

FROM RABBI ZEMEL

.....
"SO LONG AS THE
TABLE IS THERE, WE
ARE ALL PART OF
THE CONVERSATION"

DEAR FRIENDS,

When I was a young rabbi, my cherished colleague, Rabbi Lynne Landsberg, z'l, related to me a rabbi story. These are the rabbinic experiences that we share as colleagues. We learn from them. They shape our rabbinate. Rabbi Landsberg, who many of you will remember as a member of our Micah community, was in the home of a grieving family, helping to plan a funeral.

It was a lovely home with beautiful artwork. The adult children were there, gathered from around the country. Their father had died years earlier, and now they were back in their childhood home preparing to bury their mother. The children were arguing, not meanly but animatedly over who would inherit what appeared to Rabbi Landsberg to be a rather ordinary dining-room set. In the eyes of these siblings, though, it was anything but ordinary. "This table holds our family memories, our holiday gatherings, every Shabbat, every reunion," one son or daughter said. "This is where we celebrated and loved and grew."

Rabbis are marked by these kinds of stories. We find something sacred in them. They give us insight into what really sustains Jewish life. They carry wisdom, depth of understanding and love. They stay with us.

Ahad Ha'am said, "More than the Jewish people have kept Shabbat has Shabbat kept the Jewish people." Rabbi Landsberg and I might say, "Amen!" And then amend Ha'am's wisdom with one word: "Table." The Shabbat Table is the

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An Exploration of Anti-Semitism in America Today: Are We Safe?

BY JARED BLUM

"May the children of the stock of Abraham who dwell in this land continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants—while everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree and there shall be none to make him afraid."

SO STATED PRESIDENT George Washington in his famous letter to the Touro Synagogue in 1790. It was a strong promise treasured by the American Jewish community and all who sought equality in this new country. Unfortunately, American history has demonstrated that this promise has not always been kept.

From the order by General Ulysses Grant banning Jewish merchants from selling to his army during the Civil War, to the conviction and lynching of Leo Frank for a murder he did not commit, to the State Department of President Franklin D. Roosevelt forbidding the Jewish refugees of the St. Louis from entering the country, to the political strategy of a 21st century president, anti-Semitism has run like a current in the river of American politics. And like that current in the stream, the strength of anti-Semitism has depended upon the intensity of its source.

And let me be clear. That source today is stronger than it has been in more than 75 years.

Sadly, the data bears this out. The Anti-Defamation League, the foremost civil rights group addressing anti-Semitism in the United States, recently released its 2019 audit of anti-Semitic incidences. These events encompassed assaults, vandalism and harassment; they numbered over 2,100 last year alone, a number which was the highest

recorded since the ADL began these audits in 1979. This 12 percent increase from 2018 came on top of a historic rise in such incidents from 2016 to 2017 of 60 percent.

Over all, the numbers of hate crimes of all kinds reported in the United States remained fairly flat last year after a three-year increase, according to an annual FBI report.

Synagogues Targeted

While crimes against property were down, physical assaults were up. Visible, high profile anti-Semitic assaults in 2019 included the attacks in Poway, Calif., Jersey City, N.J., and Monsey, N.Y., as well as a plethora of violence in Brooklyn, particularly against Hasidic Jews. Not only did the number of assaults nationally increase by 56 percent last year, there were increases in incidents targeting synagogues and community centers as well.

There is no question that the recent deadly attacks in synagogues in Pittsburgh in late 2018 and Poway in 2019 have made many American Jews feel more vulnerable than they have felt in decades. "This was a year of unprecedented anti-Semitic activity, a time when many Jewish communities across the country had direct encounters with hate" said Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL's CEO.

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"Every person shall sit under
his grapevine or fig tree with
no one to make him afraid."
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Vine

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MEMBERS HAVE ALWAYS SPARKED CREATIVITY: DON'T LET COVID-19 BE A BARRIER NOW

By JOSHUA BERMAN



I remember where I was standing when I first heard about Sukkat Shalom. It was a Friday evening, before Shabbat services. The Temple foyer was filling up, members of the youth choir just released from rehearsal were making a bee-line for the cookies, and old friends were catching up just before the candles were lit.

A fellow Micah member asked me if I had heard about this new project, Sukkat Shalom? I hadn't, and I wondered if it had something to do with building a Sukkah. It did not. Well, at least not literally.

But when I learned what we were doing as a community to assist the settlement of an Afghan refugee family in our area, I was stunned.

