

## FROM RABBI ZEMEL

### ACCEPTING THE INVITATION

DEAR FRIENDS,  
In introducing the Shabbat morning Amidah (standing prayer), our *Mishkan Tefillah* prayerbook offers two words that never cease to capture my imagination and spirit: "Prayer invites." Shabbat morning regulars know that I like to say that prayer is an invitation for us to delve into the deepest parts of our souls, to explore what author Daniel Dennett calls our "center of narrative gravity." Prayer invites us to seek the truest and best stories to tell about ourselves. Prayer invites us to explore the world around us and both marvel at its wonders and ponder our role in making it better. Prayer invites us to hit pause and consider ourselves, the universe and the space in between.

As we approach our holiest days, I find myself thinking about these two words and how our Days of Awe put them in capital letters and broaden the invitation. The Holy Days invite us not only to explore, but to examine what we wish to change. Yes, the Holy Days are premised on the radical supposition that we are able to change! Human beings, each one of us a reflection of the divine image, have the power to alter the way we live our lives. We can seek to become more patient, more generous, and less judgmental. In these days, we examine ourselves in order to learn and to grow.

We do this as individuals and as a community. With this letter, I therefore ask, what in American Jewish community life would I like to see change? I offer three ideas:

1. Let us communally engage in the Israel conversation with love, under-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 ►

## It's So Much More Than Underwear

### An Interview with Friendship Place's Chris Cannedy

BY MARTHA ADLER WITH JEANNELLE D'ISA

IF YOU'RE NEW to Temple Micah, you may wonder...

Underwear?

For the past 22 years, Temple Micah's 6th graders and their families have partnered with Friendship Place, a nonprofit dedicated to serving D.C. residents experiencing homelessness. The Underwear Drive, held annually from the High Holy Days through November helps provide a year's supply of new, clean underwear to the city's unhoused. The drive has been a way for our 6th graders to serve our local community while learning to think globally. As we prepare for this year's Underwear Drive launch, we talked with Chris Cannedy, Community Engagement Manager of Friendship Place, to learn more about

what brought him to this work and help answer the question "why underwear?"

Cannedy began his work at Friendship Place in 2019. A Micah neighbor and a member of the National Cathedral, Chris' first connection to Friendship Place was volunteering to assemble Easter baskets for their clients. He then traveled to Puerto Rico with other volunteers from the Cathedral after Hurricane Maria in 2017—that trip deeply affected him and redirected his professional pursuits. "I couldn't sit in a cubicle anymore after the hurricane cleanup," Chris said. "I left my 9-to-5 job in insurance claims and came to Friendship Place." He was hired as a development assistant, but soon

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## PROVIDING DURING A PANDEMIC

Friendship Place opened The Brooks, a short-term housing facility in Ward 3, in April 2020. That year, the Underwear Drive shifted to become an "everything drive," as Micah members helped outfit The Brooks with new bedding, kitchenware, and all the things that make an urban apartment a nicer place. With play areas, a computing center, and a homework lounge, The Brooks is designed to provide a 24-hour, care-centered environment for families as they transition to homes of their own. Its residents "shopped" in Chris' office for bedsheets, plates, and other needs. "The amount of donations was so much," said Cannedy. "Those we serve were very, very appreciative. A client came through to 'shop' for her needs and said 'I know COVID is happening, but can I give you a hug right now?'"



"Every person shall sit under  
his grapevine or fig tree with  
no one to make him afraid."  
MICAH, CHAPTER 4, VERSE 4

# Vine

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# THINKING OF ORANGES

BY RIELLE MILLER GABRIEL

The High Holy days are upon us, and I am thinking of oranges.

No, I'm not erroneously comparing apples and oranges, nor am I confusing my Jewish holiday food symbols. You see, when I was in elementary school we would each be given an orange on our last day of school before the High Holidays Fall Break. And one year I learned a very



important lesson—leaving an orange in my school bag for a week and half in the waning summer temperatures of Philadelphia during an 'early' appearance of the holidays resulted in a very orangey-scented mess. Let's just say that

my parents were not particularly happy with me and my bag smelled like oranges for at least the entirety of the first semester.

