

AS I SEE IT...

I get tired of it all. It's endless. When do we finally win? Isn't there a point in life when the worthy goal is achieved, when the moral struggle is completed!

Over the last several months our Temple Tidings has published a number of requests for help. Send money and food to the Food Bank. Give to Mazon. Donate stuffed animals to Children's Hospital. Support ARZA. Believe me, I've sifted through dozens of other pleas to approach our congregation at this season. All are worthy causes. Sometimes I have felt as if I were being heartless and insensitive by choosing one cause over another.

A few weeks ago I participated in a conference at UNO on prejudice and violence. Twenty years after the Kerner report, over thirty years following the Supreme Court decision ordering the desegregation of our schools, now more than a generation after the Holocaust - I could go on - still violence, bigotry, racism, plague our nation and blight our conscience. I was called to the conference because violence and threats of violence cast such dark shadows on our nation's future. Man's inhumanity to man never ceases?

So when do we finally win? Isn't there a point in life when the worthy goal is achieved? When the moral struggle is completed?

We all can recall being summoned to marches by numerous groups. Many times we tend to say: "No. Please ask someone else. I've done my share."

We must become involved. We need to say to ourselves, when does anyone have the right to say: "I have done my share." "Till the day of one's death, thank God, there is no end to what must be done!"

Every year the Passover Seder reminds me. Yes! It's endless! The task of righting wrongs, of fighting bigotry, of feeding the poor, of housing the homeless, of renewing freedom is without completion.

That is precisely the point of a Seder each year. Each year we must renew faith in our commitments to reinvigorate our ancient ideals. Only as we engage ourselves in an infinite purpose, like Jacob, may we stand with astonishment in God's presence, to proclaim:

"This is none other than the house of God
And this is the gate of heaven."

The Passover Seder reminds us, we have more to do and much to live for. The task is infinite. The Seder is the ticket to the City of Peace. The Seder is a passport for the labor for justice, righteousness and freedom. "Next year in Jerusalem" - in God's infinite time, we do prevail.

AS I SEE IT

I love magic shows. I always have. The sleight of hand sorcery is promise of irrevocable logic conquered, of inevitable destiny turned on its head, of impossible alchemy wondrously manufactured. When the occult takes over, we are released from the discipline of the mind and from the probity of reality. Without sweat or tears, our world is miraculously, effortlessly transformed. Fantasy reigns forever.

I guess one never really outgrows a zest for fantasy. Nevertheless, those who achieve emotional maturity recognize fantasy, the occult, and magic for what they are - the invention of a fertile imagination. Given free reign or the encouragement of drugs, the mind is a magician's wand even, a conjuror's carpet. Sometimes the mind, abused by the imagination or drugs, takes individuals into a world of darkness with frightening superstitions and psychic distortions.

New Age practices appear very much to encourage this fearful dip into mindless spirituality. As defined recently in the New York Times the term New Age encompasses a wide range of beliefs that stress the paranormal or the harnessing of untapped mental powers through such means as rock crystals, clairvoyance and astrology. The underlying principle is that life is essentially a magic show.

I have been concerned of late about this quest for New Age spirituality. Spirituality has a legitimacy in the Jewish tradition. Some young people, however, fall prey to the New Age sleight of hand practices. They yearn for escape from spiritual experiences that stress the cultivation of mind and responsibility, instead of the release from logic and the escape from personal duty.

Judaism drew an unbridgeable chasm between itself and fairy tales. I have emphasized, in the past, the three major spiritual pathways of our heritage: First, Torah - the honing of the intellect. Spirituality is in the experience of sharing the Books' truths. Come and witness the Saturday morning Simcha B'Shabbat Torah study in the Chapel from 11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. It is spiritually a delight.

The second pathway to Jewish spirituality I have called "at homeness." Being at home with venerable traditions and historic memories is an antidote to alienation and loss of identity. "At homeness" shapes our rootedness in life and eternity. We establish a continuum of meaning and destiny that warms the heart day by day when we practice Judaism in our homes and in our families. "At home" in the world, we also sense the awesome beauty of God's universe. Nature's handiwork reveals God's rationality, not a demon's malevolence.

Jewish spirituality is cultivated as well by connections to community, the third pathway. These connections are the product of a communally shared commitment to shape history for the better.

Intrinsic to Judaism is an unyielding belief in tomorrow, a celebration of life. We demonstrate our confidence in history by shaping a caring community through "Tzadakah." "Tzadakah" requires a sharing of our well being with others. The joyous uplift from "Tzadakah" is authentic Jewish spirituality.

Jewish spirituality, in short, is a doorway into life; not an escape hatch out of it. We welcome the bright corridor to 5755 with joyous expectation. The future is ours!

L'shanah Tova Tikatevu

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They fought and died for a different freedom. The Jews who resisted tyranny two centuries before the common era would be appalled by our contemporary view. The Macabbean struggle for freedom was not infected by rampant individualism.

"I've got to be me" and other inane themes focus freedom on individual goals and personal satisfactions. Personal satisfaction was not the characteristic value of a Jewishly-oriented community. Jewish parents did not make rearing of independent, autonomous children their major objective.

Parents have been seduced by a perspective of life that promotes child-rearing for pernicious purposes. Adults who become independent of family, background, memories, traditions, values live by themselves, often in states of depression and devastating loneliness. Even when they marry, they do not understand that interdependence is the key to a blossoming, healthy personality.

But in today's world, parents encourage a child to be independent. The teenager will own a checkbook to learn to manage his funds. Management of funds is a higher priority than learning to manage life. A teenager has a private room, equipped with TV, HiFi and phone. Today's teenager need not really learn to cooperate or share anything with the family.

Adolescents are encouraged to "make their own way." They get a job to which they show more loyalty than to parents. Children use income from after-school or summer jobs totally for their own material needs. But this same teenager who has become independent of the family moral, emotional and spiritual resources, becomes dependent on the fleeting fads and greedy values of the peer group. They have achieved freedom to do whatever they want. Even to commit suicide.

This was not the freedom valued by 4,000 years of Jewish life. This was not the freedom for which the Maccabees dared to oppose the mightiest militant power of that world.

Freedom focused on the community's right to be loyal to its own heritage and value system. Above all else, Jews gave utmost devotion to their families, characterized by esteem for their parents and indissoluble ties to grandparents. Rootedness in family, traditions, and Jewish moral values transmitted emotional rootedness, identity, and a shared purpose with an historic people.

Jewish youth were bound, in interdependent harmony, to family and community by standards requiring study, charity, and righteousness. They were taught that for the sake of God they must be worthy human beings. We teach that for the sake of success they must earn a good living.

The Maccabees sought freedom to serve God. To build a world of justice and human dignity - such was the purpose of freedom. This freedom we celebrate on Chanukah.

AS I SEE IT....

This month's easy transference of Presidential power is the epitome of civility. Consider the wonder of it all! One minute George Bush possessed power, perhaps beyond comprehension. Then, just a moment later, it was freely given away to Bill Clinton.