After soaking in the amazing details of this ambitious plan to change lives, I recall asking at some point, "whose phenomenal idea was that?" And the answer was telling: "Ours." Meaning, the idea had come from the congregation.

Since learning of the first Sukkat Shalom project, I have watched as committee members went on to other projects involving refugees, including a trip a year ago to view detention facilities on the U.S.-Mexican border.

Micah has always been a place where we take a spark, build the fire, fan the flames and warm each other and those around us. This is what has always been special about Temple Micah: So many thoughtful, inspirational and collaborative programs and efforts are created and driven by our community.

Sukkat Shalom is just one of many programs born, raised and nurtured by our community members. Our Gun Violence Prevention Project emerged from our deep desire not only to raise awareness about a local, devastating and out-of-control problem, but also importantly to take action to reduce gun violence.

Likewise, our Lunch & Learn series grew out of a desire by our congregants to share space, dive together into interesting topics,

wrestle with challenging ideas and yes, break bread together. Guided by thoughtful panelists, this group together has questioned Biblical notions, shone a light on thorny current events, reimagined traditions and even found time to laugh with each other. The diversity of ideas and presenters has become such a special and ingrained way for us to link arms, learn and spend time together.

But what are we to do in our current moment – restricted by Covid-19 and our vigilant non-stop efforts to be safe and healthy?

I believe now, perhaps more than ever before, we should strive to find ways to collaborate and co-create. As a community, there is so much room for us to do what we have always done: Get involved, identify opportunities, and find ways to partner with each other and thicken our ties as a community through engagement and action.

Covid-19 certainly should not put us "on pause." We are here. We are still here. There are so many ways for us to further, expand and deepen the Micah experience.

If you have an idea, please don't keep it to yourself. Perhaps it is inspired by a news article, an image on a screen, a passage in a book, a comment from a family member or an observation from a child. Maybe it is merely a way for Micah members to find time to be together, even virtually; or an opportunity to provide support for a particular segment of our community; or an inspiration that is aimed at the broader community around us.

But let's not wait for our clergy, staff or the Board of Directors to take the lead. Yes, they will be here to help, guide and support. We will help you move forward. We will help you create the space, literal and figurative.

Of course, your space right now might be a "Zoom room," but depending on the project, perhaps it could be a backyard or a park — with appropriate spacing and mask wearing. Micah leadership would welcome the opportunity to provide resources – technological, financial or otherwise.

This moment in time has such opportunity. No, we cannot ignore Covid-19. But it also should not stop us from being the innovators, creators and givers that we are.

The Feast

THE EASY BEEF AND ORZO (aka NOT YOUR MOTHER'S HAMBURGER HELPER) EDITION

BY ALEXANDRA WISOTSKY

I HAVE MENTIONED before that one of the best things about writing this column is I get to talk to Micah members that I may not otherwise have encountered. Even though we have kids in the same b'nai mitzvah class, I only met Robyn Goecke and Beth Schneider by working with them on this year's Underwear Drive. Robyn and Beth have known each other for years though, having met in a baby class when their eldest children were newborns.

Beth and her family joined Temple Micah two years ago after she and her family looked for a smaller congregation with more of a community feel. Micah fit the bill. Robyn and her family joined shortly after, although they had been coming to Micah's family High Holy Day services for years. Both women met with one of the rabbis and knew that there was something special about the place.

"Micah has a fresh perspective on Judaism," said Beth. Despite being new to Micah, they have thrown themselves into the community, both selling bagels before Machon Micah last year, and this year helping to coordinate the Underwear Drive. "It's hard to say no when one of the rabbis asks you to do something," Beth said with a laugh. Yes, I can relate to that.

Both Beth and Robyn like to cook, often giving each other cookbooks, sharing recipes, and getting their families together for meals in pre-pandemic days.

The following recipe has definitely become a family favorite for both the Goeckes and Schneiders. Robyn told me "it came from a woman I was in a Lamaze class with; it was her Lebanese grandmother's recipe. It makes good finger food for a baby, and is quick to make when you are trying to figure out what to get kids to eat."

"The cinnamon adds a little extra

something," said Beth. It is so popular that Robyn's kids ask for it for their birthdays. A note from Beth about the recipe: "The cheese, while optional, really makes it!"

I am always looking for new recipes; so if you have one you wish to share with the congregation, please get in touch.