You see, back before they were popular on the Passover Seder plate, oranges were used to celebrate Rosh Hashanah. They are sweet (for a "sweet new year") and they are round (like the world whose birth we are celebrating). And, I learned at a tender age, they must not be neglected.

An older—perhaps wiser—me, now sees the orange as another symbolic metaphor for this important time of year. Like an orange, whose seeds from a neglected fruit can spring forth a new crop of sweet, round fruit, we, too, can emerge year after year sweeter and more full of life.

I have always been drawn to the opportunity for introspection offered by the High Holy Days. I am likely my own worst critic, and I willingly submit to the liturgy and rituals of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur—critiquing myself and apologizing to those who I have faulted.

It is probably no surprise then that by far

my favorite ritual of this special period of time has always been Tashlich. There is something about the physical act of throwing my faults away that makes me feel present and committed to do, and be, better.

Over the years though, my family has added to our Tashlich ritual. Letting the sermons of our very wise rabbis soak in, I have begun letting the hope and grace of these days restrain my self-recriminations. And our Tashlich ritual has adapted. We recite the traditional poem and toss our old bread into Rock Creek, but we also do these three things: (1) using a stick, we each draw a picture of something good from the year we want to keep with us as we move into the new year; (2) then we draw something we want to let go of from the prior year; (3) with our feet we wipe away the second drawing and replace it with a drawing of a promise we each make to ourselves. Like an orange, I have found this intentional time with my family—focused on grace and hope—leaves a sweetness in my memory.

At our Board Retreat this summer, we went through a similar thought process to prepare ourselves for the upcoming year. As a result, Temple Micah staff, clergy and board are working together to make sure we can continue the good things we gained as a congregation over the past year (such as hybrid worship access!), let go of things no longer serving us, and focus on our new priorities. In particular, we have promised ourselves to dedicate this year to bringing the warmth and intimacy back to Micah. We look forward to sharing the many opportunities to engage with one another, hear each other's stories, and reconnect over the year.

May you and your loved ones be sustained by these High Holy Days. I am looking forward to continued growth and healing for our community in 5783. L'Shana tova!

**Underwear FROM PAGE 1 ►**

discovered he had a gift for organization—coordinating volunteers, arranging donations, planning logistics for events—and moved to the more “people-centered” work of community engagement.

“I hate sitting at a desk all day long. Now I can get out and get Friendship Place’s needs met—tell people how they can support us.” When asked how he felt about accepting (and storing!) around 20,000 pairs of underwear, socks, bras, t-shirts, and thermals per year from the Micah Underwear Drive, Cannedy

commented gracefully. “I appreciate and feel the trust the community has in me to accept donations and to be that middle man.”

As Cannedy explained, lacking clean underwear can impact an unhoused person’s health, which is why donated underwear and foundation garments are so crucial. “When people come to Friendship Place, they are actively experiencing homelessness or are in danger of it. They have very little. Their self-esteem has been destroyed. They may not even have underwear at all.” From the very start of clients’ relationship

with his organization, clean, new underwear and socks—“something that is uniquely that person’s”—help repair a person’s sense of worth. “We are serious about ending their experience with homelessness. [Underwear] is important. It means a lot in re-introducing people to society and rebuilding their confidence.”

Underwear brings those experiencing homelessness to Friendship Place. “The Welcome Center is often full of underwear. People come to us for clean socks and get connected with employment

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**Rabbi’s Message FROM PAGE 1 ►**

standing and a strong moral compass. Love, because Israelis are our family. Understanding, because we are not experts on the realities of their daily lives. Understanding, because the growing anti-Israel sentiments of the left sometimes flirt with a new kind of antisemitism that claims Israel is a colonial enterprise or that a Jewish, democratic state is a contradiction in terms. Understanding, also, because much of the Arab world as well as the nuclear aspiring nation of Iran to this day do not want Israel to exist. And understanding because the Israel-Palestine conflict has two owners, Israel and the Palestinians.