In past times, to avoid conflict, succession was inherited by birth. Divine Sanction gave a special aura to the process. But even then, rarely was power transferred in a way so utterly peaceful. Only as humankind internalized the self-disciplined standards of civility, essential to freedom, was democratic government's frequent shift of power, made possible.

But that possibility survives today under increasingly perilous conditions. The transference of Presidential power, the epitome of civility, cannot be sustained under duress from the pervasive presence of graffiti, the epitome of vulgarity.

Civility emerges from a people's free assent to rules and mores. Graffiti is civility lost and standards debased. Graffiti is graphic evidence of civility's repudiation.

Graffiti represents rules broken in the darkness. It suggests the ability to escape the consequence of public defacement. No one is looking. No one will know. So do the cowardly and insolent vandals foster a milieu in which rules are disregarded and civility is besmirched, in the darkness.

Unfortunately there is so much graffiti we learn to live with it. Our tolerance for impudent boorishness is ballooning. Boorishness and crudity, in behavior and speech, slowly but surely, erode into lawlessness. Finally, life is irremediably cheapened. Graffiti

vandals no longer hide behind the cover of darkness. Their moral pollution is enacted in the light of day, evolving into violence, with violence setting the stage for tyranny.

I see the creeping pollution of boorishness in countless places, acted out by ordinarily good people. They have become unwitting partners to a seduction of civility.

They park in the reserved places for the handicapped. They break into queues. Their language is easily obscene and quickly abusive. They disregard the rules in small issues, especially in the darkness. No one is looking. No one will know. It's not going to hurt anyone.

Our children are hurt. The message is, if you can get away with it, it is permissible. When children are caught, parents complain: "Why pick on my child? Everyone else is doing it!"

Children not brought up to be accountable for their behavior and speech, even in the dark, become polluting adults in the daylight. The debase courtesy and graciousness, the seeds of freedom.

The issue is not superficial propriety. Good manners taught and modeled, emphasize sensitivity to others. Living by the rules, self-discipline, courtesy - form an environment of good faith and social confidence, a prerequisite for the easy transference of Presidential power.

We must rid our personal lives of moral graffiti. Our behavior and speech, marked by civility, is an absolute requirement for the flourishing of freedom.

Rabbi Aryeh Azriel

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The local election has not yet taken place; but because of the bulletin's publishing deadline, I write about Thanksgiving while not knowing who are the winners and the losers. I am not sure that I can approach this holiday with my usual zeal for what is my favorite national occasion. I am somewhat fearful about America's future.

I truly enjoy Thanksgiving. At one and the same time, it is so American and so Jewish. The turkey, the pumpkin, the incipient Yankee spirit of self-reliance dressed in Pilgrim costumes are all red, white and blue images. But, the idea of leaving one's birthplace, the land of one's ancestors, and of going to a new land, bolstered by an irrepressible optimism about the human potential to build a new and better world, these are ideals straight from the Torah.

Read about Noah, the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets. Each experienced a summons to the awesome task to build a new and better world. Noah responded to the imperative command: "Get yourself out of the ark..." Abraham responded to the imperative command: "Get yourself out of the country and from thy father's house..." Every one of the biblical figures responded to a divine imperative which, in short, compelled them to labor for a new and better world. They were the healers and repairers of a damaged human drama. They dreamed of ladders to heaven, with each rung a step forward on behalf of equity, freedom and healing dignity.

No less, the stalwart pioneers of former years came to this new shore for precisely the same purpose. The Old World of strife and bigotry, of failed hopes and stifled dreams, was abandoned. Families uprooted themselves despite great trepidation to grasp for a different destiny. They came to America because they believed in the capacity of human intelligence and imagination to illumine life with Israel's ancient promise: "Proclaim liberty throughout the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof."

For me, a teacher of Jewish tradition, this means that America has a social justice responsibility. This is the Jewish part of Thanksgiving. We rejoice greatly for the abundance of this great land. But we must also hear the divine summons to take responsibility for what America is all about - a place to heal and repair a damaged world.

Thanksgiving is a compelling summons to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, house the homeless. The selfish exploitation of the nation's resources, human and natural, so damaging these last years, must be reversed by our President. We were meant to be a beacon of justice and freedom and not a second place of failed hopes and stifled dreams. That was the Old World. We are the New.

As we approach Thanksgiving Day, may our hearts throb joyously with the images and the ideals bequeathed by Pilgrims' pride and Biblical liberalism.

Whatever the results are on November 8, may President Clinton have the courage to claim for the nation the heritage of the self-reliant Pilgrim and the liberal Biblical hero.

AS I SEE IT....

The ability to change is the most valuable facet of our humanity. How ghastly it would be if all mistakes were irretrievable! How dismal our lives would be if we were doomed to repeat it over and over again! How oppressive it would be if a lie were to be forever preserved.

We are not condemned to repeat our mistakes. We can change. This truth astounds me anew every High Holiday season as I hear its powerful message. I can change and, with God's help, I will change. Inertia, false pride and pessimism thrust me into a rut. I feel overwhelmed. My good intentions evaporate but during the High Holiday season I renew my faith; I can change.

I do not mean to suggest that people can shape their lives as readily as a potter can transform clay. Human nature is not that flexible. According to tradition, however, no life is so rigid that it can not be improved by determined effort. Our ancestors gave a name to that effort. They called it Teshuva.

Teshuva means "a return." On the High Holidays we seek to return to the values and goals of Judaism. During this season we attempt to cut through all the cynicism and disappointment that encumber our lives. We try to locate ourselves on the map of life and ask ourselves are we traveling down the right road? Have we wandered away from where we want to go? Have we gotten lost?

Teshuva is our tradition, is confirmation of astounding human truth. We can turn away from past mistakes. We can change.

Soul searching is painful. Still I believe that it is worth facing the ugliness that was, in order to shape the beautiful that can be.

This year I know that I must refuse to let yesterday's errors brake my back. Where I was dishonest, I must turn to a new honesty. Where I have been cruel, I must strive for a reconciliation. I must find the courage to say "I am sorry."

Perhaps then I will feel, in the worth of our tradition, Lev Chadash V'ruach Chadasha, a new heart and a new spirit. Perhaps then, the new year will become palpably "new."

I love the High Holiday season because it energizes me with this spirit. I love this time because it tells me I can start over again. I love it because it triggers in me the awesome power I possess. I can change. Tomorrow can be better.

L'shana Tova Tikatevu

AS I SEE IT

I saw it. Absolutely marvelous. The green bursting the earth's brown crust. The first crocus. Snow in patches sprawled on the ground. but, in warm places the green erupting.

A harbinger of spring. A vision of God's plea: "Let there be light."

I heard it. For a moment the clamor ceased. Silence, a blanket of quietness. Again, a clear note. I heard it, for sure. A pristine sound. In right A bird bright with color. A sound of gaiety. Come, sing to me, messenger of lilting melodies. Lift me. Help me to soar. No more darkness. I listen to you warbling God's plea: "Let there be light."

March had tragedy enough. Is it always this way in March? So many funerals and illness.

The sorrow is like chaos. The anguish spills out with tears. So much to say when loved ones depart. How good to speak, to share, to feel an embrace. Still the sorrow is a vast, threatening emptiness.