Robyn Goecke and Beth Schneider

EASY BEEF AND ORZO

Serves 4 to 6 • Time to prepare: about 30 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 medium onion, chopped fine
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 4 cups chicken broth or stock
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup orzo
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup chopped Italian parsley
- 1 cup of fresh grated Parmesan cheese (optional), divided

Steps

1. Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onions and cook until soft, about 5 minutes.
2. Add meat and cook through.
3. Add tomato paste and cook for two minutes, stirring constantly.
4. Add stock and spices. Bring to a boil.
5. Add orzo. Bring back to a boil, stirring occasionally. Cook until all the liquid has been absorbed, usually about 20 minutes.
6. Add the parsley and half of the optional cheese. Stir to combine and then remove from heat.
7. Season to taste with additional salt and pepper if needed, and sprinkle with additional 1/2 cup of optional cheese.

After Years On the Cemetery Committee Grossman Is Handing Over the Gavel But Still Helping Those in Need

BY FRAN DAUTH

FOR THE PAST 50 years Temple Micah has maintained a cemetery for congregants' families at George Washington/Mt. Lebanon Cemetery in Adelphi, Md., and for nearly half of those years Shelley Grossman has been a cemetery trustee.

Moreover for 15 of those 20 years, Grossman has served as chair of the Cemetery Trustees Committee.

"Shelley has been an invaluable resource to so many people in her many years as chair," Rabbi Zemel said, adding, "She was simply great."

A Sacred Privilege

Grossman says, "It has been an honor and a sacred privilege to serve on the trustees committee. I have learned a lot about the Jewish way of death. I have had the opportunity to assist people at a stressful time and thereby gotten to know many members better. It has been very satisfying."

Grossman, who recently relinquished her gavel to Trustee Miriam Grogan, added, "I'm remaining on the committee, just turning over the administrative

stuff, worry and hassle to the next generation."

"Grogan," Grossman said, "will do an amazing job."

In discussing the role of the cemetery trustees, Rabbi Zemel noted "the cemetery trustees provide a vital service for our community assisting people at a most difficult time with burial arrangements in our cemetery and by overseeing the maintenance of the grounds."

A Vital Service

It was that vital service that led Grossman to get involved in the trustees committee.

"When Fred, my first husband, died, the Micah community enveloped me in a warm, caring blanket of love and concern," she explained in a recent interview.



Shelley Grossman

at my side throughout the ordeal and for several months after.

Overwhelmed With Kindness

"Prior to Fred's death, my longstanding active participation in the temple had become marginal. But I was so overwhelmed with the kindness of the Micah community that I determined to re-engage my enthusiasm and give something back."

"It turned out that I am comfortable dealing with grieving people, so work on the trustees committee was a natural."

Grossman said that while gravestones and the cemetery landscape require some of the committee's attention, the work is congregation centered. "That work is the real mitzvah the trustees committee performs, as far as I am concerned," she said.

That mitzvah was the motivating factor for Grogan, the new chair, as well.

Part of the Life Cycle

"I was a part of the *chevra kadisha* at my previous congregation, where our role was to prepare, ritually and physically, a body for burial. I found it very meaningful. When Sean and I joined Temple Micah, it seemed like an obvious place for me to offer to help.

"It is an honor to serve our Micah family at such an important part of the life cycle," Grogan said.



Miriam Grogan



Grossman FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►

It is the Cemetery Trustees Committee that sells individual plots to Micah families. The process usually involves a committee member meeting the congregant interested in purchasing a gravesite at the cemetery to pick out a plot.

When a death does occur, it has been the committee's practice for a trustee to meet a family member at the cemetery and go through the process to ensure all the requirements are met.

"Most important," Grossman said, "it provides aid and comfort to the family

member at a stressful time. Years later, family members have come up to me and told me how much they appreciated having someone who knew the ropes."

In 1979 Temple Micah officially purchased a section of George Washington/Mt. Lebanon Cemetery from Tifereth Israel, a Conservative synagogue in the District. Micah owns 330 gravesites in that location. Several years later Micah purchased 45 additional gravesites from Mt. Lebanon in another section of the cemetery, which welcomes interfaith burials as well as Jewish internments.

The need for more sites

Grossman said the price of a plot, which includes perpetual maintenance, is \$1,500, one of the lowest in the metropolitan area.

For the past 40 years the two cemetery locations have easily accommodated Micah burials, Grossman said. But, she added, the growth – and aging



— of the congregation means "in the not too distant future" Temple Micah will require additional gravesites. The Trustees Committee will be involved in that process although the temple board will have to approve such a purchase.

