC.)

Sisterhood past president Erica Lieberman-Garrett is awarded her "ahavah" pin, at right, joined by past presidents and recipients Linda Pollack, Joyce Peckman, Nettie Seder and Joan Stark.



On January 13th, Meredith Cline led services and also sponsored the oneg in honor of her birthday. Linda Pollack was there to sample the highly intoxicating (literally and figuratively) chocolate concoction Meredith made and brought.

Keys Jewish Community Center, Inc.

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

To all KJCC members:

The KJCC Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 12th, 2017 at 12:00 p.m. in the KJCC sanctuary.

The February Board meeting, in the Ruth Richardson Social Hall, is scheduled for the same day at 10:00 a.m. All members in good standing are invited to attend both meetings.

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

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

The Nominating Committee has met as required and selected the following slate of 2017-2018 Officers and Board Members. This slate was approved at the January 8th, 2017 Board Meeting:

President – Beth Hayden

Executive Vice President – Gloria Avner

Vice Presidents – Marc Bloom, Michael Kaufman, Medina Roy

Treasurer – Linda Kaplan

Recording Secretary – Art Itkin

Financial Secretary – Donna Bolton

Corresponding Secretary – Joyce Peckman

Directors:

Ken Atlas

Dave Feder

Susan Gordon

Steve Hartz

Mitch Harvey

Beth Kaminstein

Linda Pollack

Skip Rose

Gene Silverman

Stuart Smith

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

Respectfully submitted by the 2017 Nominating Committee:

Gene Silverman (chair), Bernie Ginsberg, Medina Roy, Renee Salant

Righteous Gentiles, A Hiding Place, and Family Heirlooms

by Gloria Avner

Everyone in the world knows the story of Anne Frank and how her family hid in specially adapted rooms in their business building, taken care of by their employees and friends, until discovery and capture. The story of Corrie ten Bloom and her family is not so well known, but that may soon change, at least for us.

The ten Blooms were Dutch, like the Franks, but they were not Jewish. They hid Jews. They said their religion, Christianity, demanded it, and with big hearts, passion, and great sacrifice, they created hiding places for Jews. The family took care of Jews right up to the moment when, because of their suspicious use of too many ration books, the search parties came, found the hiding places, and took Corrie ten Bloom and her sister to a Concentration Camp, along with the Jews they had hidden.

Corrie's sister did not survive the brutal atrocities of life in the death camps, but Corrie managed to come out alive. At war's end, she returned to the Netherlands, where she became known as *Tante* (the Yiddish word for "aunt") Corrie. After a chilling encounter with her captor, she became even better known as the woman who forgave her torturer. A book was written about her experiences in the 1940s called "The Hiding Place." It later became a movie (which we may soon add to our First Annual KJCC Moms Memorial Winter Film Fest).

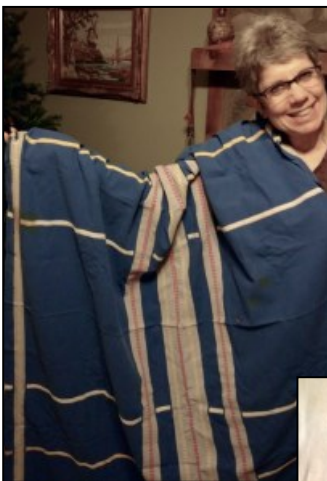
Fast-forward three decades. My sister Rhona leaves America (and her boyfriend) to live in Amsterdam for ten months in the late 1970s. She finds housing with a Dutch wom

an named Romkje Fountain and her growing family. It turns out that Romkje was *Tante* Corrie's helper after the war, assisting her with writing, speaking engagements and travel. Rhona and Romkje become fast friends. When Rhona became engaged to her state side boyfriend and returned to the States for her wedding, Romkje gave her, as a wedding gift, a beautiful tablecloth that had belonged to *Tante* Corrie. "Both of these women," she tells me, "are very special to me and so is this gift!"

I've known my sister for 58 years (yes, she is the baby of the family) and I'd never heard this story before, not until New Year's Day, about a month ago. We were looking through my mother's things, the precious pieces of personal history packed up when she left her home to move to assisted living – and which she will never have

a use for in her nursing home.

We were waxing tearful, big sister and little sister, admiring the embroidered tablecloths hand-stitched by



The two cross-stitch tablecloths, one held by Rhona, above, that their mother and grandmother made many years ago and that she and Gloria just found.

our mother and her mother for Shabbos tables small and large. Out came the story, and a connection to the Holocaust – in a good way. Now I want to see the movie and learn more about these immensely brave sisters, whom I suddenly see as family friends. Watch e-mails for a day and date. ♦

The Lure of Living in Israel

One American Family's Story

by Shirley Miller Stein

We just returned home from our 29th trip to Israel, our second in eleven months. Why? Five of our ten grandchildren, two of their spouses, a wedding, visits to a sick friend and memorial services for dear departed classmates were cause enough.

To date, three grandchildren have served in the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces). Two others, 20-year-old Akiva and 18-year-old Rafi, plan to serve in '17. Only 18-year-old Ariella, now studying in Israel for her gap year, plans to return to the States. Elana, married mother of two, plans to return to Israel after she completes her nursing degree. What made our grandchildren leave cushy homes and communities in the U.S.

to settle in a small, embattled land so far away? I have no glib answers, but here are some thoughts.

It started, perhaps, with us. I met Ira in 1954, and married him four years later. He, though pleased with the existence of a Jewish state, was hardly Zionist and had little interest in visiting. A member of young Judea, I had stronger affinities. Still, the demands of schooling and a growing family ruled.

Things changed in 1970. A rabbi in a nearby community organized a tour. My sister, one of his congregants, urged us to give it a try and offered to mind our children. Since Shira, our youngest, was now four, we bit.