That said, nothing should be allowed to diminish our moral compass or our moral outrage at policies that are driven by right-wing settlers in the West Bank. Nothing should diminish our outrage when Israel’s far-right leaders, such as Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, are invited into the political mainstream. They are Jewish fascists and we should not hesitate to call them that. Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president emeritus of the Union for Reform Judaism, was blunt when he wrote recently in Ha’aretz that the two represent “nothing less than a poison in the lifeblood of Israel and the Jewish world” by advocating that Palestinians be forced to choose “between expulsion and servitude.” American Jewish communal leadership should follow the model of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, which responded to Smotrich’s visit to London earlier this year with this statement: “We reject Smotrich’s abominable views and hateful ideology. Get back on the plane, Bezalel, and be remembered as a disgrace forever. You are not welcome here.”

2. I would like to see the American Jewish community offer greater support and acclaim to our synagogues. Much press coverage about religious affiliation across the board is about disaffiliation. The “nones” (those with no religious affiliation) are routinely identified as the fastest-growing group. Often, when Jewish religious life is publicized and lauded as innovative, exciting or creative, it actually is outlandish. I have read, for example, about Jewish wilderness adventure weddings featuring sacrificial altars, shofar and drums, and conducted on Jewish Festival Days when weddings are prohibited. Other stories are about ventures that seem silly to me, teaching “dovenology,” Jewish “mindfulness,” or “embodied spirituality.” What are these things? Moreover, they can be corrosive to Jewish life, making Judaism appear as a form

of exotica rather than a search for a day to day moral path sustained in community. These initiatives attract a small minority of Jews while most American Jews continue to get their Jewish spiritual nourishment in synagogues. But how often are our mainstream synagogues acclaimed as the great places they are? As Larry Hoffman has pointed out synagogues provide a multitude of things that we take for granted, including pastoral care, life-cycle rituals, Torah study, outreach, conversion and interfaith dialogue. As Hoffman writes addressing the Jewish community: “Where else do we find a multi-generational community through which you can grow through time? Where else do people assemble in moments of communal trauma? ...Who else regularly sends marchers to Washington, collects food for the hungry and help for the homeless?”

We know this and take it for granted. Where is the recognition and support in the wider community? American Jewish life across the entire country is ultimately sustained in our synagogues.

3. Finally, I would like to see a greater Jewish emphasis on the creative arts in their many forms as a way to deepen and broaden our understanding of spirituality. Too often, we view spirituality as a tool for certain “spiritual or mystical” types who seek to divorce themselves from the grim realities of the everyday. This is nowhere near my understanding of spirituality. Spirituality is a desire to discover. It is an acknowledgement that the human experience is a multi-dimensional one, far more than the physical/mental binary. We need art—and not only in museums, theaters, galleries, concert halls, and opera houses. I have learned to see worship as an art form. There are few who have taught me more about prayer and spirituality and how to more fully embrace, understand or interpret a text than Liz Lerman, the well-known choreographer and longtime Micah member. Art offers a path to creativity and teaches us about rigor, discipline and a healthy regard for the past. Art is not haphazard. True art always stands on the shoulders of what has come before. As much as anything, we need artists of every form to be partners in shaping our Jewish spiritual and communal lives. For this reason alone, I am grateful that Liz Lerman will be leading us in movement on Yom Kippur.

The Holy Days are drawing near. They are inviting us all to grow. Individually and as a community, let us accept the invitation. Shalom.



**Underwear FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►**

assistance, hygiene, and dental and medical care, so underwear helps our personnel help our clients.” The street outreach team at Friendship Place “just grabs a pile of underwear when they go out,” Chris said. Along with hygiene kits and other basics, “[The underwear you donate] helps build trust.” People living on D.C.’s streets hear about the clean underwear Friendship Place supplies, come to the Welcome Center, and grow comfortable staying to have other needs met. An undershirt or a bra can become the first unobtrusive step on a path to better outcomes.

Alan Banks, a formerly homeless individual now working at Friendship Place’s Welcome Center, helped shape Chris’ rhetoric with his lived perspective: Friendship Place’s clientele are currently experiencing homelessness. And anyone can experience homelessness, Chris emphasized: “Most people in the U.S. are living paycheck to paycheck. It can happen quickly. It’s not just those people out there.”