In addition to Grossman and Grogan, other committee members are Gene Granof, Mel Goldberg and Jessica Silver. The bylaws allow for a sixth member.

**Rabbi's Message FROM PAGE 1 ►**

symbol of where we gather, where the wisdom and deep feelings of generations are transmitted from one to the next. In other words, the Table is simply the site of "L'dor va dor." The Shabbat table is the symbol that embodies Ahad Ha'am's teaching.

During the pandemic, our Shabbat services have sustained me and, I know, many of you. Without these weekly gatherings, we might lose our connection to time itself. For many reasons, we center our Friday evening services on the blessings of the Shabbat table. This statement of Professor Roger Berkowitz of Bard College captures the core of what we at Micah are trying to create each week, and what the Jewish people have been creating for centuries:

"(Hannah) Arendt offers a metaphor of sitting around a table to understand what it means when the real world is lost. So long as the table

is there, we are all part of a conversation, connected by the table that creates, as it were, the world that unites us. Remove the table and we are isolated individuals sitting in space. Similarly, stories we tell and songs we sing bring us together and guide us in living together as a collectivity. Institutions we respect and symbols we revere inspire in us a shared sense of purpose. And celebrations and memorials offer us a common liturgy that builds a foundation upon which we stand, a shared ground."

There could not be a better description of Jewish living. The Shabbat table provides the ritual structure where the Jewish story is told and re-told. By simply coming to the table we define ourselves as partners in the ongoing story of the Jewish people. Sitting at the table, we become simultaneously storytellers, story listeners as well as actors in the story itself. We are the living heirs of Abraham and Sarah,

Moses and Miriam even as we tell their story through our ritual life.

Covid-19 has forced physical separation on us for over eight months, with no real end in sight. Our response has been to create a virtual table. When we gather around our virtual community table on Friday evenings, we are Bet Yisrael — the House of Israel — coming together as a family. We are no longer isolated. As Professor Berkowitz said, we are connected.

The story we tell each week comes to us through our liturgy. The candles symbolize both creation and revelation. In Shabbat lights, I see the glow of the burning bush and its eternal call to oppose tyranny in any form and to light a beacon to freedom. The bush of our biblical story burned in the wilderness of Horeb, the place of Sinai. If you look at Shabbat candles, you can find yourself transported to our covenantal Sinai moment and the promise of

Torah itself. As Americans, we can see the torch held aloft in New York Harbor.

In recent months, the Shabbat candles of Horeb have called me to Sinai's admonition against idolatry, to our call to be idol smashers. Idolatry is our biblical word for false gods, would-be messiahs, those who put self above all else. In our day, fascism is a modern form of idolatry. There is nothing quite like the light of a Shabbat candle to call us to our covenantal partnership and to guide our way forward.

Judaism is a religious tradition rooted in stories. Our stories uncover deep human truths that resonate and inspire to this day. We tell our stories at the Shabbat table. We recall the stories that shape us whenever we gather.

Please join us at our Micah Shabbat table. Let our lights burn in your home — in all of our homes.

Shalom,
Daniel G. Zemel

Talking About Books

No surprise, Micah people are big readers. Here is a roundup of some of the books that various temple discussion groups are reading currently or have recently read.

Among them is “Friday Black” a collection of short stories by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, a book that was to have been the subject of a congregation-wide session in April. That event never took place due to Covid-19 restrictions. The new date for an online conversation is set for 7 p.m. on Dec. 3. The sessions will be led by Micah members Gayle Wald, who teaches African American literature at George Washington University, and Andrea Levine, who taught literature for many years at GWU.

George Saunders, author of the widely read “Lincoln in the Bardo,” says the stories in “Friday Black” are “Strange, crazed, urgent, and funny, yet classical in the way they take on stubborn human problems . . . The wildly talented Adjei-Brenyah has made these edgy tales immensely likeable narrators, capable of seeing the world as blessed and cursed at once.”

• • •

The Monday Morning Group is reading “Democracy In Black,” by Eddie S. Glaude, who spoke to Temple Micah on Yom Kippur afternoon. Glaude, who is frequently seen on MSNBC, chairs the African American Studies Department at Princeton University. He is considered the preeminent expert on James Baldwin. Henry Louis Gates Jr. calls Glaude “the fiercest of thinkers, and this book is a brilliant and crucial prescription for necessary change.” The Washington Post noted, “Glaude reminds us that change rests with us, that ‘we are the leaders we’ve been waiting for.’”

