

FROM RABBI ZEMEL

NEW WAYS, NEW WORDS TO USE WHEN LOOKING FOR GOD AND/OR FAITH

DEAR FRIENDS,



In my last letter, I offered thoughts about a liberal Jewish theology. It was an attempt to put to words the essence of my Jewish commitment, belief and actions. Too often, I hear what we

are not, as in not Orthodox, not kosher, not Shabbat observant, not kippah wearers. This is useful only to a point. My Judaism needs to inspire me, not simply separate me from the observances of others or the practices of the past. It needs to be positive and proactive, to tell me what I am, not what I am not.

My previous letter elicited many more responses than usual. How heartening! (It's always reassuring to know people are paying attention.) People asked for more. "Share more of what you think about God," one reader urged. Here goes.

I do not like the question, "Do you believe in God?" I do not understand the question because I don't know what people mean when they ask it. Do they wonder whether I believe that something I call God might answer a prayer? Do they wonder whether something I call God might hear a prayer but choose not to respond? Do they want to know whether I believe that God does things? Do they want to know something else entirely? Is their question more complicated or nuanced than any that I just posed? Most likely, different people mean different things when they ask

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Taking a Wide and Deep Look at Individual and Collective Roles in Systemic Racism

BY FRAN DAUTH

IT WAS IN May of 2020 that a Minneapolis police officer knelt on George Floyd's neck for more than 8 minutes, until he ceased breathing. Floyd, a Black man, was stopped by police because he was suspected of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill at a grocery store. His death led to protests around the globe. That homicide, of course, wasn't the first such occurrence.

As Rabbi Zemel said in his message to the congregation in January about the launch of Micah's Racial Justice Initiative: "George Floyd's murder sparked protests that should have been set off long ago."

And while dehumanizing systemic racism has been present in the United States for all of its history, the recent deaths of George Floyd and numerous others prompted members of the Temple Micah community to begin discussing anew how the synagogue could address the need for racial justice in American life.

The Racial Justice Initiative, inspired by those talks, launched Feb. 9th, with an online community-wide conversation about the history of systemic racism.

The community conversations will continue monthly through July, tackling

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Micah's Hebrew Poetry Group Can Get Wild—Also Really Learned and Thoughtful

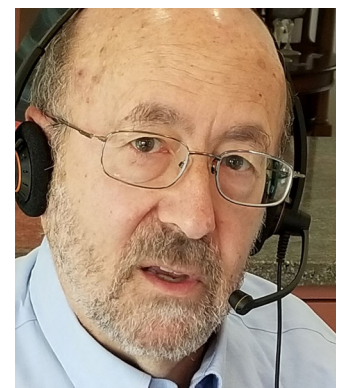
BY FRAN DAUTH

WHAT WORDS COME to mind when you hear that Temple Micah has a Hebrew Poetry Group? If you said learned, dedicated, curious, inquisitive and thoughtful you'd be describing the conversations that occur at the bi-weekly meetings.

You wouldn't be wrong if you said occasionally "wild," either. The group has a fifth meeting when a month has a fifth Saturday. They call it a "wildcard" session.

The last wildcard session, on Jan. 30, saw the group studying Amanda Gorman's inaugural poem in English and in a Hebrew translation. How wild is that?

Ed and Shelley Grossman began the group some 15 years ago. Ed is the long-time leader of the group; Shelley says he is "the driving force behind it," while she



Ed Grossman

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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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FOR ME, THE MICAH SOUNDTRACK BEGINS WITH TEDDY KLAUS

By JOSHUA BERMAN

Some of you may remember the 1996 movie "Jerry McGuire". As the love story comes to its conclusion, Tom Cruise's character rushes to the house of his love interest (played by the fantastic Renée Zellweger). After saying "hello," Cruise launches into what seems to be the start of a very long speech in which he will beg her to take him back. She cuts him off, with the now famous line, "You had me at hello."



I had one of those "You had me at hello" moments at Temple Micah. It is vivid. I can close my eyes and see it as if it weren't a decade ago, but rather just yesterday. And it is courtesy of the magical Music Director Teddy Klaus, who recently announced his plan to retire next June.