Chris’ parting remarks were straightforward: if you see a homeless person, he said, take the time to greet them. Acknowledge them—don’t just walk by. If you are able to and wish to, give them a dollar or two. It doesn’t take long to make a human connection on even our busiest days. ♦

Friendship Place’s needs have grown and changed with the opening of The Brooks, a 50-unit building for families with children, and Valley Place, transitional housing for men and women who have been chronically homeless. If you’re donating this year, consider:

- ✓ **Laundry baskets:** couples and individuals will leave Valley Place to set up homes of their own
- ✓ **Plus-size underwear for female bodies:** most of DC’s homeless are male, but Friendship Place’s clientele is now about 40% female
- ✓ **T-shirts, preferably cotton, in any color and all sizes**
- ✓ **Socks, socks, socks!** Help augment Temple Micah’s partnership with Bombas – the company donated 7,750 pairs on our behalf, enough for 4-6 months

Have questions? Want to help this year’s 6th Grade class? Contact [underwear@templemicah.org](mailto:underwear@templemicah.org).

“Each one of us can face God with the language of the heart”

From *A Time to Speak: Selected Sermons and Writings* by Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel

In Search of Sacred Community, Yom Kippur, Sep 26, 2012 / 10 Tishrei 5773

## COME STUDY WITH THE PSALMS GROUP

Adonai, our Master, how mighty is Your Name over all the earth,  
Who has set Your glory about the heavens....  
When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,  
The moon and the stars You have established,  
What is man that You are mindful of him,  
And the human being, that You take note of them?

From *Psalms* 8

Have you, at some point, looked at the magnificent array of the night sky  
and felt the immensity of creation and wondered what we are doing here?  
Or perhaps you have, in an entirely different vein, experienced moments like this:  
I am sunk in the muddy depths, there is no place to stand;  
I have come into deep waters and a whirlpool has swept me away.  
I am exhausted from crying out, my throat is parched ....

From *Psalms* 69

Psalms speak to Jews and non-Jews with words of insight, despair, comfort and beauty. Psalms are exquisite hymns of praise and thanksgiving, cries of anger and desperation, meditations characterizing the good life, and even thumb-nail histories of the Israelites. Some are chorales, intended for performance in the Temple rituals. Others seem to be highly personal, private pleas or devotions.

Micah's Psalms Study Group, co-led by Micah members Mary Schwartz and Livia Bardin, meets monthly on Zoom for a close look at one psalm in English translation. Drawing from traditional sources and our contemporary training in text analysis, we study each psalm for structure and meaning: What is the message of this psalm? How does it speak

to us today? We may talk about how the psalmist integrates the physical and the spiritual through poetic imagery. We may discuss differing, sometimes conflicting, translations. For instance, why does one translator interpret "nefesh" in Psalm 27 as "will" while another calls it "maw?" Psalms, too, are key elements of traditional liturgy. We may puzzle as to why a particular psalm came into use for a particular occasion. Or we may simply admire the psychological sophistication and understanding of human nature that brings this psalm to us at this moment.

Anyone is welcome to join in—drop an email to [psalms@templemicah.org](mailto:psalms@templemicah.org) if you'd like to be on the list. The group's next meeting is Tuesday, Sept 20, from 12:00-1:00 pm.

## LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT

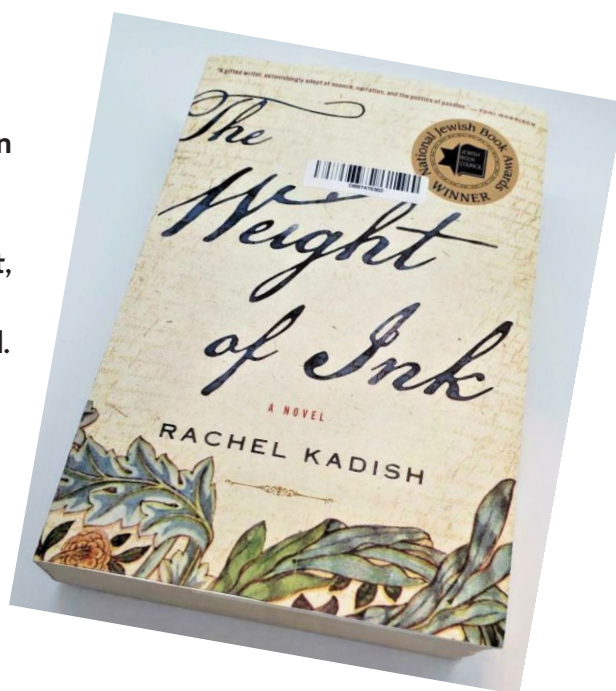
### *The Weight of Ink* by Rachel Kadish

*The Weight of Ink* is the interwoven tale of two women of remarkable intellect: Ester Velasquez, a 1660s emigrant from Amsterdam who is permitted to scribe for a blind rabbi, just before the plague hits London; and Helen Watt, an ailing historian in the early 21st century with a love of Jewish history. Winner of the National Jewish Book Award.