The two-week trip was an eye-opener. Though organized tours tend to insulate their clients from coarser realities, we

could appreciate how desperately poor and primitive the country was, but also how spirited and imbued with Jewish values. Ira, especially, was won over, and we vowed to return.

Fast-forward three years. A real-estate promoter visited our town at the

Photos taken by the Steins of Tel Aviv: in the 1970s, left, and today, above

height of the 1973 Yom Kippur war. Taking a page out of Jeremiah's book, we put a down payment on an apartment in Ashdod, not yet

built. (Ashdod is a major port on the Mediterranean, about due west of Jerusalem. It was one of the main cities of the Philistines, who in ancient times controlled that portion of the coast.) It was 1976 before we could use the apartment, but over the years we returned repeatedly and watched with awe as the country grew and flourished. We also brought the children and traveled the land with them. We were *Olim Regalim*, devoted visitors, but could never quite reach the level of *aliyah*, actual emigration. Later on the kids went without us, as members of youth groups.

Retirement provided both time and resources for more frequent visits. Many of our friends had also emigrated. Their celebrations



gave us further incentive to go. Two of our children went to Israel for part of their college educations, and, more recently, such studies have become *de rigeur* with our grandkids. We've sold the apartment in Ashdod and purchased a part-interest in a larger one in Tel Aviv, which is more accessible to all of us.

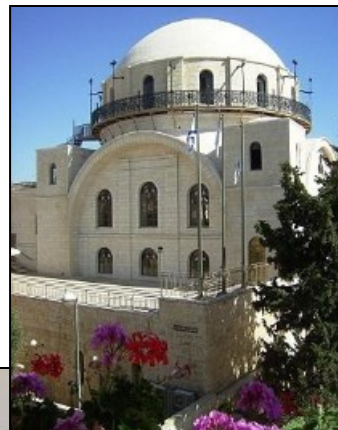
All the kids attended Jewish Day Schools. By graduation they were imbued with a fierce spirit of Zionism and seemed motivated to use their skills, energy and resources to contribute to the good of our unique "start-up" nation. Facing ongoing daily challenges by living in Israel, they amaze us with their resilience, optimism, confidence and survival skills. The kids feel a keen responsibility to help ensure the survival of our beloved Israel. They seem remarkably independent; still, when the going gets tough, they have each other's backs.

While my husband and I struggle with Hebrew and find it stressful to live in Israel, feeling like American outsiders, the kids exude comfort and ease in negotiating the daily ups and downs of Israeli life.

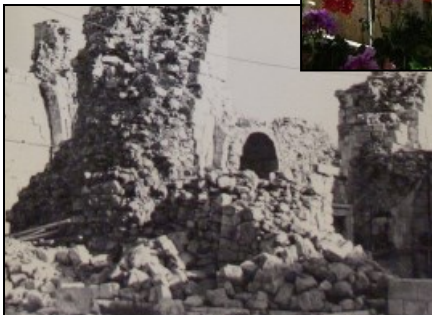
Still, I'm ambivalent about the grandchildren making *aliyah*. While both proud and worried for their safety, I sometimes worry that they've sold themselves short. As I see it, America's medical, educational and cultural resources outweigh those of any other nation. Many foreigners seek citizenship, risking life and limb to

reach our shores.

I'm not sure of all the reasons for the kids' *aliyah*, but a primary mover is likely their desire to live fully as Jews in a way that's not possible



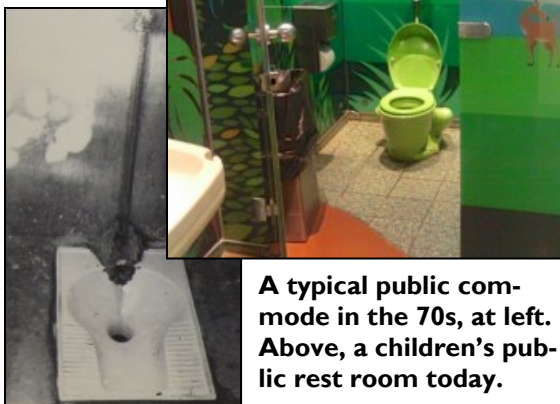
Jerusalem's Churva synagogue: today, above, and in the 70s after Jordanian occupation, left.



elsewhere. Although Jewish communities abound through much of the world, nowhere else features Judaism as an integral part of the rhythm of daily life. Shabbat and other holidays are celebrated nationwide. Christmas is hardly a blip on the screen, but Purim, Pesach and Shavuot preparations and celebrations abound with verve, creativity and countrywide observance.

In the U.S., assimilation seems to be our greatest threat to survival. While no guarantees exist, chances for our grandchildren remaining Jewish and marrying "in" seem much greater in Israel. We'll be delighted to welcome more Jewish great-grandchildren into our family. And will be equally delighted to visit them.

It wasn't even on our radar screen, when my husband and I got married almost sixty years ago, to live anywhere but America. Now we can choose which place to call home. For millennia, Jews prayed to return to Jerusalem. Now it's become a precious reality for increasing numbers of our youth. We wish them all good luck (*hatzlacha*). May they all be blessed with peace, good health and Jewish pride. *Am Yisroel Chai!* ◇



A typical public commode in the 70s, at left. Above, a children's public rest room today.

Oy Chanukah:

The Dinner, the Song, the Celebration

Text by Gloria Avner

To hear Yiddish, our ancient East European *mama-loshen* (mother tongue) of at least a century ago – though many of us grew up listening to our parents and grandparents speaking it when they didn't want us to understand – would have been wonderful enough, but to hear it out of the mouths of beautiful children, serious and sweet, was thrilling. Our past and our future were on stage together, filling the room with a palpable sense of awe and hope.