The Monday Morning Group, which may or may not rename itself because it will meet on Wednesday mornings beginning in December, meets via Zoom, be it on a Monday or a Wednesday.

The Downtown Discussion Group (which is not currently meeting downtown but online) is reading Leora Batnitzky’s “How Judaism Became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought.”

Batnitzky is the Ronald O. Perelman Professor of Jewish Studies in the Department of Religion at Princeton University. Her book addresses the seemingly age-old question of whether Judaism is a religion, a culture, or a nationality. She argues that this question more than any other has driven modern Jewish thought since the eighteenth century.

The November selection for Micah Book Club, which also meets these days by Zoom, is “The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz,” by Erik Larson. The book looks at Churchill’s pivotal first year as prime minister as he strove to unite not just the British public but America in a joint battle against Hitler.

The December selection is “There, There” a novel by Tommy Orange about 12 members of Native communities all traveling to a big powwow in Oakland, Calif. The book is the first novel by Orange, a member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho nations, who grew up in Oakland.

• • •

For more information on these groups, contact the temple office. Dates for the meetings can be found on the calendar on the Micah website.

Anti-Semitism FROM PAGE 1 ►

Does this violence reflect we are living in a time of nationwide anti-Semitism? Reliable attitude polling appears to reject that thesis quite strongly. Since 1964, ADL has taken the pulse of anti-Semitic attitudes in America. Its latest survey finds that only 11 percent of American adults believe in certain anti-Jewish stereotypes, and that percentage has stayed stable for the last three decades. Then why, in recent years, has there been a surge of anti-Semitic incidents, including violent crimes, even as overall anti-Semitic attitudes remain low?

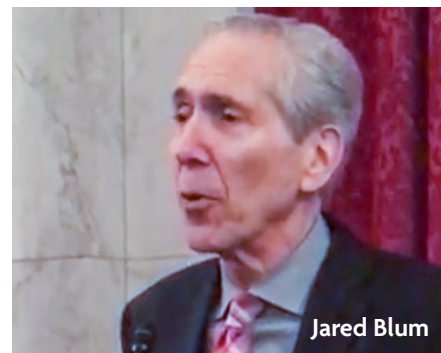
A Convenient Scapegoat

American Jews unfortunately may have hit the anti-Semitism trifecta. Historically, when nationalism, conspiracy theories and anti-elitism grow, Jews and other minorities represent a convenient scapegoat, and these derogatory perspectives toward Jews

are aided today by social media and spread like a virus. This cyber hate has permeated our society with a ferocity that is alarming.

Actions and language from political leaders from both the far right and the far left have almost normalized online anti-Semitic views. Certainly, this is true in the political sphere. Not only were Jewish journalists covering the Trump campaign during the 2016 election harassed by vicious anti-Jewish tweets, but ADL’s newly established Center for Technology and Society collected and analyzed all tweets across a single month that were directed at the 30 Jewish members of the House and Senate. The one-month snapshot – between July 23 and Aug. 22, 2020 – included 5,954 tweets that were identified as potentially anti-Semitic.

Civil rights advocates are attempting to counter online hate through pressure upon the social media companies with some success as Facebook and YouTube



Jared Blum

have banned Holocaust denial and Louis Farrakhan from their platforms. Advocacy groups like ADL are successfully pursuing state and federal laws like the recently enacted “Never Again Education Act” supporting Holocaust education in schools around the country.

This, in brief, is the state of play today in the United States. However, it is important to remember that President Lincoln speedily overturned General Grant’s anti-Semitic order, an