What Micah members are saying: "It made me feel proud that women could play such influential roles in a male-dominated Jewish society (even if it was just historical fiction!)" — *Barbara Diskin*

Pick it up from the upstairs library next time you're here!

Want to recommend a book feature? Email [stiftel@templemicah.org](mailto:stiftel@templemicah.org).



# THE LANGUAGE OF EACH CRY: A POEM FOR THE HIGH HOLY DAYS

By Rabbi Stephanie Crawley



Blessed is the One who hears  
the wordless voice of the shofar,  
the language of each cry.

*Tekiyah // Shevarim-Teruah // Tekiyah*  
*Tekiyah // Shevarim // Tekiyah*  
*Tekiyah // Teruah // Tekiyah*

Shout // Grasp-Gasp // Rage  
Mourn // Lament // Sigh  
Alarm // Battle // Prayer

May our cries fall  
on open ears

*Tekiyah // Shevarim-Teruah // Tekiyah*  
*Tekiyah // Shevarim // Tekiyah*  
*Tekiyah // Teruah // Tekiyah*

Wail // Stun-Shatter // Scream  
Silence // Tremble // Tear  
Weep // Break Break Break Break Break  
Break Break Break Break // Open

May our cries fall  
on open ears

*Tekiyah // Shevarim-Teruah // Tekiyah*  
*Tekiyah // Shevarim // Tekiyah*  
*Tekiyah // Teruah // Tekiyah*

Judgment // Wait-Work // Justice  
Seek // Reach Reach Reach // Repair  
Memory // Birth // Purpose

May our cries fall  
on open ears

TEKIYAH GEDOLAH

HOPE

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Roberta and Morton Goren  
Sue Alpern Fisch, by Nathan  
and Karen Beraha

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**CONDOLENCES**

**THE TEMPLE MICAH COMMUNITY** extends  
its deepest condolences to:

PEGGY BANKS, on the death of her sister-in-law,  
Gita Funston

PHIL FELD AND LORI-BETH HUA, on the death of  
Phil's wife and Lori-Beth's mother, Joan Feld

SUE ALPERN FISCH, on the death of her father,  
Jerome Alpern

JANET GORDON, on the death of her aunt,  
Sallye Gordon

HELENE GRANOF, on the death of her sister-in-law,  
Beverlee Schiff

DOUG GROB, on the death of his mother,  
Helen Mandel Grob

RACHEL GROSS, on the death of her stepfather,  
Bill Witte

MAGGIE FRASER KIRSH, on the death of her father,  
Louis Alvin Wunnenberg

MARK KOVEY, on the death of his sister,  
Eileen Kovey Mackler

RABBI ESTHER LEDERMAN, on the death of her father,  
Robert Lederman

DANNY OSHTRY, on the death of his father,  
Norman Oshtry

JONATHAN RISKIND, on the death of his mother,  
Gladys Shenner Riskind

THE TEMPLE MICAH COMMUNITY, on the death of our  
longtime member, Judith Rosen

GEORGE WEINER, on the death of his mother,  
Thelma Weiner

May their memories be for a blessing.

**MAZAL TOV**

Debra Berke, on the naming of her  
grandchild, Brooke Elizabeth Bodner

Ilana Goldman and Alex Southey, on the  
birth of their child, Miriam Rose Southey

Mitchell and Ashley Klein, on the naming  
of their child, Amelia Mae Klein

Sara Morningstar and Phil Katz, on the marriage of  
their daughter, Eleanor, to Sergio Andrés Bazoberry

Carla and David Rosenbloom, on the naming of  
their grandchild, Irie, son of Sarah Rosenbloom

Rabbi Rachel and Geoffrey Schmelkin, on  
the birth of their child, Lilah Binah



## RECENTLY PUBLISHED

**Bad Jews, by Emily Tamkin**

What does it mean to be a Bad Jew?