The Yiddish word “Oy” most often conjures complaint. Combined with the words “*vey’z mir*,” it portends great sorrow, as in (the literal translation) “woe is me.” But when the word next to Oy is *Chanukah*, and two handsome young boys in turquoise skullcaps are

singing the words, you know a *simcha* is happening and a rare treat is in store. Seventy-five of us were happy to experience this mu-

A big part of who we are is embodied in the concept of remembrance. The rabbis have taught us to celebrate not the military victory but the one of light and faith and continuity. This year, on the seventh night, in the dark, the candles blazed and together we remembered.





sical treat (with accompaniment by Jules Seder, our talented Music Director and pianist) in the KJCC sanctuary a month ago. It was the 7th

See the smiling faces of camaraderie and anticipation filling the tables of both social hall and schoolroom? The ritual portion of the



night of Chanukah, and *qvelling* (feeling proud and *ferk-lemp* – choking up at the same time) was the order of the evening. (There may even have been some teary emotional overflow among the wide grins.) But wait...I'm getting a little ahead of myself...

The date was December 30th, the eve before New Year's Eve, a true *Chag Sameach*/

Happy Holiday at KJCC, starting with our Annual *Chanukah Celebration/Latka-fest* dairy dinner. Our building gently overflowed with nearly 100 guests. Linda Pollack once again, with grace and generosity, sponsored this splendid feast, and Sisterhood volunteers, both cooks and decorators, outdid themselves preparing delicious dishes and festive rooms. Look at the photos.



evening began with candle-lighting. Those who brought their family's personal *chanukiahs*, about 30 of them displayed beautifully on two central tables, gathered round to light the



lights (eight candles in each, including the helper "shamesh" candle) and everyone joined in singing the two blessings expressing our gratitude for the miracle that happened when the Maccabees' small



KJCC's Adult Education Program

Proudly presents its

First Annual KJCC Moms Memorial Winter Film Fest

Sponsored in full by Michael & Lorena Kaufman

In loving memory of their moms, Lucy Kaufman and Celeste Bravo Mendez



Sat., Feb. 04, 2017	The Band's Visit
Sat., Feb. 11, 2017	The Lemon Tree
Sat., Feb. 18, 2017	Bagels Over Berlin
Sat., Feb. 25, 2017	Remember

More Coming in March

All films begin at 7:00 p.m.

GUESTS ARE WELCOME – There is no charge

REFRESHMENTS will be served afterwards

For More Information, Contact Medina Roy: hiitsmedee@gmail.com



band of anti-Hellenists, through sheer zeal, were able to recapture and then rededicate – aha, the literal meaning of

Chanukah – the Temple in Jerusalem. Our own temple (meaning KJCC, not capitalized) quickly became a scene of dazzling brilliance as all lit their personal candles in the darkened room. (An extra miracle was that the

Both room were filled with celebrants. Susan Gordon's design scheme had various combinations of blue and white on every table. Dinner was splendid. (The latkes were, too.)



smoke alarms did not join the music for more than a few seconds.)

For years we have sung the traditional "Maoz Tzur" right after lighting (and we would do it again later at the beginning of Shabbat services), but this night was differ-



ent. One of our newest members (and Holocaust survivor), Gunther Karger, had volun-

teered to play the sacred tune for us on his harmonica. Illuminated only by the hundreds of blazing Chanukah candles, the sweetness of the melody and the moment took on a new dimension. It was a fitting prelude to the next

event: joining the buffet line for a home-cooked delicious meal featuring, of course, a wide variety of *latkas*.

Starting a half-hour earlier than usual gave us lots of time to schmooze and enjoy each

other, not to mention sample a wide array of creamy and jelly-filled desserts; thanks again to all who provided the treats and donations for their purchase.



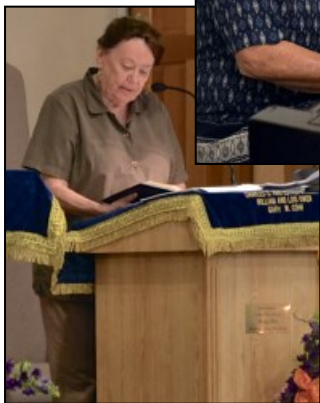
When the time came to shift to the sanctuary for the rest of the Chanukah program, we were able, without rushing, to saunter into the sanctuary, more participants than I've ever seen outside of a High Holiday service, and prepare to enjoy the service, beautifully and thoughtfully led by Beth Hayden (who is about to become KJCC's next president).



After the Shabbat and *Yom Tov* Blessings, the Fink boys, J.B. and Max, stepped up to the *bimah*, one standing next to their Sunday School teacher, Randy Klein-Gross, the other standing with Education Chair Susan Gordon. Both boys were self-possessed, fidget-free, clear, well-paced, attentive to the “vamp” musical intro and interlude played by Jules, and they sang the old song beautifully.

The boys’ song was followed by a trio of adults (Yardena, Humberto and me) singing two more songs, *Maoz Tzur*, accompanied once again by Jules Seder, and a Portuguese (Ladino) celebrational song called *Ocho Kandelikas* (eight candles), with Humberto on guitar.

The service went on, both meaningful and moving, Beth also delivering a thoughtful “Drash” or Torah talk. At the end of the service, instead of concluding with *Adon Olam*, the theme of hope for the future was reinforced as Jonah and Oshi Gross, a past and current student of our Sun-



day School, played *HaTikvah* on trumpet and bassoon while the congregation rose and sang.