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TZEDAKAH

August 5–October 14, 2020

HIGH HOLY DAYS

Andrew and Christine Abrams
Sasha Adler
Susan Alpern-Fisch and Ricky Fisch
Steven Amarnick and Phyllis Wallace
Dina Anchin
Jodi Hope Anderson
Alan Appel
Roberta and Emily Aronson
Janet Augenbraun
Vicky Autrey
Alexandra Bachorik and Nicholas Herrmann
Justin Bachorik and Ashley Bear
Lawrence Bachorik and Gail Povar
David Bader
Laura and Peter Baitel
Terry Baker
Peggy Banks
Scott Barabander
Julie Baron
Ellen Beares
Robert Belloff
Susan Benda
Katie Benner
Benjamin Beraha and Corinne Pickus
Nathan and Karen Beraha
Christine Beresniová
Steven Berk
Shari Berke
Jennifer Berlin
Shellie Berman
Howard Berman
Brittany Beth
Benjamin Binswanger
Elsa Black
Eli Blum
Norman Blumenfeld
Lynn Bonde
Sid and Elka Booth
Ted Bornstein
Nancy Boswell
Christopher and Molly Bowen
Ellen and Stan Brand
Heather Brandon-Smith
Jonathan Branfman
Joyce Branfman
Betsy Broder
Ellen Brondfield
Frances Brookner
Michelle Brotzman
James A. Brown
Arthur and Sandra Brown
Arlene Brown and Eugene Bialek
Ellen Burch
Carol Calhoun
Juliette Carpien
Jannet and Alan Carpien
Kathryn Ceja

Richard Chrysler
Kelley Clopton
Betsi and Harold Closter
Daniel Cohen
Rachel and Zach Cohen
Genna Cohen
Nancy and Arthur Cohen
Ann Cohen
Nadine Cohodas
Lauren Colliver
Debra Conlin
Matthew Cooper
Eleanor Correa
Samantha Crane
Michelle Cravez
Melissa Crawley
Susan Crockin and John Atkins
Amy Damsker
Sarah Davidson
Noy Davis
Rebecca DeSantis and Alan Randall
Elana Dhuse
Marjorie Dick Stuart
David and Barbara Diskin
Diane Dodge
Jonathan Donenberg
Julia duMais
Deborah duMais
Maria Echaveste
Alan Edelman
Jonathan Edelman
Mckinley Edelman
Jeff and Nancy Edelstein
Michelle Elisburg
Gail Erlichman
David Faytell
Naomi Feigenbaum
Ellen Feingold
Howard Feldman
Rachael Feldman
Laura and Ronald Ferguson
Rachael and Olivier Fleurence
Cindy and Larry Frank
Sarah Frank
Robin Frank
Paul and Elizabeth Friedman
Donna Friedman
Dorian Friedman and Alexander Lurie
Phyllis Frosst
Jamie Gardner and Jonathan Stern
Rachel Garstang
Lora Geiger
Ann Geller and Jay Rappaport
Jacob Genachowski
Mark and Libby Gitenstein
Elisa Glazer
Marsha Goldberg
Chad Goldberg
Oren and Laurel Goldberg
Paul Goldberg and Susan Coll
Andrew Goldfarb

Benjie Goldfarb
Leslie Goldman
Ira Goldstein
Kenneth Goldstein
Laura Goodman
Janet Gordon
Hannah Gould
Bradley Graham
Emily and Bob Grand
Carole Greenberg
Victoria Greenfield and James Bodner
Sara Greengrass
Jared Greenstein
Elyse Greenwald
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Phyllis Marcus
Elaine Margolis
Barbara Marin
Karen Mark and A.M. Tucker
Meredith Mark
Kristan Markey
Heather Markowitz
Sherry Marlowe
Elyse Mauger
Elliot Maxwell
Mara and Bruce Mayor
Loren Mayor
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Barbara and Al McConagha
Marge McIntyre
Amy McLaughlin and Mark Levine
Trey Meehan
Monica Meerbaum
Nancy and Louis Melamed
Lorna Melendy
Joshua Meltzer
Harlan Messinger
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Stephanie Mintz
Susan Morawetz
Samara Morgenheim
Wendy Morris

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 Alisa Newman Hood
 Deborah Nord
 Ursula Oko
 Jennifer and Michael Oko
 Allison Orris
 Ellis Parker
 Kimberly Parker and Dan Mach
 Jeff Passel
 Marilyn Paul
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 Shira Perlmutter
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 Mieka and Tony Polanco
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CONTINUED NEXT PAGE ►

THE LIFE OF TEMPLE MICAH

WHY WE NEED POETRY TO ENGAGE SACRED TEXT

BY RABBI STEPHANIE CRAWLEY

Dear Micah Family,

I have read this passage at least 30 times since I first encountered it. It comes from Marilynne Robinson's novel "Gilead" when the aged narrator is reflecting on a memory from his childhood of praying with his father while traveling.

At first I thought I saw the sun setting in the east; I knew where east was, because the sun was just over the horizon when we got there that morning. Then I realized that what I saw was a full moon rising just as the sun was going down. Each of them was standing on its edge, with the most wonderful light between them. It seemed as if you could touch it, as if there were palpable currents of light passing back and forth, or as if there were great taut skeins of light suspended between them....They seemed to float on the horizon for quite a long time...