So look and listen. Sounds and visions of healing promises. The cup must be filled. And we must fill it. Life permits no less.

In nature it happens spontaneously. The rhythm is eternal. The movement is inexorable. The sun's yellowness, the earth's greenness. And we are part of it, yet, we can be defiant. Inside, it's not involuntary. We must will to hear, to see. Only if we listen. Only if we see.

Sound and vision are intimations. God's plea, "Let there be light", rustles through boughs without buds, leafless trees. In April it is no more than this. The plea, so early, is more the echo of imagination than an image of reality.

We coax reality to turn from mourning. The sun sends rays. We bring eye and ear. Nature in its way, we in ours, come to answer God's plea, "Let there be light."

Winter has its time. Mourning too. Then spring. The yellowness and greenness. The warbling sound. The gaiety. The inside healing. Pour life into the cup.

Let laughter ring. The bud appears, shoots striving heavenward. Spirits also. We must. It is April. Our ear must hear. Our eye must see. A vision of green. A symphony of sounds. Once again, a cup overflowing. Once again, the joyousness, the gratitude.

How sweet in our souls. We saw life's promise. We heard life's melody. We make it happen. We answer God's eternal plea: "Let there be light." The light, radiant, in us.

AS I SEE IT

Despite the popular notion that Reform Judaism is sliding toward "Orthodoxy," the fact is the gap widens between Reform Judaism and the legalists in the Conservative and Orthodox movements.

The Conservative Movement Cantorial Assembly rejects the applications for membership of women cantors. Thereby, the investment of women as Conservative cantors is irrelevant.

In contrast, the Reform rabbinate affirms the Jewish identity of a child born of a Jewish father and non-Jewish mother. For the Reform Movement, Jewish identity no longer is determined solely by the mother's religion. The patrilineal religion will be accorded equal significance. Reform Judaism has already ordained women rabbis and invested women cantors.

In its affirmation of equality for women, and in the issue of patrilineal descent, Reform Judaism reaffirms its historic posture of radical descent to promote Jewish survival by confronting the requirements and insights of the contemporary world.

The inner spirit of Reform is one of optimistic confidence in its vision of the future. Thus, it seeks rootedness in the past and its traditions and values. At the same time, it dares to embrace the moral and spiritual ideals of today. This is an approach that is in confirmity, we believe, with the historic pattern of Jewish life through the millenia.

Jewish survival is no whim of history. At different times the emergence of creative directions stirred new beginnings for Jewry when doing the same thing and simply

preserving yesterday threatened extinction.

While there was significant continuity, the Talmudic period, the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry, the "Shtetel" and the ghetto, the enlightenment and the move to the new world, were each times with uniquely distinctive expressions of Jewish life. They were each areas which responded to the special requirements and progressive insights of the day.

Old forms died. New institutions and sensitivities produced the capability to cope with challenges not before experienced. Great minds like that of a Hillel or a Moses Maimonides offered new structures of thought to infuse faith and meaning in life for the anxious and troubled. In every instance, Jews and Judaism made the triumph of life's humanity a dominant criteria. And thus did we survive.

In its present departure from the past, Reform Judaism leads the way for our peoples' survival. We welcome the new status of women as co-partners with man in this task. We welcome the convert, the child whose choice is for the enduring confident optimism and humanity of our heritage.

For Tidings

Should a child attend the funeral of a grandparent? Should a parent notify, as quickly as possible, the college-age child, away at school, about a tragedy in the family?

These are frequent questions raised by parents. Out of love young children often shielded and protected from unpleasant life cycle family events. College-age students sometimes are not given important family information in a timely fashion because the news might upset them and interfere with their schoolwork.

Of course, generalizations about how to relate to children during times of family crisis can be over-simplified or even irrelevant. Every child is different and every family has its own special emotional tone. Still, I venture to question the wisdom of those who are overly protective of their children in times of family emergency, especially around the death of a family member.

Children even by age three know something about losing things they hold dear. It is a fact of life. They must have a developing, growing experience not alone with a loss of things but also with the end of life. There must be spiritual resources which they learn to cultivate and to which they come when they experience, on their level, a tragic moment. Yes, children are inevitably exposed to tragedy and joy with the dawning of consciousness. Unfortunately, by overly protecting them and shielding them from the sharing of family crisis their coping capacity and their spiritual resources never mature beyond childhood levels.

College students are entitled to make their own decision when away from home about being with the family in their time of need. When we delay informing them we give them an unfortunate message. Something like: "I didn't need you when my parent died." or, "Your grades are more significant than the emotional support you could offer me." This is in itself a tragedy, a message that puts off the child in his relative unimportance during important times.

The sharing of death and dying with children will cause them pain. But is there any more important sharing that promotes family love, devotion, interdependence than these profoundly human moments?

Parents who love their children help them by teaching and practicing sharing, appropriate to the age and the spiritual significance of the experience. Birth and death are profoundly significant, spiritually and emotionally, they must be shared with children. They have love to give their parents. We parents should welcome and cherish their love.

AS I SEE IT . . .

Sometimes I am oppressed by my fears. And what a bundle of fears I have. It's not the little things which afflict me. I can handle the day by day anxieties. The worldly issues loom so large, they seem so intractable, their weight, on occasion, is overwhelming. Especially this is so when my ability to influence the larger issues is so small!

I worry about the war in the Persian Gulf, scud missiles launchers, my parents trying to breathe through their gas masks, American P.O.W.'s. I worry about the arms race, and the nuclear threat. I worry about the intensifying gap between the "haves and have nots". I see drug addiction and alcoholism robbing life and dignity from beautiful young people. I fear for the future.

I hear from older people, the painful sounds out of their lonely and empty lives. I fear for them. On the other hand, I hear the demand of some adolescents for a freedom from restraints and standards for the sake of an independence that is, in the end, an imprisonment to them. I fear for them.

Again and again, I see children subjected to emotional dismemberment by parents whose anger with each other vents itself as cruelly as if they were Abraham offering up Isaac. But there is no lamb in the place of the child. And there is no defensible reason to the parental act equivalent to the sacrifice of a child. I fear for both parent and child.

Sometimes I want escape. Let it be someone else's problem.

And then there is a place and a time where a word or my hand offered in friendship brings a ray of sunlight.

Or, there is a day when some simple pleasure elevates my spirit.

Or, a time comes to say thanks; a thanksgiving day.

So, I stop for a moment. In quiet thought I make a new list, a different list, a thanksgiving list. Thereby sometimes I am no longer so filled with fear.

But sometimes we simply can't find peace. We then turn to the little place in which we live. And upon our inescapable fears we shower the healing balm from those who love us.

How blessed we are. We can live with our fears. How sweet our thanksgiving. How good is our God.

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Strange as it seems, Jews have a continuing problem with the persistence of pagan idols in Jewish sanctuaries. They reappear periodically on our bema despite the valiant struggle of the Maccabees over 2,000 years ago, when idolatry was seemingly vanquished.