In the summer of 2011, our family came to Micah for the first time. We sat in the third row of the sanctuary – which I saw as a relatively simple, yet beautiful room. When we arrived at the appointed time, we were the only ones there and we took a moment to look around. We were struck by the absence of an ornate bimah looming high above the congregation. We took note of the lack of plaques on the seats. And there didn't seem to be a *yahrzeit* board anywhere visible.

But then we heard the piano. Soft. Beckoning. Strangely familiar. Comforting. Our attention was drawn to the front left corner of the room, and there was a stranger named Teddy – but at the time he seemed like an old friend — half standing, half sitting with a big smile on his face as he shared the melody with us. And the tune, it immediately transported me back to my childhood as a camper at Jewish camps. In 20 seconds, he had managed to tap into my Jewish soul. How did he know? And I remember thinking, *if this is Micah, I'm home.*

Before reading on, please stop and close your eyes for a moment. Put yourself back in the sanctuary just for a second. It doesn't have to be the first time you were there. Transport yourself back to any moment in time. Listen. What do you hear? For so many of us, music is what binds our Micah experience. And it was Teddy who produced this soundtrack of our Micah experience.

Don't get me wrong, the Micah gift and miracle of music has been the collaborative love of so many of our Micah friends. This decades-long symphony is a blessing from our Machon teachers, the choir, the orchestra, the pick-up band, guest soloists, and of course our rabbis, and Debra and Meryl. And all of us singing, praying, clapping and chanting as part of the congregation.

And in the center of all of that harmony, was Teddy. From the saddest of our moments together to the happiest celebrations, Teddy's music was a deep and intense part of our experience. From beginning-of-life baby namings through weekly Shabbatot, b'nai mitzvah, communal holidays, and even end-of-days mourning, Teddy shared his love with us through his music. For each of us, the memories are different, but powerful.

Flash back to a Purim spiel— there was Teddy leading an intrepid group of students (and parents) in a goofy, irreverent retelling of that great story, even managing to corral our clergy into some intermission campiness. As he did for both of my boys (for which I'm so deeply grateful), he gave so many children opportunities to immerse themselves in the holiday, build confidence, learn some pop tunes, sing and even dance a little through the Purim productions.

We have sat together on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings for four decades and witnessed as children become adults as they became b'nai mitzvah. For so many of them, it was Teddy by their sides (having prepped with them for weeks), smiling, encouraging, supporting and then applauding with his trademark thumbs-up. But Teddy's inspiration didn't end there. In many of those young adults, Teddy had fanned that spark of Torah reading, inspiring them to read from the sacred scrolls on the High Holidays.

How about the melodies he has coaxed from the breaths and instruments of so many of our fellow congregants? I always smile when I know our wonderful choir will be part of a service. I look forward to the first Friday of the month when the youth choir will belt out familiar tunes (with Teddy nudging them along from behind the piano – "louder, louder!"). Just the sight of the orchestra and pick-up bands getting set up

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THE FEAST

THE MEDITERRANEAN STYLE ROAST VEGGIES EDITION

BY ALEXANDRA WISOTSKY

"OUR FAMILY LOVES Israeli and Middle Eastern foods and this riff on roasted vegetables is easy, quick to get into the oven and totally magic when they come out" is how Jennifer Gruber described her offering when I asked for a recipe. She gave me two recipes and I can tell you she is absolutely right about both of them. But more on this later.

Jennifer and her husband Eric first encountered Temple Micah in 1992 when they were living on Capitol Hill. Eric's father had just died and they started looking for places to say Kaddish. "I had been teaching Hebrew in a couple of other synagogues, and the places I knew about were not a good fit for us," said Jennifer. So, one night they went to Friday night

services at Micah when it was still sharing a building with St. Augustine's Episcopal Church.

Jennifer said they walked in and it was a small group of people including Rabbi Danny Zemel and Music Director Teddy Klaus. "Teddy came up to us and greeted us and asked if we would like to light the candles. It was so welcoming," she added. So up they went to light the candles. "I didn't know the tradition



at Micah, so I just sang the blessing. Afterwards Teddy came up and said to me 'so I see you sing; do you want to join our choir?'"