With the service over, all were invited to the social hall for a special Kiddush (and, of course, lots more dishes of dessert). We would not be drinking the ordinary libation of Manischewitz by the thim-



bleful, but instead we would bless the fruit of the vine with a lovely flute of



The Chanukah festivities weren't over. Before services began, KJCC Musical Director Jules Seder brought carefully rehearsed J.B. and Max Fink up onto the *bimah* to sing in, of all languages, Yiddish. (Yes, adult hearts melted.) Gloria and Yardena and Umberto then sang two songs, one in Hebrew and one in Ladino. At service's end, Jonah and Oceana Gross led everyone in *Hatikvah*.



champagne. On this penultimate evening of 2016, in a toast to a healthy, happy, prosperous, and *yiddishkeit*-filled New Year, we held thoughts simultaneously of the many KJCC accomplishments of the year side by side with sad personal losses.

May we continue to enjoy many more *simchas* on evenings such as this one in the coming year, celebrating in community with our members, our members' families and our friends. We didn't have noisemakers, but we sang with gusto, especially the last lines and final words of our blessing for the New Year: *L'Chaim. To Life!* ♦

All the evening's performers captured together at evening's end, including, at right, Gunther and his harmonica.

Keys Jewish Community Center Tikkun Olam Project



How many prescription and vitamin bottles do you discard almost on a daily basis? We have the opportunity to contribute to an ongoing project at Burton Memorial. They are collecting empty medicine bottles and sending them to Haiti. The hospitals and clinics there are in need of these bottles in order to provide prescriptions to their patients.

Simply bring your empty bottles to the KJCC and place in the collection box. Remove all personal information and medication information first.



Note that this is a request for bottles, not for medications.

A NEW/OLD TRADITION IS (RE)BORN

Jews, Christmas Day and Chinese Food at KJCC

Sometimes an idea is just an idea, a kind of Mickey Rooney/Judy Garland routine (except it's Sam and Gloria), starting something like "hey, wouldn't it be fun if . . .?" And sometimes the idea grows like topsy and becomes an event that really IS fun. Sam shares the idea from the pulpit, and within 24 hours a generous donor has stepped forward anonymously to pay for the food. Game-playing and a movie are added to the day's events. Scrabble, Boggle, and decks of cards appear. The RSVPs come pouring in.



Christmas Day? Look at this sign posted on the window of an urban Chinese Restaurant saying "thank you"

to the God of the Jewish people.

Instead of going out, we ordered in. Truly a match made in heaven.

We had festive décor, too, thanks to Mitch

An old tradition is re-born: Jews, Christmas Day and Chinese food. What could be a more Jewish ritual than going out for dinner to the only restaurants Jews were able to find open on



Harvey, Linda Perloff and Susan Gordon's artistic touches. Many hands made light work. Thanks to Carla and Erica for helping get the

food to the hot table and to the people who brought thoughtful desserts – Mark Lipkus, Elaine Solas, Shirley Stein and Mitch

and Linda (for the Chanukah-inspired jelly donuts). We were wildly abundant. Scrabble players stretched brains for good points, a table full of card sharks raked in poker quarters and, just before the movie started (another Jewish/Christmas Day activity tradition), we had a sweet sundown moment, lower-





had a warm place in her heart for strays of all kinds... neighbors, friends, KJCC *mish-pocha*, even visi-



ing the lights and singing *Chanukah* blessings over the two candles in our *chanukiot* (a moment of holiday synchronicity that last came 19 years ago).

Medina Roy gave us three movies to pick from. More than a minyan of us stayed to see "Keeping up with the Steins," an over-the-top Scott Marshall comedy with ultimately warm commentary on the excesses that can overwhelm Bar Mitzvah celebrations. (His father, famous director Gary, had the meatiest role, that of hippie granddad.) We



tors of friends: all were welcome for a grand buffet. Many of us fondly remembered Carol and her boisterous warm hospitality as we celebrated, this time, in our own "home."

Given the attendance, smiles and laughter, it is highly likely we will be doing this again. Judy and Mickey will be applauding somewhere from the wings.

—Gloria



ate, we played, we watched, we went home.

But this new/old tradition had another dimension, too. For years we'd spent much of Christmas Day at the Steinbock home. This was Carol's special day and she



Chants Populaires #4 and Chanson Hébraïque

Ravel's Unique Treatment of Jewish Themes

Though there are hundreds of distinct spoken languages (and untold numbers of dialects) in the world, most of them not easily understood by any other, music is the international language. It manages to convey meaning through the magic of sound, and is understood by those who speak every language because the sensations and emotions conveyed are understood by every human. Conveying that language can, like speech, be done simply or with layers and nuances. Beth describes here the brilliance of one of the world's most revered orchestral music communicators as he sought to convey Judaism through music.

by Beth Hayden

Maurice Ravel exhibited a lifelong interest in folk music, and in 1910 composed five *Chants Populaires*. Commissioned by Alexandre Olenine, the fourth of the five popular songs was *Chanson hébraïque*. The

text is actually not Hebrew, but Yiddish and is attributed to Rabbi Levi Itschak of Berdichev (1740-1809). The text has five verses, with each verse containing four lines of text. Each verse begins with the same first two lines

The Text of Ravel's Chanson hébraïque

ALL VERSES (lines 1 and 2):

1. *Majerke, main Suhn,*
2. *Majerke, main Suhn, oy Majerke, main Suhn,*

Meireke, my son,
Meireke, my son, oh Meireke, my son,

Verse 1 (lines 3 and 4):

3. *Zi weiss tu, var wemen du steihst?*
4. *Lifnei Melech, Malchei haM'lochim, Tatunju.*

Do you know before whom you stand?
Before the King, the King of Kings,
my father.

Verse 2 (lines 3 and 4):

3. *Wos ze westu bai lhm bet'n?*
4. *Bonej, chajei, M'sunei, Tatunju.*

What will you ask of him?
Children, life and sustenance, my father.