The ugliest idol goes by the name "Static Sameness". Some Jews prostrate themselves on their occasional visits to the synagogue, with absolute devotion before "Static Sameness". Solemnly they intone the watchwords of their fidelity to idolatry: "it's not the way it used to be." So they object to the different rabbi, the new prayerbook, the changed music.

With Abraham, Judaism was from its inception, a revolutionary vision of a dynamic world in which history could be changed, in which life could be sanctified, in which persons could walk boldly into the future. Lot's wife looked backward to the enshrined and comforting "Static Sameness". She became a pillar of salt. Reform Judaism is most true to its vision, when, indeed, things are no longer the same.

The most corrupting idol is called "Freedom". In the sacred name of freedom all things become acceptable, all values become relative, all children become equal to parents. "I have a right", displaces Judaism's "I have a responsibility." the theme of Jewry's enslavement and later redemption permeates Jewish moral sensibilities. But the freedom from Egyptian bondage beckoned us to Sinai and "Mitzvot". Today freedom is a one way ticket to self indulgence.

The idol of "tradition" is the most self deceiving of contemporary idolatries. "My child has a birthright to be Bar Mitzvah", so some Jewish parents believe. They think of tradition as possessing inherent powers. It is akin to the pagan attitude toward heavenly lightening or brooding mountains. The unknown and mysterious is to be worshipped. For some parents and their children Judaism is unknown, Bar Mitzvah is mysterious and the synagogue is unfamiliar. There is no moral or spiritual purpose in the family's Bar Mitzvah observance. Bar Mitzvah is like a totem guarded over by caterers and band leaders.

Parents take affront when anyone intimates that a son or a daughter who pledge to observe the commandments should study past age 13 or worship at Temple before and after Bar Mitzvah. What a strang idea to expect worship of God to take precedence over worship of "tradition".

The Maccabees had their idols to cleanse from the Temple, We have ours.

3-24-89

AS I SEE IT...

There is a tendency to bewail the fact that today's children have no heroes. Or, if they do, their heroes are only the TV stars who have achieved notoriety rather than worthiness.

The coming of Passover reminded me that apparently Judaism does not "believe in heroes. Moses is not even mentioned in the Haggadah. We ought also to note that Judah the Maccabee, like Moses a deliverer of our people, rescued us against enormous odds. Judah is similarly uncelebrated in Jewish literature. The Talmud makes no reference to him or his remarkable defeat of the powerful Assyrian empire.

I think there is an additional factor to explain this scruple on the part of our sages. They not only feared the idolizing of a hero because it might detract from God. They equally refused to indulge in or to encourage hero worship because it could diminish the individual's confidence in himself.

Remember, there is no more beautiful or profound Jewish ideal than that which proclaims the dignity, uniqueness and worth of every human being. Reincarnation for example, never gained acceptance in Judaism because it lessened the eternal singularity of every sublime soul.

The elevation of a hero to the status of super-human-being could imply that an ordinary person is not as worthy as a hero. Furthermore, it might encourage a surrender to the hero of our responsibility for the wellbeing of the society in which we live. Everyone of us, in some way, is a hero.

The rabbis suggested if we didn't have a Moses, another Jew would have emerged at that time to be our Moses. History, our tradition concludes, does not depend on heroes for its redemption. It is up to me and you.

At the Passover Seder, it might be appropriate to spend a few moments in discussion about Judaism's aversion for heroes. We elevate no one above the humanity of all of us. We each are frail. Nevertheless, we each are capable of growth, of becoming more than any of us think we can be. Each of our lives is infinitely precious!

The Seder is the celebration of the power of mind, spirit and conscience possessed by everyone at the Seder table. We were redeemed from bondage to freedom because God breathed into the soul of every human form a special unique worthiness. At the Seder we rejoice over the liberation of life's promise that is generated in us by our own effort.

Moses is not the hero at the Seder. You and I are.

Aryeh Azriel

AS I SEE IT...

I asked couples, at whose marriages I officiate, to return six months to a year after their wedding. We spend some time reviewing their experiences in the first year of their marriage. One of the interesting follow-up factors is the ability to predict how well the marriage will do.

What is the major criterion I use to predict the degree of success of a marriage? During one of the premarital counseling sessions I ask the couple to tell me about their relationship. Having established a rapport with them at the prior sessions, the couple fall into the pattern of conversation based on their usual relationship. This is the key to the quality of the marriage. It really is crucially vested in the manner by which they communicate, the manner in which they say things to one another.

For example. I was visiting a family and the husband continued to watch T.V. The wife, somewhat embarrassed, took her place between the T.V. and her husband.

"I cannot see through you!" he boorishly remarked. It's not that he spoke with anger or shouted - he simply acted as if his wife was a thing to be dismissed summarily.

Another time I was in the back seat of a car. The husband and wife were in the front. The wife became a negative "back seat driver", with a cutting observation, as her husband avoided another car, "Don't you know how to drive?"

In a marriage, in a relationship with children, in all human relationships, remarks or observations that belittle or demean others signal a problem in the relationship. Most often accusatory words that place blame reflect the speaking individual's need to elevate their ego by behavior that either bullies or disparages their mate or child, whatever the case.

I don't want to delve into the psychological factors that account for such communication in a relationship. I do want to stress that hostile and demeaning remarks are evidence of a relationship that is in trouble, because the hostility revealed means the accusing persons are emotionally in trouble themselves. We act out with words or gestures our inner feelings about ourselves.

The point is, it's all in the way you say it. The tenderness and thoughtfulness of our expressions reveal a relationship that is tender and thoughtful and the fact is, when we discipline our speech to use words touched with kindness, we shape our inward emotions and attitudes to correspond to our outward speech. Beautiful words render beauty to the speaker. Ugly words bring ugliness of spirit. We become what we speak.

Next time you hear people speak to one another with cruel phrases or with gentle, loving expression, you will be able to predict, as I can, the quality and condition of that relationship.

INVOCATION

JEWISH NATIONAL FUND, JUNE 27, 1995

Our God, God of our fathers and mothers,

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon" (Ps. 92:13). [With this verse] R. Tanhuma bar Abba began his discourse: Why are the righteous likened to a palm tree and a cedar, but not to any other tree? You find that with all other trees a man cannot tell from afar that it is such-and-such a tree. Why not? Because they are low. Whereas the palm tree and the cedar, being tall in stature, , can be seen from afar, and all may stand under them and raise their eyes to the trees' stature. Therefore are the righteous likened to a palm tree and to a cedar, since the Holy One elevates the righteous in the world, so that they may be seen from afar.

This day we honor Milt Abrahams and Dr. Del Weber, tall in stature, where the grain is true and the fiber outstanding.

Help us God to remember your blessing that at the sight of comely human beings and beautiful trees one should say, "Blessed be God who has created beautiful creatures.

AS I SEE IT...

CHILDREN'S SABBATH

Thank God for the media's power to arouse our sensibilities. Whose conscience fails to be pained by the media's vivid portrayal of the suffering Bosnian people?

For shame, however, that so much home-grown misery is overlooked and ignored. We had billions to spend for Desert Storm. Who knows what it cost to send troops and helicopters with food to rescue the Bosnians? In America schools had to close before summer because of the lack of funds. I do not disparage the moral imperative of aid to the Bosnians, never-the-less, I cry out in anguish, for shame that so much home-grown misery is overlooked and ignored.