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ROASTED VEGETABLES WITH ZA'ATAR

Prep time: 15 to 20 minutes. Bake time: 30 to 40 minutes.

Serves 6-8

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 lb. Brussels sprouts
- 1 large onion (red or white)
- 6 medium-large carrots
- 6 medium sized white potatoes
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 3 tablespoons Za'atar
- Salt and pepper to taste

Steps:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. If you like a bit of char, set oven to 425 degrees.
2. Peel off the outer leaves of the Brussels sprouts. Slice vertically in half.
3. Cut all the other veggies into 1/2 inch pieces.
4. Spread the vegetables equally on two large baking sheets.
5. Drizzle the veggies with olive oil. Toss until well coated.
6. Shake the Za'atar evenly over veggies, turning veggies so they are well coated with the herbs and oil. Add salt and pepper (optional).
7. Transfer to oven and bake for 30 minutes. Use a fork or cake tester to check that veggies are soft inside. If not, bake for an additional 5 -10 minutes.

ROASTED BUTTERNUT SQUASH WITH DRIED FRUIT AND POMEGRANATE SYRUP

Prep time: 15 to 20 minutes Bake time: 30 to 40 minutes

Serves 6-8

Ingredients:

- 1 large butternut squash
- 12 dried apricots
- 1 cup of dried cranberries
- 1 large onion (red or white)
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1/3 cup of pomegranate syrup
- Salt and pepper to taste

Steps:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Put the whole butternut squash in the microwave for 3 minutes. Let cool to the touch.
3. Peel the squash and cut into 1/2 inch pieces.
4. Cut apricots in half.
5. Put all of the dried fruit in bowl and fill with warm water until fruit is submerged.
6. Let soak for 5 minutes to hydrate them. Drain water.
7. Peel and chop the onion into 1/2 inch pieces.
8. Spread the veggies equally on 2 large baking sheets and drizzle with olive oil.
9. Turn over the veggies, then drizzle with pomegranate syrup. Add salt and pepper (optional).
10. Transfer to oven and bake for 30 minutes. Use a fork or cake tester to check that veggies are soft inside. If not, bake for an additional 5 to 10 minutes.

Racism FROM PAGE 1 ►

topics such as racism in the justice system, in education, health care and in the economy.

In addition, “learning cohorts” have been created for smaller groups to discuss those areas of systemic racism and how to take action, individually and collectively.

The six-month initiative was created by the Racial Justice Task Force, chaired by Amy Berman and comprised of Martha Adler, Helen Burstin, Yolanda Savage-Narva and Rabbi Zemel.

The first virtual community conversation in February attracted members of 130 Micah households. So many people signed up for the learning cohorts that a lottery was held to select 40 participants to fill four groups of 10 each.

In its proposal to the Micah Board of Directors, the task force had noted that the protests sparked by the murders of people of color are “pushing Americans to reckon with the realities of racial injustice, violent extremism and systemic racism. And, Jews and Blacks have a long history of struggling together for justice. We believe it is time for the Temple Micah community to further engage and wrestle with systemic

racism, to see our role within it, and to work together toward becoming an anti-racist community.”

The task force members began meeting regularly in late August, and as part of its deliberations selected an outside facilitator to lead the effort, Rachel Faulkner.

What made Faulkner the ideal person, Adler, a member of the task force, said was that “she seemed to at the outset to ‘get’ Micah, she is a Jew of Color, she is direct, smart, and committed to social justice.”

Faulkner is a widely-lauded community organizer, coach, social justice advocate and anti-racist educator, who currently serves as director of community investments at the Safety Respect Equity Network, which is a Jewish network of more than 125 organizations seeking solutions to gender-based harassment, discrimination and inequity.

The SRE Network website notes that it recognizes “sexual misconduct and discrimination happen in Jewish workplaces and communal spaces, too. We cannot tolerate these behaviors within our institutions. We are called upon by the ethical standards of our tradition to address them . . . as well as to lend our voices and action to the national

movement seeking a culture shift in our country.