Verse 3 (lines 3 and 4):

3. *Oif wos darfs tu bonei?*
4. *Bonim eiskin baTorah, Tatunju.*

Why do you need children?
Children study the Torah, my father.

Verse 4 (lines 3 and 4):

3. *Oif was darfs tu chajei?*
4. *Kol chai joiducho, Tatunju.*

Why do you need life?
All life shall praise him, my father.

Verse 5 (lines 3 and 4):

3. *Oif was darfs tu M'sunei?*
4. *W'ochalta, w'ssowotu, w'weirachto, Tatunju.*

Why do you need bread?
You shall eat, and be satisfied and bless
the Lord, my father.



A sample of the music sheet for Ravel's take on one of the most familiar elements of Judaism — the Kaddish. You can see the eighths and sixteenths and his innovative use of the left hand.

followed by a question (line three) from the father and then an answer (line four – in italics) from the son. It is interesting to note that the Berdichever Rabbi's oldest son, who died at an early age, was named Maier.

The simplicity and repetition of the text are reflected in the musical setting, which is *strophic*, meaning the same melody is repeated for each verse. The father questions whether the son knows before whom he stands and what would he ask of him? The verses then proceed to query each item cited in the son's original response. Why children? Why life? Why bread? The final lines are reminiscent of the "Tsur Mishelo" sung at the end of the first Sabbath meal. Ravel's musical setting is respectful of the simplicity and repetition of the text. The Chanson is set in E minor and uses 4/4 (common) time. The father's questions are set to a repetitive rhythm (something Ravel was fond of using) consisting of an eighth note, two sixteenths and two eighth notes. The father's questions are in E minor and rather prosaically laid out. However, when the child responds to his father's questions, Ravel sets these responses in a different musical world. The child's responses are sung over rolled chords marked "Piu lento, Quasi recitativo" (more slowly and like a recitative, i.e., rhythmically in the manner of speech). The father's bleak repetitive motifs and world of minor are left behind as the child's response begins on an uplifting C major rolled chord. *Arpeggiated* chords (chords broken into a series of notes instead of

played all as one) support the child's responses to the end of the verse, where an ascending minor 6th supports the first syllable of *Ta-tunju* (my father) and mournfully descends, leading the piece back to the father's E minor key and repetitive rhythms. An orchestration of the accompaniment was made by Maurice Delage and published in 1957. It was recorded with Gérard Souzay, baritone, singing in 1958. A sample of that version is available here: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k8805753n> (click on page 1). For Ravel fans this is definitely worth the purchase price. A performance of the *Chanson hébraïque* with the original piano accompaniment sung by Cecilia Bartoli, mezzo-soprano, is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqFXntNTolc>.

(For those who think that composing consists of creating a melody, you can see a little why Ravel so fascinates serious musicians and is still studied for his orchestrations. He found ways to reveal human expression, and its emotions, as no one had before.)

Following the success of the *Chanson hébraïque*, Ravel was commissioned again in 1914 by Madame Alvina-Alvi, a soprano with the St. Petersburg opera company, to set to music *Deux melodies hébraïques*. The first of the two texts is none other than the Kaddish in Aramaic and the second of the two texts is again not Hebrew but Yiddish:

Frägt die Velt die alte Cashe (The Eternal Enigma). The two pieces were premiered in 1914 at a Société Musicale Indépendante (SMI) concert in Paris performed by Madame

Alvina-Alvi, soprano, with Maurice Ravel himself at the piano.

The Kaddish (together with the *Amidah* and *Shema*) holds a unique and central place in Jewish liturgy and, as Jews, we are all familiar with the text. Its primary theme is the sanctification and magnification of G-d's holy name and it appears within the prayer service as a marker or separator for various sections of the service. Ravel's setting of the Kaddish uses the text of the *Chatzi Kaddish*, but omits the congregational response "Y'hey sh'mey raba m'varach l'olam ul-almey almaya." Set in C minor, Ravel begins the Kaddish with the accompaniment providing a dominant pedal (a repeated pitch that usually moves in and out of concordance with other harmonies) on the pitch of G. Around this repeated pedal, the vocal melody also meanders around G, but introduces feelings of modality with augmented seconds formed by the raised seventh and lowered 6th steps of the C minor scale. As the prayer unfolds, Ravel abandons the bare octave pedals on G, and adds dissonance with the introduction of seconds/sevenths above and below the pedal G. The Kaddish is "through-composed" (non-repetitive in structure, having different settings for each verse). The first section of the Kaddish is closed with the word "Amen." The second section maintains the pedal tone of G, but adds in the accompaniment *arpeggiated* scalar figures that fluctuate between lowered 6th and raised 7th scale degrees. The vocal line again centers on G with a lowered 6th scale degree and a restricted *tessitura*, which imparts a feeling of insistence and purpose to the musical line. A *codetta* concludes the Kaddish and is marked by a series of *melismatic* runs (where the singer holds a single syllable yet uses a sequence of different notes) in the vocal line sung to the syllable "ah." The small, repetitive range, which has characterized the vocal line up until this point, is suddenly expanded. While the accompaniment maintains its insistent pedal on G, within four measures the vocal line covers a range of a 12th moving from *melisma* to *melisma* until it culminates

in the final "Amen," a descending C minor triad that is a direct quote from the High Holydays musical liturgy. You can hear an excellent performance of this outstanding setting of the Kaddish performed by Cecilia Bartoli, mezzo-soprano, here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kP7O1ypiKgY>.

The second piece in this set is based on an anonymous Yiddish text, "Fragt die Velt die alte Casche" (The Eternal Question). The anonymous text is purposefully vague and ironic.