The media ought to focus as well on the hovels in which American children suffer and die daily. Malnutrition, disease, despair, haunt children's lives in cities, in ghettos, in barrios, and in reservations. And the media ought to give time on the home screens to arouse our sensibilities about the rundown schools, the rat-infested apartments, and the lead anesthetized brains of thousands upon thousands of hungry, impoverished, deprived American children. Too many end up as drug addicts and criminals. America leads the world with the greatest proportion of its citizens incarcerated. More Blacks go to prison than go to college. The tale is not simply bleak, it's disastrous!

Fred N. Hechinger, educational columnist for the *New York Times* recently reviewed an extensive study of child care in 14 countries. Comparing what other nations do for pre-school-age children, the study places the United States significantly behind most countries, including Belgian, China, Italy, Hong Kong, Germany, and Scandinavia.

The author comments, "In the United States such programs remain controversial because of a nostalgic view of the role of mothers, even though most mothers must be out working."

Mr. Hechinger points out, "Many Americans who oppose the move to universally available child care in early childhood education overlook the fact that most affluent parents already enroll their children in private programs at age two or three. Unless similar services are offered to poor children the gap between haves and have nots will grow ever wider, sapping the nations productive strength and ultimately unraveling the fabric of a democratic society."

Oh, if only the media would help us to see ourselves as they have helped us to see others. The Jewish community, with our historic commitment to education, has a special responsibility to encourage a vast program, at whatever cost, to make quality education available to all children.

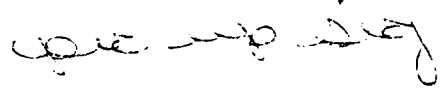
President Clinton, who acted with determination to save Bosnia, must use a bit of that same fortitude to save American children. The fate of our nation is even more at risk on this issue.

Here are some painful statistics from our home front:

- ♦ Over one-fourth (27.1%) of the households with children under 18 years old are headed by single parents.
- ♦ Single parent families with one or more children under 5 years of age are 11.5 times more likely to be living in households with income below the federal poverty level than two-parent families with young children.

- ♦ More than 1 in 5 households in the East North East and East South East areas of Douglas County do not have a vehicle available; nearly 1 in 10 households in these areas do not have a telephone. These areas combined account for 71.5% of Douglas County households without a telephone and 59.0% of households without an available vehicle.

Please, God, help us to rescue the children of America!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "W. J. ...", located in the upper right quadrant of the page.

AS I SEE IT...

Glamour and gold against righteousness and responsibility. So were the opposing lines drawn.

The Greek Gods, of a debased and oppressive Hellenism, amidst sweet incense and seductive fleshpots, enticed their conquered Jewish vassals. The great sports arena symbolized civilization cheapened by a trivialization of life. To risk human life for sport made for adventure and excitement, and also, for cruelty and perversion.

Statues dedicated to the glorification of pagan pigs and the emperor Antiochus decorated the once austere sanctuary, previously devoid of tangible representations. Votaries came there now to receive power and privilege, where once pilgrims harkened to a summons arousing compassion and conscience.

Assyria's Antiochus had a master plan. He schemed to assimilate the conquered Judea, on his way to the subjugation of Egypt. When some Jews failed to abandon allegiance to their human faith and moral tradition, in anger Antiochus forbade them religious freedom. The confrontation between mighty Assyria and tiny Israel ensued.

Understand the crucial conflict because it remains the challenge to civilization, now as then. Mattathias and his sons, led by Judah, descended from the multitude.

No! They would not cheapen life with sport, at the cost of life.

No! They would not display the naked body in the public baths.

No! They would not pay homage to the festive idols symbolizing the conceits of glamour and gold, power and privilege.

No! The sports arena should not be built at the expense of feeding the hungry and housing the homeless.

No! Self gratifying sexual behavior may not undermine the love of parents for one another, nor the solidarity of the family.

This small band overcame the mighty horde. To celebrate the triumph of light over darkness, of human dignity over oppression, of freedom over tyranny. They conceived of the simplest of symbols, a tiny candle, or a cruse of oil. We still celebrate the power of right over might each Chanukah. The simple candle still is kindled in repudiation of glamour and gold.

Yet, we must remember as well, the Maccabean rebellion, and the victory of good over evil, was short-lived. Within that very generation of worthy pioneers, Judah's successors succumbed to the attractions of Hellenism. The prophetic spokesman for a humane and just social structure were silenced. The second commonwealth was no different morally than its Hellenized neighbors.

Help your children to understand the fragility of the tiny candle, and the inward moral flame it symbolizes. Inspire your children to be Jewish pioneers of Torah, not seduced assimilationists. Chanukah is not found in the glamour and gold of gifts. We are dissenters against the multitude. We are proponents of righteousness and responsibility, compassion and conscience.

So kindle in joy the Chanukiah. Celebrate dedication to Israel's God!



Temple Israel

TIDINGS

Founded 1871

10 Kislev 5752

November 22, 1991

Vol. XLII No. 5

WORSHIP SERVICES

Friday, November 22
8:15 p.m.

Cantor Webber-Gilat
"Giving Thanks"
Bima Guests

Professor Wendy Wright
The Reverend Phil Barrett
Baritone Timothy Houfek
Temple Israel Quartet

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
the Temple Sisterhood

Saturday, November 23
11:15 a.m.

Torah Portion: Vayishlach
Genesis 32:4-36:43

Friday, November 29
8:15 p.m.

Cantor Webber-Gilat
"And Who is Tamar?"

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
Leslie Sharon and R. Thomas Vann
in celebration of Michael Howard's
Second Birthday

Saturday, November 30
11:15 a.m.

Torah Portion: Vayeshev
Genesis: 37:1-40:23

Friday, December 6
7:30 p.m.

Chanukah Family Service

Junior Choir sings
Chanukah Medley

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
the Temple Sisterhood

Saturday, December 7
11:15 a.m.

Bar Mitzvah of
Lance Bradley Polikov
son of Sheila and Marvin Polikov

Simcha B'Shabbat
(Alternative Torah Study
Service in the Chapel)

Torah Portion: Miketz
Genesis 41:1-44:17

AS I SEE IT...

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Anyeh Zvriel

WHY A JEWISH EDUCATION FOR OUR CHILDREN?

The most usual answer is "I want my child to know something about being Jewish."

■Being Jewish involves the accumulation of memories which shape the character of the Jewish people. A family has its personal memories and its communal memories. They combine to anchor Jews in history.

■Being Jewish means a commitment to Jewish values. The Mitzvot (commandments) of Jewish life commit the individual to a life of learning, of marriage, of good deeds.

■Being Jewish suggests beliefs about the meaning of life and faith in life's value. Our sense of the divine unity arouses in us an affirmation of the unity of humankind, the oneness of body and soul, the power of good to transform evil.

The home and the synagogue are partners working toward the achievement of these ends.

Aryeh Azriel, Rabbi

The writer is the rabbi at Omaha's Temple Israel.