Asked why she chose to assist Temple Micah’s racial justice project, Faulkner answered: “I believe in the power of the Jewish community to change the world, to lead, to be led, and to show up in racial justice spaces where there is currently a void.

“It’s on every single one of us to disrupt the systems that are denying Black folks’ access to what they need to live, and ultimately to thrive. If I can help Jews figure out their place in the fight for racial justice, I can begin to do the work that I know I will not complete.”

Berman, the task force chair, echoed Faulkner’s words, saying, “We know that this is the continuation of a long journey that we are now formalizing and calling the Racial Justice Initiative.”

She explained that the structure created for the initiative was designed to enable congregants to go wide – the community conversations open to all that are led once each month by Faulkner – and to go deep in the smaller groups, the learning cohorts. The hope is that the various efforts will help the congregation “look at our individual and collective roles in racism and to try to help each other take action,” she said. ♦

THEY MET AT TEMPLE MICAH, MARRIED AT TEMPLE MICAH AND HAVE INCLUDED MICAH IN THEIR ESTATE PLANNING

When Sid Booth says he and his wife Elka “go a back a long way” with Temple Micah, he’s talking about more than 50 years.

In fact, Sid and Elka met at Temple Micah more than 50 years ago, while stuffing envelopes for the welcoming of Rabbi Bernard Mehlman who had just been hired as the congregation’s first rabbi when it was still in Southwest.

Over the years, the couple “found in Temple Micah a warm home that meets many of our family’s religious educational, social and civic needs. . . We are challenged there by our tradition and by very smart and compassionate rabbis to become better Jews, to be more mindful and caring, and to share the work to repair our broken world, Sid said.

He shared the couple’s love of Temple Micah in hopes of inspiring others to consider making a planned gift to Micah.

“We want to help ensure that this journey of Micah

endures for future generations, [and] as one of several members who some 15 years ago explored an endowment mechanism for Micah, I couldn’t be happier that the Temple has now established endowment-like funds to support future needs and is offering planned giving opportunities.

“This is why when we updated our wills earlier this year, we made sure to provide for Temple Micah. Having Temple Micah in our estate plans gives me a sense of comfort that we are planting seeds for the future of the Jewish people.”

Sid added, “We are so grateful to have found this exceptional spiritual community, and perhaps to have had a small role in building it.”

For more information on the Planned Giving program, view the Planned Giving webinar at <http://www.youtube.com/user/TempleMicah>, or email Plannedgiving@templemicah.org.

Poetry FROM PAGE 1 ►

is a “member.” To an outsider, this is not an obvious distinction.

Back when Temple Micah was still in Southwest the Grossmans led sessions to study Hebrew in the context of Friday and Saturday services. They reviewed the prayers in Hebrew and conversed about them in English.

Then when the couple was on a Temple Micah trip to Israel in 2005 they heard a speaker read a poem in Hebrew by the great modern Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai. “It struck me I could understand most of the poem in Hebrew,” Ed recalled.

“The Hebrew was colloquial without being jargon and there were references to the Bible that were fairly transparent,” Ed said. “In short, the Hebrew was both fairly simple in language and provided insightful material that would be worth discussing in English.”

And that is exactly what happens at The Hebrew Poetry Group now.

It was on a subsequent trip that Ed bought a 5-volume set of Amichai’s collected work in Hebrew. The group has been working its way through Amichai’s poems ever since, with occasional excursions to consider other poets and poems. But even then, there is a Hebrew component as there was when the conversation was about the Amanda Gorman poem, “The Hill We Climb.”

The Hebrew translation was done by Rachel Korazim, an Israeli educator who has her own website dedicated to the stories, poems and songs of Israel. Now that the Micah’s Hebrew

Poetry group meets on Zoom, Korazim often joins a session, as she did the day Gorman’s inaugural poem was discussed.

Korazim’s occasional attendance is illustrative of the sort of folks who are attracted to the conversations. Three accomplished – and much lauded – published poets are part of the group: Jean Nordhaus, Myra Sklarew and Barbara Goldberg.