Fragt die Velt die alte Casche
The world asks the old question

Tra la la
Tra la la

Entfernt men
One answers

Tra la la
Tra la la

Un as men will kennen sagen
And if one wishes (one) can say

Tra la la
Tra la la

The musical setting here, like the text, is simple on the surface yet complex. In the accompaniment, Ravel again uses a repeated motif, two eighth notes and a quarter note in rising fifths in the left hand, set against dissonant fourths descending by step in the right hand. While the piece is set in E minor, Ravel almost totally avoids the feeling of a tonal center with the vocal line, beginning on the raised 4th degree of the E minor scale. The unique quality of the musical setting reflects the uncertainty of the text as the entire effect of the piece is unusual and creates an unsettled feeling.

You can hear all three of Maurice Ravel's "Hebrew" songs sung by Daphna Cohen-Licht, mezzo-soprano, at <https://youtube.com/watch?v=sJSfAxzErvo>. ♦



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Of Fruit Trees, Self Defense, Arrogance, and Humility

(A Movie Review on Tu B'Shvat)

by Gloria Avner

I watched a movie called “Lemon Tree” the other night. It was in Hebrew with subtitles. The only phrase I consistently understood without translation was “*Kol B’seder.*” It came frequently, in both question and answer form. Is everything ok? Are you ok? It’s ok. I’m ok. Everything is in order. Everything is fine.

Things in lemon tree land, however, are anything but fine.

The beautiful lemon tree grove, owned and cared for by generations of one Palestinian family, now managed by the sole surviving and strong-willed widow, Zelma Sidana, sits cheek by jowl on the border of Israel with the Palestinian territories. It happens to abut the Israeli Defense Minister’s newly constructed expansive, high-end home. Despite the immediate building of a high lookout tower and installation of multiple television monitors, the minister and his military associates quickly decide the grove is blocking the view of the Secret Service men (or the Israeli counterpart) protecting him and Israel from potential terrorists. The lemon trees are declared enemies of the state and scheduled for summary execution in the form of uprooting. What ensues escalates into a life-and-death struggle, and the Israeli powers that be hold the lion’s share of influence.

The military necessity to protect a small nation surrounded by enemies weighs heavily on one side of the scale. On the other is a lone dedicated empty-nester, Zelma, who preserves the fruits in beautiful jars and makes

her living selling them, and a community of trees, symbols of life, nourishment, and tradition, values historically held in high esteem by the Jewish people. In an act of chutzpah, the Secret Service men walk through the Arab woman’s lemon grove and gather, without asking, lemons for drinks at the minister’s

housewarming party. The effrontery is appalling and the Arab woman’s rage is totally appropriate. It is not difficult to guess who will win this war, but it is disturbing.

The new defense minister, a political man professing a hawkish, hard line about the Palestinians, is embarrassed when the press, led by a female

reporter, picks up the reverse (and, of course, intentionally ironic) David-and-Goliath story, and tension escalates dramatically.

The parable in the movie is as much about war between men and women as between cultural and historical enemies. The defense minister’s empathetic wife sees the dilemma of the Arab tree tender. She is compassionate as well as strong. Both women can visualize themselves in the other’s shoes. The trees are strong too, glossy with health, abundant with round, ripening fruit. (Spoiler alert: The much publicized issue comes to court, and though the power of the Israeli minister far outweighs Zelma’s, he does not quite get his wish to uproot the trees. Neither the Palestinian people nor the trees are killed outright.)

Though Biblical Jewish law is never men-



tioned in the movie, the judge in the case decides in favor of radical pruning over outright extermination. (Perhaps she remembers the strictures regarding trees that we celebrate on *Tu B'Shvat*.) The trees are not killed, but they are reduced to malnourished skeletons, grossly deficient in power to fill their mandate to live, to nourish, to reproduce their species; they suffer. It is painful to watch the withering of the once lush trees and rotting fruit as the movie proceeds. Whether the debilitating pruning will ultimately destroy the trees or the woman's ability to survive is an open question.

Life is the issue, the key to both movie and our understanding of man's relationship with nature, especially the Jewish relationship to nature. Here we are, on the eve of *Tu B'Shvat*, about to celebrate the New Year of the Trees.

(Our children will be planting miniature trees this year, saying blessings and singing the song "*Mayim*" (Water). Mort Silverman will be adding fruit trees to our orchard as well.)

The defense minister in the movie has to be tough on the Palestinians to defend his nation. Both women see the flaw in this over-reaction. Neither the Jewish people nor the Palestinians can be reduced to simple definitions as enemies. All have their own gifts, even if unknown to us, just as the lemon is emblematic of all the gifts of the plant kingdom.

According to the Creation story, seed-bearing plants and fruit trees were put on the Earth before any other living thing (Genesis 1:11-12), well before man.

Judaism has always said that man is like a tree. Our roots are key to our survival. Indi-

vidual men and women, like leaves, will wither and die in season, but there is always hope at the end of winter and the promise of new birth in the spring. We witness the ongoing, dependable cycles of growth and dissolution.

As the holiday *Tu B'Shvat*, the New Year of the Trees, approaches, it is good to remember that trees and their fruit are the source of our nourishment in more than material ways, wov-

ven into our history, inextricable from our culture. The Tree of Life, which God placed in the heart of the Garden of Eden, is a symbol of Jewish existence, a core value of continuity in individual and community lives.

"*Eytz chaim hee*" we chant in our Shabbat morning Torah service: "The Torah shall be as a Tree of Life to those who uphold and cling to it." Metaphors abound, as do stories and prohibitions. We are told it is a mitzvah to plant trees, that even in wartime, fruit-bearing trees are not to be destroyed (Deuteronomy 20:19-20). It is clear *Halachic* Law that we are not allowed to eat the fruit of a tree less than four years old. The fruit is forbidden, non-kosher. In this way, our ancestors protected a tree's chance to grow strong, and

their chance to eat its fruits for years to come.