It is, in my opinion, simply beautiful poetic prose. But it evokes more in me than simple beauty. For me, this passage illustrates just exactly why we need poets to engage with sacred text.

Why this passage?

There is a concept in Jewish law called *bein hashmashot*, meaning between two suns. It is most easily understood as twilight, but the rabbis, concerned with figuring out exactly when Shabbat begins, calculate the exact amount of sunlight and moonlight that creates this liminal period between day and night. One rabbi suggests

that it is the length of time that it takes for a person to walk about half a mile from the start of sunset. Others try to measure an amount of darkness in the sky that makes it no longer day but not yet night. However, in their attempt to do the math, they miss the poetry of this moment.

Concerned only with whether their Shabbat stringencies have begun to apply, they miss the strange, powerful feeling of standing in two moments at once that Robinson so powerfully describes.

And so, I come back to my earlier thinking, "This is why we need poetry!"

It isn't that our texts fail to introduce beautiful ideas. It is that they so frequently had a different orientation. We need poetry and poets to pick up esoteric or exacting moments and breathe them life. Even though I've studied the legal concept of "*bein hashmashot*" before, I'm not sure I understood it until I read Robinson's words.

During these pandemic months, my poetry shelf has gotten a lot more wear. In fact, readers of my Vine contributions have seen my own fledgling attempts to make sense of this moment through poetry. What has previously been a hobby has turned into a lifeboat. In a moment where it is so easy to feel isolated from the world, poetry has given me the opposite feeling. I connect with other humans in a moment of shared word, and put myself back into the world.



In her essay "Poetry is Not a Luxury," Audre Lorde writes about the vitalness of poetry:

It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action.

Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest external horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives.

Poetry is *bein hashmashot*: It is between two things. It helps us live between the unformed and formed, the thought and unthought, this world and the world we hope for. Our tradition knows this. When the Israelites were standing between an army and a towering sea, they did not turn to logic or legalese. They turned to poetry. It was their poem, "*Shirat haYam*," meaning, "Song of the Sea," that helped them cross the sea. Their words were stepping stones and bridges.

We are also *bein hashmashot*, between two moments. It is so hard to see what the world might look like next week, or next month. But perhaps, like the Israelites, poetry might just help us imagine.

Tzedakah FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►

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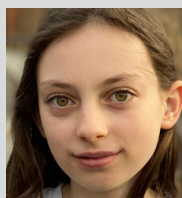
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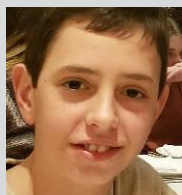
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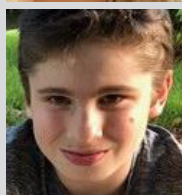
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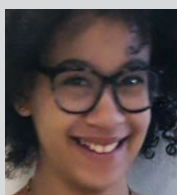
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 Cloyd and Emily Cloyd, on the birth of their
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Kate Kiggins and Jared Blum, on the engagement
 of their son, Eli to Caitlin Watson

Harriette Kinberg, on the birth of her
 granddaughter, Jovelle Gaetana Gozzi Kinberg

Dorothy Kirby, on her 100th birthday, November 6

Lori and Wayne Muhlstein, on the birth
 of their granddaughter, Ivy Cora

Mary Beth Schiffman and David Tochen, on the
 marriage of their son, Daniel to Erin Margolis

Doug and Melinda Soffer, on the births
 of their grandchildren, Nolan in August
 and Caleb David in September

CONDOLENCES

The Temple Micah community extends its deepest
 condolences to:

IRIS BARNETT, on the passing of her mother,
 Lillian Sokolow

AARON BIELENBERG, on the passing of his father,
 John Bielenberg

SIDNEY BOOTH, on the passing of his cousin,
 Melvin Garbow

ERIC GOLDBERG, on the passing of his father,
 Stuart Goldberg

ANDI LIPSTEIN FRISTEDT, on the passing of her
 mother, Susan Irene Samuel

BEN AND RABBI DANNY MOSS, on the passing of their
 grandmother, Shirley Suconik

NICK STARK, on the passing of his father, Alan Stark

May their memories be for a blessing.