Most, of course, are not published poets, but all love poetry.

Ed, a former senior lawyer in the Office of the

and continue to live this story,” she said.

A more recent participant, Michael Newman, said he was attracted to the group because members are “welcoming, knowledgeable and (there’s) no discord. Poetry is a wonderful respite from Covid.”

Newman said Amichai’s poetry is accessible and meaningful with wonderful images, adding that he enjoys learning about a poem’s structure and its historical context.

A session involves reading a poem through in English, then in Hebrew and finally, translating line by line. “In

years, who came because she didn’t fully appreciate a poem until she heard the conversation, Ed said. The woman, who has since died, was invaluable to the group, he said. “We still miss her a lot.”

Sessions were held on Saturdays, Ed explains, “to follow Shabbat morning services originally because people were there already and we had food —especially if there was a bat/bar mitzvah – and it was very much in the spirit of Shabbat.”

In years past, the group had eight to 10 participants. Now that it is on Zoom, there are typically a dozen or so in attendance. The wildcard session, featuring the Amanda Gorman poem, saw 20 participants sign in to Zoom.

The individuals in the group change and that changes the character of the conversation, according to Ed.

“The online version has made it possible for some more to attend, but some regulars (who came in person) haven’t been attending. We do miss the refreshments.”

In a sense, the Hebrew Poetry Group has its own outreach program. Recently Jean Nordhaus was the featured speaker at a monthly Lunch & Learn Zoom session discussing her poetry collection, “The Porcelain Apes of Moses Mendelssohn.” The question-and-answer session was moderated by Ed Grossman. Earlier, Poetry Group member Herman Schwartz delivered a talk on Yiddish poetry that he had done for the Wise Aging cohort.

One comment from Ed Grossman might encapsulate the group’s attraction: “Amichai would feel comfortable at Temple Micah.” Amichai died in 2000. ♦



Legislative Counsel of the House of Representatives, concedes he has “no formal background or study of poetry, either in English or any other language.” Shelley is a retired journalist.

Asked why study poetry? “Because it is great literature,” Ed answered.

One of the long-time members of the group, Judy Hurvitz, commented that “modern Hebrew poems are almost always written in response to experiences and events, usually 20th century, in Jewish and Israeli history.

“So, this is a way to understand the lives and emotions of everyday people who lived

virtually all cases we have an English translation, members of the group typically point out different ways the Hebrew could be translated . . . Sometimes a word in Hebrew has several potential meanings and the different meanings provide greater richness and dimensionality, Ed said.

The group varies widely in Hebrew literacy, he said. “Some folks know very little Hebrew, but they learn a few words, and I believe the discussion about the Hebrew is still beneficial to them.”

Ed noted that for years the group included a woman who was fluent in Hebrew, having lived in Israel for

TZEDAKAH

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Teddy Klaus for the gifts he has bestowed on our congregation, by Kate Kiggins and Jared Blum
With profound appreciation for the meaningful online services made possible by Rabbi Zemel, Rabbi Beraha, Rabbi Crawley, Rabbi Frank, Teddy Klaus, Debra Winter, Rachel Gross, Jeannelle D'Isa, staff and dedicated Temple Micah members, by Nancy Piness

IN MEMORY OF
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The birth of Orli Ruth Goldstein, by Jodi Enda, Terence Samuel and Ilana Samuel

IN MEMORY OF
Harvey Salkovitz, uncle of Judy Hadley, by Trudy and John Saracco

This list reflects donations received Dec. 23, 2020–Feb. 5, 2021. Every effort has been made to ensure its accuracy, but if there are any errors or omissions please accept our apologies. For corrections or clarifications, please contact Rhiannon Walsh in the temple office. Thank you.

Feast FROM PAGE 3 ►

Jennifer joined the choir. She and Eric started going back each week and by the end of the year they were members.

In those days the community members also taught in the religious school and everybody knew everybody. It was a small community, so people were not able to be invisible. If you came, you had to be involved, so Jennifer and Eric became deeply involved. Eric was on the board of directors when Micah moved to the new building – in their second year as members. Jennifer took over the organization of the annual book sale and ran it for about five years. Then, she

started the Judaica shop and ran it for eight or nine years. She and Eric were presenters at a Micah retreat.