Let the lesson from the movie and our celebration of *Tu B'Shvat* walk hand in hand. Save the trees. Save the people. "To life," we say, every time we bless the fruit of the vine, giving credit to the God of our Fathers for commanding us to be grateful for what we have been given.

As the Midrashic tale instructs us: If you are planting a fruit tree and someone tells you the Messiah has come, first finish planting the tree. Then go welcome the Messiah. ♦

Planting a tree – a concrete, practical act – has represented hope since ancient times. On *Tu B'Shvat* in Palestine, trees were planted for children born during the previous year: for a boy, a cedar, with the wish that the child would grow to be tall and upright; for a girl, a cypress, which was graceful and fragrant. (Yes, it was a different time.) Later, branches from the cypress and cedar of a bride and groom were used to make the *chuppah* (canopy) for their wedding ceremony. The planting was associated with two of the most important times in an individual's life, birth and marriage, two occasions when we concentrate on the possibilities for the future. So powerful is this connection that even in the Theresienstadt Concentration Camp, children planted a tree.

—from an article by Leslie Koppelman Ross in *MyJewishLearning*, by permission.

Tu B'Shvat

Dr. Doolittle, Vitamin J, and the Ba'al Shem Tov

by Gloria Avner

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

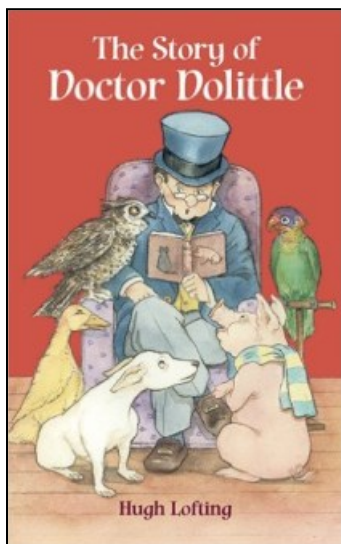
I was not surprised that it could happen. I certainly understood the desires and dislikes of my own pets over the years. And when I was a child, riding in the back seat of our family car on endless Sunday drives through the country, I pretended (or knew) that the trees were all lined up on the side of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

In our Shabbat prayer book, every Friday night, we read psalm after psalm in which the oddest things have a voice: Islands rejoice, trees clap hands in gladness, mountains thunder, waters lift up their voices in roaring. (See a wonderful book called *Pirkei Shira* for a full catalogue of nature speaking.) When we are alone in nature, quiet and content, observant and not caught up in the niggling details of our daily lives, we too have the opportunity to com-

municate not just with birds and animals, but with everything that God has created. A joyous heart (joy being a greater vitamin—or pathway to radiant good health—than any capsule bottled in a pharmacy or health food store) is the major prerequisite.

As we move closer to one of our favorite holidays, *Tu B'Shvat* (the 15th of *Shevat*), the New Year of the Trees, let's acknowledge that even though it is mostly associated with reclaiming land in Israel by planting thousands of trees, we are actually celebrating something so ancient it goes back to Temple times. As we prepare for our mystical seder and the blessing of the seven kinds of fruits found in Israel, let's look to one of Judaism's most legendary teachers, wonder workers, and storytellers, The Ba'al Shem Tov, for some insights into the holiday, nature itself, and the ways in which we are taught and absorb lessons, by appreciation of that which surrounds us.

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



carefully to the inner sound that's within the material sound that enters your ears, you'll hear the voice of God, which enlivens and brings into being, each moment, the sound that you hear."

Once, on *Tu B'Shvat*, the Ba'al Shem Tov was sitting with his closest disciples in Medzibuz. They were eating fruits in honor of the day, drinking *l'chayim* and discussing the importance of joy, *simcha*. During this conversation, the Baal Shem Tov said: "Joy is so great, because by joy a person can reach an exalted spiritual level so that he sees the *Shechinah*. After the verse: 'you shall be only joyful' (Deuteronomy 16:15), the Torah continues (v.16): 'Three times a year every man of you shall be seen [in the Temple] before the presence of the Lord your God.' When a Jew is happy, he is revealing that he is satisfied with the world that the Holy One, blessed be He, created, and also with the behavior of all the children of Israel, the people close to Him. He has no complaints against Heaven and no demands or grievances against any other Jew. Everything is good, upright, acceptable, fitting, and sweet; and this kind of joy, which brings a person to have a good eye, so that he looks on the Creator and His creatures lovingly, causes a revelation of the *Shechinah*. That is the secret of the teaching of our sages, who said about the person who goes to the Temple to 'be seen' by God: 'Just as he came to be seen, so does he come to see' – that is, to see the Divine Presence."

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

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

are like the halves of a pomegranate.' The palm tree says: 'A righteous person shall flourish like a palm tree.' "

The road entered the forest, and the horses galloped in pleasure, kicking up snow all over. On the two sides of the road an ancient, dense forest stretched out, with trees whose branches leaned out, arching over the road, almost touching in the middle and nearly blocking out the light of the sun. But here and there the sun peeked through the branches, lighting the travelers' path as they sped along in the sleigh. And as they went, they sang another verse from the Book of Song: "Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord. . .!"