THE EMERGING NEW ART OF PRAYER AFTER MONTHS IN THE VIRTUAL REALM

BY RABBI JOSH BERAHA

One thing I love about being a rabbi is that the work is never the same. Sure, life cycle events repeat themselves — baby namings, b'nai mitzvah, weddings — but the people are always different, and the *shnitzer*, unique.

One might argue that Shabbat services are routine, in their time and general make-up, but in each service the experience varies based on what's going on in the world, and what we bring to the moment. I could go on, but suffice it to say that each day I awake brings new conversations, new ideas and new stories.

The rabbis taught that we should never let Torah become an antiquated decree, but rather, an order of being, knowledge and insight, issued *this very day*. I very much hope that I am somehow fulfilling this teaching in sensing that every day is indeed unique.

And yet— since the beginning of the pandemic, I've experienced a lull in truly feeling the singularity of each new day. Maybe you've felt the same way? More often than not, I am at my desk, with my laptop, and though the contents on the screen I stare at change, and the voices coming through the speaker shift, I am always here, where I am now, sitting, typing, moving the cursor around to find the next Zoom link.

The ancient Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, wrote, “the only thing that is constant is change,” and I've found it helpful over the past seven months to try to remind myself of these words. I also think of Isaiah who told us, “Grass fades, flowers die, but the word of God is always fulfilled.”

Taken together I understand that to be human means to live in perpetual motion.

We are always in a process of becoming. And yet our growth has limits. If there is anything that is eternal in this world, we *are not it*. Eventually all of our days reach their end.

In these days that seem flat and unaltered it is sometimes hard to recognize any kind of motion or forward movement, which causes me to ask, are we still in the process of becoming? I think the answer has to be yes, that despite endless time at home, hours spent in front of a computer screen, sleepless nights full of frustration, a consistent nagging feeling that something's gotta give, we are indeed moving forward. But where? How?

One place I see movement is in the experience of prayer.

I've given a lot of headspace of late to what we've lost as we experience group prayer exclusively in the virtual realm.

I mourn the corporeal community we had pre-coronavirus — a packed lobby, crying babies, lively children, singing together, the choir, live instrumentation, and the list goes on. But in the wake of the High Holidays, and nearly 30 weeks of Shabbat online, I am beginning to realize how much change is happening, and how much more and *lasting* change there is to come.

I'll admit, at first, online worship seemed to me a filler, a poor substitute for what was. But though I lament the monotony of days blending one into the next, the ground beneath me has in fact been shifting all along.

I was pining for my and our pre-Covid life, which blinded me to perceiving the change. But I see it now. What we are doing now — online b'nai mitzvah, online High Holiday services, online shiva services



and baby namings — is not a mere stand-in for the “real thing.”

Rather with each new week, we're re-writing the rules of gathering and praying together.

I won't lie and tell you that as the weeks go on, my heart won't still be tinged with some amount of sadness as I open my computer and sit down in front of the bright screen and find the appropriate link, just like I did during the work-week. More little boxes, more muting and unmuting. But what I'll strive to see is that what we're all witnessing and taking part in is nothing less than a revolution in Jewish prayer. A titanic shift. Who knows what may come next?

Temple Micah has always been a congregation that prides itself on creativity and a welcome embrace of change. But the current moment calls for us to go far beyond anything we've ever done.

In the tiring, humdrum day-to-day, our call now, while we're here, is to look for new growth, (and push new growth!) in prayer, and in all we do. And to see the possibility in all that's breaking, and all that's yet to come. Together we can fulfill the rabbis teaching, to make Torah as though we're receiving it, right here and right now.

Anti-Semitism FROM PAGE 6 ►

order that Grant said for the rest of his life that he had regretted ever giving. In addition, though it took almost a century to obtain, a pardon and exoneration for Leo Frank was given by the governor of Georgia. The state of Israel rose from the ashes of the Holocaust, and there is no more supportive ally to that country than the

United States of America.

Anti-Semitism has become more hard-edged in this country and more visible due to a number of reasons. However, as Rabbi Zemel has said, as Jews we do not despair. We fight. We engage. We persist. We support all who would be victimized. It is part of our genetic code.

What now must be done is for the

nation to demonstrate to the world that America continues to value and uphold George Washington's sentiments expressed in 1790.

Jared Blum is a National Commissioner for the Anti-Defamation League and has served in numerous leadership positions there including as Chairman of the Board of the ADL Washington D.C. Regional Office.

Temple Micah wishes you
and your loved ones
a joyous and safe Hanukkah



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