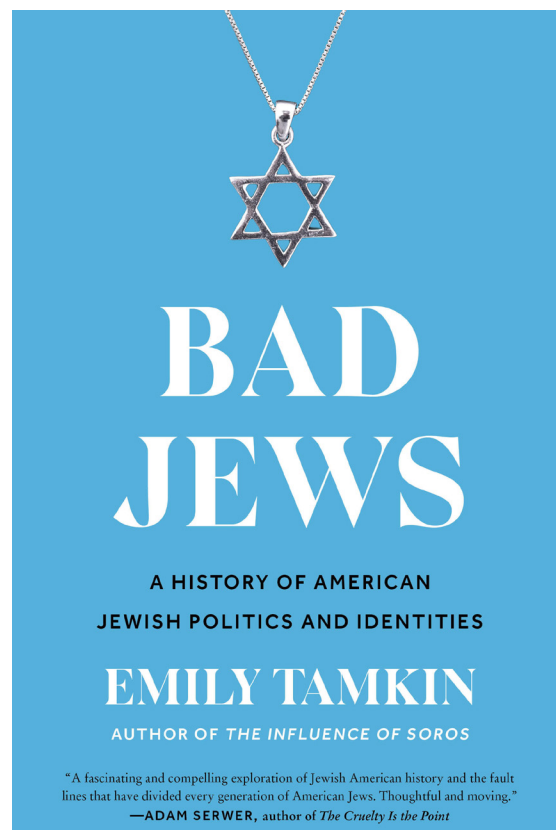
From the publisher: “Many Jews use the term ‘Bad Jew’ as a weapon against other members of the community or even against themselves. You can be called a Bad Jew if you don’t keep kosher; if you only go to temple on Yom Kippur; if you don’t attend or send your children to Hebrew school; if you enjoy Christmas music; if your partner isn’t Jewish; if you don’t call your mother often enough. The list is endless.

In *Bad Jews*, Emily Tamkin argues that perhaps there is no answer to this timeless question at all. Throughout American history, Jewish identities have evolved and transformed in a variety of ways. The issue of what it means, or doesn’t, to be a Good Jew or a Bad Jew is particularly fraught at this moment, American Jews feel and fear antisemitism is on the rise.. There are several million people who identify as American Jews—but that doesn’t mean they all identify with one another. American Jewish history is full of discussions and debates and hand wringing over who is Jewish, how to be Jewish, and what it means to be Jewish.

In *Bad Jews*, Emily Tamkin examines the last 100 years of American Jewish politics, culture, identities, and arguments. Drawing on over 150 interviews, she tracks the evolution of Jewishness throughout American history, and explores many of the evolving and conflicting Jewish positions on assimilation; race; Zionism and Israel; affluence and poverty, philanthropy, finance, politics; and social justice. From this complex and nuanced history, Tamkin pinpoints perhaps the one truth about American Jewish identity: It is always changing.”

*Bad Jews* is expected October 18, 2022 from HarperCollins.

*This new Vine feature spotlights recent publications by Temple Micah members. If you’re an author with a new book (in any genre), please email the editorial staff at [vine@templemicah.org](mailto:vine@templemicah.org).*

**Tzedakah FROM PREVIOUS PAGE ►**

IN MEMORY OF  
Midge Decter, by Nathan  
and Karen Beraha  
William Dick, Beverly Ferreira,  
Deborah Kraut, Eileen Kovey  
Mackler, Marlyn Socolar, by  
Roberta and Morton Goren  
Ann Hansen, grandmother  
of Alex Edelman and great-  
grandmother of Mollie Ann  
Edelman, by Doreen Edelman  
Barbara Wertheimer, by  
Sarah and Eric Rosand

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Elka and Sidney Booth  
Stuart Brown  
David and Sallylou Cloyd  
David Forman and Johanna  
Mendelson-Forman  
Janet Gordon  
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IN HONOR OF  
Janet Gordon on her birthday,  
by Anne R. Gordon  
Learita Scott's 90th birthday,  
by Roger and Sally Rafson