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

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

The Four Jewish New Years, in Summary

Did you know that Jews celebrate four different New Years? Well, maybe not "Jews," because many of us have never heard of such a thing, and most of us have to look at a secular calendar each year to see when Rosh Hashanah – the one New Years we all know about – will take place. But there really are four talked and written about in the rabbinic literature. Two – and the reasons for their existence and utility – have pretty much been consigned to the dusty attic of our history. (If you don't think Judaism has evolved, ask anyone you know when the last time was that they took a sheep to the Temple in Jerusalem to be slaughtered in honor of God. Or

consider that about a third of the 613 *mitzvot* pertain to agricultural practices in ancient Judea; though a surprising amount of the ideas still make sense for farmers – crop rotation, for example – Jews have long since become a basically urban people. Or that Hasidism was initially considered a heresy yet has now become thought by virtually everyone to be part of the Orthodox wing of Judaism. Or that the rabbinic writing and laws that we now consider the very core of Judaism would have been utterly alien to, say, the Maccabees, who would have had no idea what you meant if you spoke to them of rabbis.) And the final New Year lay dormant for many years and has only in modern times come to be celebrated anew.

New Year No. 1: According to rabbinic tradition, the month of Nisan is actually the first month on the Jewish calendar. Why? Because it was in Nisan that the events of Passover took place, and they date the true beginning of the Jewish people to the Exodus led by Moses. Passover, therefore, becomes the first major event of every year, and the beginning of the religious calendar. Nisan was also the starting point used to count the years each ancient Israeli or Judean king had reigned. The Talmud also says that Nisan begins the year for the purchase of congregational sacrifices and also, interestingly, for the rental of houses.

Near Year No. 2: The first day of Elul, which is the sixth month on the Jewish calendar, usually falling in mid-to-late summer, is considered the second New Year. The Mishnah describes it as the date one had to formalize their animal tithe obligations. (In other words, it was sort of like April 15th here. Hey, the Temple priests had no land or harvests of their own; doing priestly things was hard work and they had to eat, too.) Today Elul is mostly thought of as a month of preparation for the main New Year observance.

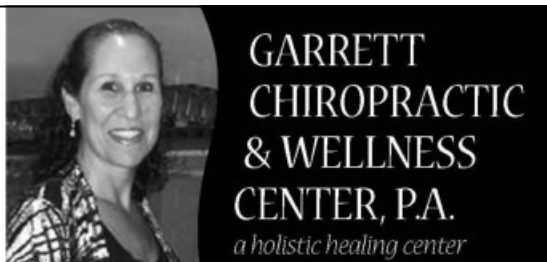
New Year No. 3: The first of Tishrei is

Rosh Hashanah, the New Year we all know. For us it's the beginning of the religious High Holy Days, a period of deep introspection and prayer. (If you didn't know, the basis for this was the rabbinic interpretation of the Biblical verse indicating that on this day "all the world is judged.") But in ancient Israel and Judea it was also the beginning of the civil calendar. And – unlike the measure for the rule of Jewish kings – it was also the point at which the reigns of foreign kings were set. As the start of the civil year (and perhaps not to conflict with planting and harvesting schedules), it was also the point from which Sabbatical and Jubilee years were measured, when further planting and harvesting were forbidden.

New Year No. 4: This is the one we're celebrating right now, the New Year for the Trees, in the month of Shevat. The House of Shammai said that the date should be the first of Shevat. But Hillel, whose rulings ended up eclipsing those of Shammai, said it should be the 15th. So the 15th it is. The Talmud says that we celebrate at this time because it's when the majority of the season's rains have already fallen. The Torah clearly states

that fruit may not be eaten from trees less than three years old. So *Tu B'Shvat* is used to determine the age of trees. (Like racehorses, all of which are given the birthday of January 1st regardless of when they were born, all trees have a birthday on *Tu B'Shvat*, regardless of when they were planted. The issue of when food was accessible was pretty important to agrarian people who lived off the land.) In recent years, of course, *Tu B'Shvat* has enjoyed a fairly strong renaissance, as the obvious day to celebrate the earth and nature and strive to protect and assure the livability of the only planet we've been given. For many years now, KJCC religious school students have planted trees and conducted a *Tu B'Shvat* seder, and they will again this year. *Chag Sameach*. ◇

*It was in Nisan
that the events
of Passover took
place, and the
rabbis date the
true beginning of
the Jewish people
to the Exodus
led by Moses.*



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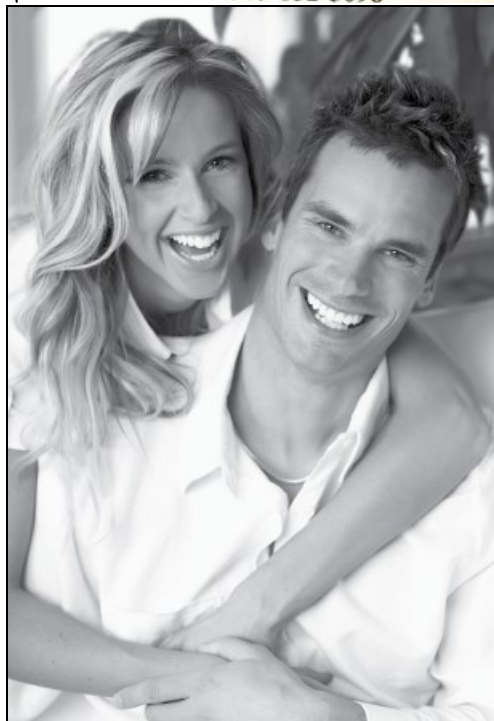
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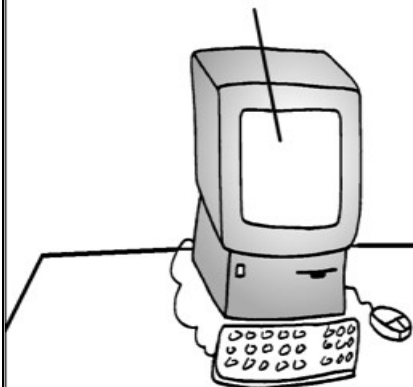
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