Raising the Level of Morality

I suspect that more than a partisan political struggle provoked the White-water battle. The Senate is evolving new rules for public servants. The higher level of personal morality is being required of those elevated to public office where they become models for our nation.

American moral sensibilities have been severely shaken over the past few years. Scandals involving corruption, venality, greed, drug abuse and sexual promiscuity have blemished public figures in every realm. Clergy, Olympic athletes, professional sportsmen, politicians, businessmen, university coaches and academic researchers have made personal gain, sordid self-gratification and success their supreme gods. This attitude accelerates national moral decline already reeling under burgeoning rates of criminality, drug addiction and teen-age pregnancy.

Is our society now unable to impose voluntary sanctions to maintain by

common consent normative patterns of acceptable or unacceptable behavior? Across the nation, the decline of parental control over teen-agers and an excessively permissive environment that both tolerates and breeds rampant individualistic and materialistic values engender a fearful atmosphere of confusion and doubt about national values. A bewildered society often appeals to government to achieve by law, and even by tyranny, what popular consent can no longer regulate.

I suspect that the Senate, by requiring a new and higher morality of our national leaders, is responding to an America whose pride in its moral stature has been shattered. Honor once seemed to count for more than it does now. While, sometimes, communal mores and sanctions can be oppressive, their absence or impotence fosters contempt for life and cynicism for values. It's time we recognized our humanity as expressed not only in our moral frailty

but also, and at least equally if not more so, in our moral stamina.

Somewhere, we must renew our capacity for self-discipline. We must advocate freedom to accept responsibility over the freedom to do what makes us happy. Somehow we must reconstruct standards of decency, including standards for our children.

If we don't begin to exert voluntary sanctions to discipline our lives with decency, generosity, compassion and sensitivity, then, indeed, our freedom is in dire jeopardy.

We have to begin with ourselves. We must agree to voluntarily accept standards focused on honor and morality and not just success and status. But, also, we have to begin with our national leadership. They must be worthy models for us all. Not even the appearance of wrongdoing can blemish those in high places.

AS I SEE IT...

Benjamin Ginsberg, a scholar at Johns Hopkins University, in a recently published book, contends that conditions which formerly produced persecution of Jews in other nations are now increasingly and dangerously present in the United States. The disintegration of a large political middle ground representing a liberal philosophy, leaves the political game to either ends of the spectrum. At such a time, both extremes of left and right exploit anti-semitism for self-aggrandizement. It's an old story.

Professor Ginsberg sees this scenario playing itself out in the nineties here in the U.S.A. Jews again are in danger.

While I have not yet read the book, and this political hypothesis I gleaned from a book review, it does seem to me that Ginsberg's perception has a ring of authenticity. But I don't think the fault lies with any single political opinion. What we are experiencing is a potent disillusionment with the human character. That is the cause for the melt-down of the traditionally optimistic middle ground in America politics.

The most typical American trait has been a confidence in the future. Expectations for tomorrow were shaped by a conviction that things were going to be better. Human ingenuity, imagination and perseverance, when applied by essentially good people, could bring us no end of glorious accomplishments. If we will it, we could even go to the moon. And we did.

We are not now so sure that people are essentially good. For the last decade, since the pinnacle of moral optimism reached in the sixties, human frailty leaves us in doubt. We have overestimated, it seems, the ability of human beings to live with decency and propriety, governed by our common assent to accepted mores and standards which maintain our trust in one another.

It's not simply the crime rate that has deflated our image of the human character. More at fault is the scandal and impropriety which have tainted those in high places at all levels of our society. If good men and women are so flawed, and so susceptible to venality and deceit, then perhaps we can no longer believe in our potential for effectuating good.

Whitewater has not helped. The media's intensifying lust for the sensational has not helped. The public's appetite for voyeuristically viewing sin has not helped. The parasites of mistrust and pessimism, on the extreme left and right, with their diet of xenophobic group antipathy, have not helped.

Only the resurgence of a vigorous and incredible middle ground will offer a remedy. That requires those of us who do seek cause to trust the humanity, and goodness of our fellows, to come to the forefront with daring outspokenness. We cannot leave the playing field of public discourse to extremists and the sensationalists. The average American, I believe with all my heart, is a decent, caring person. Good common sense is still available in good measure in America's society. To the mongers of despair, scandal, and vituperation, our faith in one another and in America, must courageously assert. "We can do better! We can do better!"

AS I SEE IT...

"To be in touch with one's self" is good mental hygiene, sometimes. When being in touch focuses on merely one's emotions, it is a bad mental hygiene.

Too many of us narrow the thrust of "being in touch" to the world of emotion. Emotional regurgitation is nothing more than self-pity or narcissism. We let emotion shape us by a surrender to its harsh and volatile waves, constructing our response to gasps for life. No one discovers the self while drowning in emotion.

The self is a complex of infinite moral and spiritual resources. A boundless universe, the self yearns for the dynamic experience of an outward reach that shapes emotion.

Soaring outward, the soul and intellect become enthralled with creation's majesty, rather than embittered with life's frustrations.

The summer's wafting breezes, the seashore's redundant sigh, the evening's dimpled lights, the dazzling colors of a flowered field, can fill the cavities of being with awe and delight.

That first plunge into the chill ocean waters, that silent calmness hidden in the woods' interior, that moment when the eye takes in a horizon of sunlit distance, is an expansion of self with an excitement of aliveness.

To speak of passing things with cordiality, to sense the love and trust of an embrace in friendship, to say hello because the insides smile requires a joyful greeting, these are the sparkling intimacies that illumine the day's countenance.

There are glorious avenues we must dare to explore to be in touch with oneself. The self is a seed containing the promise of the divine expansion of who we are. The self is exuberantly enlarged when through man and nature we are in touch with God. The hands and heart and mind are part of a harmony that sings in rapture. Now is the season to be in touch beyond the world of emotion into the universe of our inexhaustible potential.

A summer's day of joy I wish you all. Be warmed, I pray, by its tranquility. And in the warming, may intimations of infinity transmute the yesterday into gladsome tomorrows.

By the time you read this article, I will have begun my 2 1/2 month sabbatical leave. I want to express my thanks and appreciation to the leadership of our congregation for this time to reflect and be refreshed.

AS I SEE IT...

I advocate an active effort by the synagogue, and families from the synagogue, to encourage intermarried couples to raise Jewish families.

It is not my intention, however, to elevate Judaism by diminishing Christianity - or for that matter, any other faith or community, racial or religious - as we pursue this course of outreach.

I still hear the 8th century prophet, Amos, denouncing the narrow-minded of his day. He asked of Israel: "Art thou not as the Ethiopians unto me?", to signify Judaism's tenet of one God and one humanity. But one God does not mean one stifling, choking conforming religion.

I reject a misconceived emphasis on religions' sameness. This tendency to stress religions' similarity is motivated not by an intelligent appreciation of the history or theology or way of life that varying religions represent. Rather, those who tend to see sameness more than uniqueness, often are misguidedly fearful that differences engender bigotry. Bigotry is the fruit of damaged egos or sick souls. Differentness or sameness, by themselves, are not the seeds of hostility.