When Cantor Meryl Weiner injured her vocal cords at Rosh Hashanah for what was to be her first High Holy Days at Temple Micah, Jennifer filled in when Klaus asked for her help. “I was petrified and in a panic but I agreed. I’d never sung solo before a large group, let alone an entire congregation. But with Teddy’s coaching somehow I got through Kol Nidre and the whole next day,” she said.

In 2020, Jennifer produced some of the videos for the High Holy Days. Now she is volunteering with Hineni.

“We had met all these people and we never once imagined what a

profound impact it was going to have on our lives and that of our children Lina and Jacob. When we walked into Micah we had no idea that it would become our community in every way,” Jennifer told me, in explaining her family’s connection to Micah. “Our best friends are from Micah.”

But now back to these two recipes: These versions of roasted vegetables use Za’atar or pomegranate syrup for seasoning, both ingredients readily available in area supermarkets. Za’atar is an earthy, herby dry spice combo featuring sumac and sesame seeds. Pomegranate syrup has the consistency of molasses and is both tart and sweet. Personalize these with your choice of veggies and dried fruits. ♦

Rabbi’s Message FROM PAGE 1 ►

whether I believe in God, which makes the question that much more ambiguous.

In my last letter, I referred to God as, among other things, the “great beyond.” I wrote:

“I believe that there is such a thing as a sacred, moral core to creation. I simply cannot abide the belief that the human moral order is up for grabs — that I do what is right for me and you do what is right for you. Slavery, murder, torture, to name a few, must be strictly — morally — forbidden. Such morals are beyond debate and are rooted in what I call a sacred belief.”

In my Judaism, God is the ultimate anchor, the root of these moral absolutes. These absolute moral truths cannot simply be the product of human pragmatism. Universal human dignity is a sacred absolute.

I am therefore drawn to a different question or two. Rather than “Do you believe in God?” I prefer, “Have you experienced God?” or, better yet, “Have you experienced the sacred?” When I ask the

latter question, people begin to talk about almost everything — the birth of a child, recovery from illness, memories of loved ones, transcendent moments that defy understanding or explanation. When I pose the question in such a way, I believe people are empowered to think about God in a different and, for many, safer path. They do not have to take a leap of faith. I am helping them open a door to a new way of thinking about God. Often, we lack the language to express what we believe. This is particularly true when it comes to God. I am searching for new words with which to ask the same question.

Prayer is the Jewish ritual used to capture such transcendence. I did not always know or understand that. It is what I have come to after many years of study, thinking and praying. And it is this understanding that guides the planning of our Temple Micah worship.

This God-thinking coheres with my thinking about the world we live in. Max Weber used the term “disenchanted” to describe modernity as a world in which secular-

ism elevates rational thinking to an unassailable pinnacle. Contrast that with the momentary enchantment that prevailed as Amanda Gorman recited her poem, “The Hill We Climb,” on Inauguration Day. Our disenchanted world leaves us with what philosopher Jürgen Habermas has termed “an awareness of what is missing.”

This is the burden of modernity. When we choose to confront our reality, we become painfully aware of the cold “factness” of our physical lives. When we try to ignore this reality, we are left with nothing but impersonal, brutish, rational analysis. Religious faith offers a third option, an attempt to speak to the Habermas reality of “what is missing.”

Modern religious faith in general, and Temple Micah in specific, seeks to speak to the soul, that invisible part of us that yearns for more. This is the part within us that was so moved by Amanda Gorman’s poem. There is a part of each of us, I believe, that deeply longs to feel the sacred and to commune on some level with this other, inner reality.

We are all more or less familiar with Hillel’s oft-quoted teaching, “If I am not for myself who will be for me, if I am for myself alone, what am I?” (Avot 1:14). The second clause, “If I am for myself alone...,” is a call for us to move beyond ourselves. To be Jewish is to engage with the world on every level.