IN MEMORY OF  
Adolph Blumenfeld, by  
Norman Blumenfeld  
Rose Burstin, by Steven Posner  
and Robin Rudowitz  
Jack Chernak, by Beverly  
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Jeanne Lehmann Dillon,  
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Adrienne Umansky  
Pete Reiniger, by Betsy  
and Harold Closter  
Milton and Marlyn Socolar, by  
Burton Greenstein, Helen Schwartz

# HIGH HOLY DAYS AS A CHILD: TWO VIGNETTES

BY RABBI JOSH BERAHA

The Jewish new year is the holiday of apples and honey, or if you grew up in a synagogue and went to children's services on the high holidays, the holiday of slightly browning apples and honey. The apples—red ones, rarely green—cut into slices, arranged on thin, white paper plates, were distributed by parent volunteers who had dipped out of the service early (pun intended) to prepare for the hungry children who had waited anxiously for the last hour, maybe more, while being shushed by their parents each time the rabbi spoke.

The apples were generally mealy, and in my mind, though this no doubt holds some truth to it, were also touched or breathed on by every single child in the room. Neither the browning nor the meeliness mattered much (to me or anyone else under the age of thirteen) for the generous amount of honey drizzled over each plate—so much that it was nearly impossible to reach for an apple and come away without a sticky mess dripping down your fingers. The significance of the ritual was intensified by the waiting—moment after agonizing moment—for each child to take a slice and for the rabbi (who still had more to say, naturally) to bless the apples and therefore give us the go-ahead. Neither the distribution of apples nor the blessing unfolded with any urgency despite the fact the honey was dripping down our fingers.

"Does everyone have an apple?"

"So and so needs an apple."

"Now everyone has an apple? Okay, good."

"Who knows the proper blessing for apples and honey?"

"Borei pri...?"

"Borei pri...?"

"Anyone?"

We waited. And waited. And waited some more. Until, eventually, from some child somewhere in the room, came the answer.

"Eitz!"

"Eitz. That's right, eitz."

A collective sigh of relief after so much anticipation.

Having worked that same muscle of waiting we were coming to know so well as Jews (an important lesson for our people, and maybe that was the hidden lesson in all of this), we were truly thanking God for our brown, germey, mealy, honed apples. To me, no truer prayer had been muttered all morning.

• • • • •

The running time of the original *Godfather* is two hours and fifty-five minutes, which means you could watch it from the opening wedding scene to its last credit in less time than the average high holiday service of my youth. The Talmud records that a student who stood to lead prayer dragged on for too long prompted complaints from the other students to their teacher, Rabbi Eliezer, saying—"How long will this guy go on?"—Rabbi Eliezer responded, "Is he going on longer than our teacher, Moses? Was it not written that he prayed for forty days and forty nights?" (*Brachot* 34a)

I used to assume that to endure a high holy day service with one (or, for the extra pious, zero) bathroom break(s) was the true responsibility of Jewish adulthood. Until you reached that age, it mattered little if you were one of the many children in the vestibule of the synagogue bathroom, "still going to the bathroom" or "still waiting for my friend to come out." I would routinely leave the service to meet my friends while



the grown-ups were on their seventeenth responsive reading, and the cantor in the middle of that prayer for which each word was elongated, slowed, and then repeated—you know, that one?

Judaism's elaborate legal system, with laws about every aspect of living, does not specifically stipulate the proper length for a worship service. Neither will you find any laws regarding how to handle a shofar. But just as a service leader can abuse his or her privilege of leading a service, a shofar can pose a threat to those in its way. I know this because one high holy day season bathroom break, a friend swung his sports coat around like a lasso, with a shofar inside his coat pocket. The coat, and so the shofar, hit me with enough force to draw blood and scare away most of the other kids.

At the hospital it was determined that I wouldn't need stitches, just a prescription for extra apples and honey. That was an offer I couldn't refuse. What I learned that day was that it would have been better to stay with my parents, all of us together, learning to find meaning in the Jewish new year. I was, after all, close to the age of responsibility. As Vito Corleone says to his godson, "A man who doesn't spend time with his family (in services?) can never be a real man." And so it was that I learned to sit through an entire high holiday service, without any bathroom breaks. How pious.