The emphasis on religions' sameness may also be motivated by efforts to dismiss religion as insignificant. An insistence on sameness justifies apathy toward religious identity. If religions are all the same, why bother with distinctions?

When someone says to me: "Rabbi, after all, we all believe in the Ten Commandments," I am profoundly disturbed. With a silly generalization, this individual has swept away the genius of philosophers and theologians, who expounded the unique elements that make Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, such gratifying, powerful and enriching forces in history, each in its own right.

I become annoyed, to the same extent, by those who trivialize the content of religions' traditions or faith concepts. It is especially irritating to hear Jews or Christians define the difference between Christianity and Judaism, saying: "Christians already have their Messiah; Jews are still waiting for the Messiah to come."

The words *Mashiach* in Hebrew and *Christ* in Greek have different allusions and meanings. *Chanukah* is not the Jewish Christmas. *Passover* is not the Jewish Easter. Judaism is not Christianity.

I do not bemoan intermarriage. Intermarriage in America's diverse environment is inevitable. I bemoan the dismissal of Judaism by those who have subtracted from their lives its moral and spiritual content by dismissing its uniqueness, its differentness. Instead of focusing on sameness in religion, we should thank God for America's environment of freedom that allows for diversity.

It is not a matter of one religion vanquishing another. It is a matter of each religion, at its highest, providing insights and advocating behavior that can satisfy a divinely diverse humanity.

There are many paths to God's house. And each path has its own particular glory and its own particular sublime beauty. Let each path shine in this world with the brilliance of its special illumination. And to those who have intermarried, welcome them to investigate and to maturely understand a Judaism which has been powerfully motivating in the celebration of life to Jews for four thousand years.

Each side claims this will be a historic election. Each side claims that not for a generation has there been so clear cut of a choice between political philosophy. Each side portrays itself as the party of the future. The debates engender a further debate: who will win? But the ensuing discussion is on peripheral matters: who will be more energetic, or who will look better, or who will speak more aggressively? It is entirely astonishing that democracy works at all. The electoral process is so focused on _____ factors which hinge on camera and make up and imagery, it is a wonder that freedom survives. Considerably, a demagogue could easily overwhelm the electorate with mob appeal using hypnotic treachery. There is, however, a saving grace in our nation. There is an understanding consensus that weaves its way into the hearts and minds of most Americans and makes of us one nation despite our diversity. These are the elements of that consensus, as I see it:

Fair play and equity: Americans believe that everyone is entitled to the protections of the Constitution which provides for the right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This is why racism and religious intolerance cannot prevail in America.

Human dignity: Americans believe that everyone is entitled to decent housing, employment, and a good education. This is why the vulnerable in our nation will not ultimately be denied the assistance necessary to preserve their dignity.

Government is responsible to the people: Americans relish the right to complain, to hold public officials accountable for their actions. This is the essence of democracy.

Pragmatism: Americans judge ideas and institutions by their utility: Do they work? This is why a single-minded ideological demagogue cannot win in this country. Extremism, in either direction, just would not play in Peoria.

It may not be the novelist idealism that forms this consensus. But it works for us. It will work for us in the future. Both political parties are compelled to confer to this consensus. Thank God!

Far be it from me to tell anyone how to vote! Some friends might think I say this with tongue in cheek. Only a little.

The fact is, from my perspective, election day is an American High Holiday. On Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, introspection can shape my life in the coming year. On election day, my choice of the candidate will impact on the destiny of my country. When I worship on Sabbath, I identify with the Judaic ideals I cherish. When I vote, I identify with the historic American values I cherish.

What do I look for in a candidate? I look for an individual who understands the plight of the outsider, the vulnerable, the suffering and ill, the aged and the infirmed. A civilization is to be judged by how it protects the dignity of groups such as these.

I will support the candidate who reflects a deep, unwavering commitment to the Constitutional protections that undergird this nation: separation of church and state; freedom of speech and press; equality for all; a pluralistic society that safeguards the right to be different; a vibrant democracy that ensures opportunity for economic security, educational excellence, and decent housing. I value a candidate's integrity and straight forwardness. A good candidate speaks to the issues and excuse personal attacks that are irrelevant to the office. A good candidate avoids innuendos that defame the character or background of the opponent.

The election process should not be confined to what is politically expedient. Prior to election day, candidates have a sacred responsibility to spread before the public view

all the issues by which their candidacy can be intelligently judged. Candidates must engage in constructive and open debate with one another. To refuse to debate is to pervert the electoral process.

It is to Nebraska's credit that a sophisticated citizenry has rejected past negative campaigns coming from the extreme right. Personal attacks filled with defamatory innuendo against distinguished office holders backfired in the past. I think we have an obligation to make sure that America's most sacred occasion, election day, is a time that reinforces freedom by an issue oriented campaign.

Above all, on my sacred holidays an authentic Jew renews his link with the Jewish world in the synagogue. On election day, an authentic American links himself to the American heritage in the voting booth.

WOW

The Kiddush prayer that we recite over the wine on Shabbat and Holy Days is not about wine or grape juice. The main ritual function of Kiddush is to give testimony. In the opening stanza, Jews give witness to the creation of the world, to its beauty, purpose, and order. The Kiddush contains exactly 70 words - ten and seven are both perfection numbers in the Jewish tradition. Kiddush is, in part, an attempt to evoke "radical amazement" [Heschel] at the beauty of existence. It is, in part, an assertion of human creaturehood and limits. And it is, in part, a commitment to the Covenant, to our role in perfecting the world. The Talmud says that whoever recites the Kiddush becomes "a partner in the work of creation." The Kiddush prayer also calls each one of us to remember the experience of liberation from Egypt. This prayer helps each one of us every seven days to think about liberating ourselves personally from the burdens of the week.

125 Years of Temple Israel Supplement

I truly believe everyone has a special inner gift. Each of us has a unique competency. The span of our gift may be as large as the span of our potential humanity, encompassing spiritual, intellectual, moral, emotional and physical facets. Some who are richly endowed may have a special facility to achieve heights in more than one realm. But, even when our potential for excellence is singularly focused, the one gift is sufficient to overcome the common place.

Institutions such as Temple Israel can play an important role to steer individuals toward self-discovery. Just as sure as I am that no one is devoid of a special gift, I am equally positive that Temple Israel succeeds only when it fostered in our membership the will to self-discovery. People give of themselves to our congregation whose vitality and worth can energize their own vitality and worth.

Our congregational family, now celebrating its 125th anniversary has enjoyed such a rare and distinguished role. Its members, found and still find deep satisfaction in their association with the Temple. These are dynamic times. The congregation has changed and must continue to change to meet the needs of its members. We have a sacred task during this season of celebration. We must seek holiness through celebration. We must not only endure life, we must rejoice in it. There is reason for joy. Stubborn in our love of life, Judaism stirs in us an inner power to redeem life with God's presence. There is reason for joy. In the disciplines of our tradition we awaken to courage and faith, transmuting coercive despair into the gold of laughter and song. There is reason for joy. In ancient pageantry we bear aloft the document, the Torah, which gives us moral purpose, casting aside our confusion. There is reason for joy. In the fellowship of our

worship together, the unraveling pressures of yesterday are woven into a new fabric for strength.