The first part of Hillel’s teaching can mean many things. “If I am not for myself...” can be seen as a call for spiritual sustenance. It is a cry for inspiration. It is the need to nourish the inner self for the long-haul journey required to engage the world. The inner spiritual world, the need for enchantment, is not divorced from the realities we face in repairing the brokenness around us. It is faith that enables us to sustain the effort, to continue the journey. The soul needs feeding.

Our Judaism is incomplete if it does not nourish our souls, bond us with others and inspire us to continue to climb the hill that is ever before us. This is all what I like to call the Human Project.

Shalom,
Daniel G. Zemel

B'NAI MITZVAH



TATUM PARKER MACH

MARCH 6 / 22 ADAR

PARENTS: Kim Parker and Dan Mach

TORAH PORTION: Ki Tisa



ANDIE KANAREK

MARCH 20 / 7 NISAN

PARENTS: Nicole Rabner and Larry Kanarek

TORAH PORTION: Vayikra



SAM HEINEMANN

APRIL 17 / 5 IYAR

PARENTS: Jennifer Budoff and Tom Heinemann

TORAH PORTION: Tazria-Metzora



DANIEL ELI KAYE

APRIL 24 / 12 IYAR

PARENTS: Jonathan Kaye and Dara Goldberg

TORAH PORTION: Achrei Mot-Kedoshim

MAZAL TOV

Libby Pearson and Sam Haltiwanger, on their marriage, and to Libby's mother, Sonia White

CONDOLENCES

The Temple Micah community extends its deepest condolences to:

HOWARD BERMAN, on the passing of his cousin, Robyn Weinrib

GUY BRENNER, on the passing of his mother, Rachel Feldhay Brenner

LESLIE BROWN, on the passing of her mother, Elaine Brown

RITA CARLETON, on the passing of her father, Simon Josen

OLIVIER FLEURENCE, on the passing of his mother Marie-Therese Fleurence

BETH RUBENS GOLDFARB, on the passing of her father, Barry Rubens

CAROLE HIRSCHMANN, on the passing of her sister-in-law, Marilyn Bender

LOU KOLODNER, on the passing of his uncle, Mark Lichtenstein

JULIE KUBAL, on the passing of her father, B. David Kane

RABBI JESSE PAIKIN AND RABBI STEPHANIE CRAWLEY, on the passing of his grandmother, Rachel Paiken

PHYLLIS POSNER, on the passing of her brother, Edward Martin Posner

LOUIS WEINER, on the passing of his father, Samuel Henry Weiner

May their memories be for a blessing.

President FROM PAGE 2 ►

in the sanctuary brings a grin to my face. Let's not forget Sunday morning Boker Tov, and all of the voices at Machon Micah, learning our traditions through Teddy and his Machon Micah "band," assembled with love through his electronic piano. And of course, he has teased song out of so many of us in the congregation, bringing music to each of our voices and hearts.

There are so many of these moments – different for each of us. But I will end with two of my favorites. As the sun sets on Yom Kippur each year and as we each reach the conclusion of that incredibly personal journey, Teddy floods our hearts with Avinu Malkeinu. Together we remember loved ones. We make our promises. We tightly grip our neighbor's hand. We shed tears. Many of us stand and face the ark for one final prayer. And through

it all, Teddy's fingers produce a haunting and powerful Avinu Malkeinu, which lingers with us as we break our fasts, reflect on the books we have closed and on the hopes and dreams ahead.

But I close with my absolute favorite — Shabbat Shirah. Sometime each December, I turn to the Micah calendar and lock in the date for Shabbat Shirah, usually in late January or early February. When they were students in the Machon, in the lead up to that Shabbat, I'd ask my boys for sneak previews of all of the different versions of Mi Chamocha. And on that Shabbat morning, I insist on getting to the sanctuary early, settling in, closing my eyes and anticipating those first stunning clarinet notes courtesy of the orchestra and Teddy. For the next 90 minutes, we musically cross the Red Sea with the Israelites – singing, dancing, humming, listening and praying. Even this year, I'm not sure if the true

miracle was the safe passage through the Red Sea or that Shabbat Shirah came to us so gloriously through Zoom. But what I know is that I cried as I listened to Teddy's Youth Choir sing "When You Believe." For me – for many of us – that moment is what Temple Micah is all about.

It would take weeks and weeks and many Vine columns to list all of these musical moments that truly are part of our collective Micah experience. Instead on behalf of so many of us, I will simply say thank you, Teddy. We will celebrate and hug you (first virtually and, yes, at some point in person) many times in the months ahead.

So yet again I reflect back on my first morning at Micah. Teddy's first notes on the piano were the warmest embrace fathomable. Those first tunes beckoned me to stay. Those first chords were undeniably Micah's greeting. You had me at "Hello."

THE LIFE OF TEMPLE MICAH

IS IT POSSIBLE TO MEET GOD ON ZOOM?

BY RABBI STEPHANIE CRAWLEY

Dear Micah Family,

At the end of December, Rev. Canon Dr. Esau McCaulley wrote in the New York Times opinion section, “Why You Can’t Meet God Over Zoom.” It was sent around our rabbinic team, and we commented on the beautiful writing, and the deep truths of much of what he wrote.

McCaulley, a Black Christian theologian and Anglican priest who is an assistant professor at Wheaton College, speaks to the challenge of virtual worship, and his own family’s early attempts to replicate the experience of Sunday church by setting up their chairs in neat rows and putting on their church clothes. He writes, “After that first Zoom church week, our family abandoned the church clothes and makeshift pews. Everyone’s attention lagged.”

His explanation: “If bodies and physical spaces are really means by which we attempt to encounter God on earth, something immeasurable is lost when worship goes virtual.” He, of course, is right. Something immeasurable has been lost.

I miss our building. I miss the buzz of the lobby on a Friday night. I miss harmonies and true silence and praying with the faint clanging of pots and pans

in the kitchen in the background. I miss the light pouring into the sanctuary on Shabbat morning, often just as we are uttering the words, “*Or chadash al Tzion tair*—Let a new light shine on Zion,” as if our prayers were incantation. I miss chatter and handshakes and hugs, and the audible relief of b’nai mitzvah students when they have finished chanting their final words of Torah.

All these things, although describable, are of course, immeasurable. They are holy, perfect, every day and elevated moments. They certainly make up the sonic and spiritual fabric of the Micah community. But they are not all there is. If this last year has taught me anything, it is that Micah is so much more than our moments. Holiness abounds.

I loved McCaulley’s piece, especially as he moves from lamenting our Zoom existence to exploring this as an opportunity to discover what is essential to prayer and to begin to shape worship around that, in both virtual and in-person environments. But I diverge from him on one point. It is, in fact, his titular point: “You Can’t Meet God Over Zoom.” Respectfully, I disagree.

Zoom is hard, yes. Virtual services, classes and panels are inexact replicas of



their real-life versions. There is a loneliness in hanging up a call, and having the sound and community just end. But, crucially, God is still there. I’ve met God so many times over the last year. There has been so much holiness, so much hope and growth and learning and spirit. We may be in exile from our building, but we are not in exile from our community. And we are certainly not in exile from God.

There is a teaching in the Talmud that wherever the Israelites went in exile, Shechinah, the in-dwelling, feminine, presence of God, went with them. When I think about the last year, we brought God into our Zoom spaces. We met God because we brought God there. And so, in gratitude, a small poem. Because God was there, thanks to all of you.

I met God -

We were reintroduced when the light of Shabbat candles
bounced from screen to screen
I saw her peeking when the family cradled the Torah in their living room
And then with eyes filled with tears when our list of names
to remember grew and grew and grew

I met God -

We sang together on my sofa sanctuary
I saw her scrolling distractedly and then remembering
that sacred words were being spoken
And then with clapping hands as we chose joy and hope
when it was easier to choose otherwise

I met God -

In your willingness to open up the computer, even on a Friday night
In your return to the screen each week
In 146 daily 6:30pm study sessions
In your words and prayers and reflections

I met God -

Because of you.



Temple Micah
wishes you peace,
prosperity, health,
happiness, and all the
joys of Passover.
Chag Sameach!



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