Come enter the sanctuary of holiness, adorned by a smiling countenance. Despite our individual or collective travail, we see God in relishing God's beneficent creation. Perhaps the smile of others will release a smile in you. A radiant place, the joy of the Lord will be our strength, and the strength of our children.

Perhaps the answer for the next 125 years lies within the fundamental dynamic of Reform Judaism: informed choice. Reform Judaism beacons us to embrace our tradition - to learn and understand the vast treasury of Jewish practice and belief. It is only through this process that we even have the right to select elements of our Jewish heritage which are meaningful, or to exclude those elements which do not resonant with our Jewish selves. Our task as Reform Jews is to link our past and our present without doing violence to rational logic, an as well, without weakening our connection to Jewish self-realization.

We must re-awaken within ourselves the historic faith that acts as an illuminating beacon. We need a faith that evolves out of humility, an uplifting perspective that uncovers cause for optimism, and an intuitive insight about human creativity. Jewish faith develops as a response to God, not as a dispensation from God.

Our God is the God of hope, confidence, and joy in life. We want tomorrow to be different because of yesterday. Memory prods us to embrace a new vision for the future. Judaism has survived because it teaches us to move forward to a new day. The Jewish people have survived because we have taken responsibility for shaping a new day. Only those who dream of ennobling purposes find in themselves the reservoir of courage

and insight to make tomorrow possible.

Continue to endow us, O God, with the foresight to be planters, with a joyfulness to toast "L'Chaim", and the strength of purpose to follow the light which emanates from the Tree of Life.

Rabbi Aryeh Azriel

AS I SEE IT...

Even if you cannot build a sukkah, you still can ~~still~~ take Sukkot's spiritual journey.

Reflect with us, if you will, on the intriguing requirement of the sukkah's roof. The roof must be sufficiently sturdy to create more shade than sunlight. Yet, it must be open enough to see the stars and sky. The sukkah, thus, is a delicate balance. We are reminded of God's sheltering presence but also we must experience life's precocious nature. Sukkot is about "wilderness consciousness". The sukkah takes us on a journey to fill us with awe and wonderment over God's creative artistry.

As does Passover, Sukkot teaches us that our people were transient wanderers. They were forced to wander, barely capable of meeting the challenges freedom imposed. They found themselves embittered by insecurity and doubt, backsliding in the wilderness of their soul, as they marched through an inward desert.

The great sage, Maimonides taught, "Just as the matza of Passover reminds us of our sojourning in the land of Egypt and our desert experience, the fragile sukkah reminds us of our transient past, our wilderness of the soul.

Even if you cannot build a sukkah, you can still dare to take the Jewish spiritual journey, celebrated by this thanksgiving time. Here is what you can do!

Join the congregation in the sukkah within the sanctuary and outside the sanctuary. Let its symbolism ignite your spirit, to see, touch and smell the harvest season.

Spend time during the season in nature's embrace, somewhere in the outdoors, underneath the stars and sky. Invite your personal commitment to a "wilderness consciousness" that inspires environmental efforts to preserve the health and well being of God's creation. Include in your concern the tobacco, drug and alcohol abuse which destroy life.

Contemplate the meaning of "home" and "homelessness". Demand of yourself an act of "tzedakah" because Sukkot is a journey of caring for others.

Arouse your moral imagination in ways you, [and if you have a family] and your children can fulfill the mitzvah of Sukkot by welcoming a guest into your heart and home to share in the harvest of life's blessings. Offer your hospitality to friends and special guests, including those who live alone. This is a practice similar to inviting Elijah to our table at the Passover Seder.

Sukkot is a spiritual quest. Looking at our finitude, in the framework of eternity, the sukkah launches us on a journey with God. "Chag Samay-ach!"

AS I SEE IT...

It seems like I expend an inordinate amount of time disparaging hypocritical religion. The tide of sham which, more often than not, overwhelms religious ceremonials is almost impossible to withstand. Thank God for those who know better. They are the saving remnant of our heritage.

Whether it is Bar/Bat Mitzvah or marriage or a Brit, the materialistic emphasis at the expense of the spiritual purpose is a corrosive sickness of our day. We look down upon the proclivity of those in public life who cross the lines of moral propriety. But we fail to see the danger to our society in the small acts of turpitude in which we engage. I refer particularly to the children's Bar/Bat Mitzvah pledge to continue responsibility for Jewish life. Specifically, I refer to their continued Jewish education. In a shameful pact with their parents, however, some break their solemn promises almost immediately following the ceremony.

The wedding ceremony, as well, is so overplayed with the details of catering and flowers, exacting so much energy, that the essence of what is happening is lost. It is as if the marital commitments were secondary to the fleeting celebration. More attention is given to the color scheme than to the comprehension of how to arrange a loving relationship lasting a lifetime.

Now we come to Chanukah. We have infantilized this enormously significant moment in Jewish history. Gifts for children submerge the ongoing conflict between a decadent Hellenism and an ethically demanding Judaism. Just as now, Jews, were then enticed to idolatry by an over zealous emphasis on fun and games. Life was trivialized in the sports arena, just as in the home. Lions battled men for fun at celebrations that were egregiously hedonistic.

Please understand that Judaism relishes festive occasions. It celebrates life that is exalted with commitments to learning and marriage. It calls for kindling candles to illumine our homes at Chanukah in observance of freedom's delight.

To be free, however, is to be responsible. To teach our children to be Jewish, we not only give them presents. We require them, and ourselves, to care for the less fortunate. Chanukah calls for more than ritual performance. Chanukah must arouse an inner flame inspiring moral idealism. Give gifts and rejoice with family celebrations. But also open the family's heart and hands with compassionate caring. This is the intent of Jewishly defined freedom.

We make sure that freedom is not ours alone. "Proclaim liberty throughout the land to all the inhabitants thereof," demands the Torah. The verse is inscribed on the nation's Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. Jews who celebrate Chanukah must inscribe it on their conscience!

AS I SEE IT...

There are many admonitions in Judaism against taking a “strong drink.” The prevalence of such admonitions suggests that abuse was a problem then. Though there were periods of time apparently when such abuse was minimal in the Jewish community, there were other eras when we shared these devastating human afflictions to a similar extent with the general community.

Judaism, in its effort to sanctify life, imposed a moral dimension on destructive substances. So, for example, one must drink alcohol, but for one purpose only, and only at appropriate time and place. It is a mitzvah [commandment] to sanctify wine [kiddush] at a simcha [joyous occasion]. This is to suggest life’s joyousness. A bride and groom share a cup of wine under the chuppah [bridal canopy] to suggest the joy derived from their love. The family shares a cup of wine to welcome the Shabbat and thereby to suggest the joy derived from shalom. At Passover’s Seder table we drink four cups of wine to suggest the joy of freedom emphasized by the four promises of freedom given to Israel by God in the Torah.

Our failure to confirm to our tradition’s approach of alcohol use in moderation, I believe, is the seed for the growing numbers of alcohol and drug addicts in the Jewish community. While Judaism was permissive, it permitted use of potentially dangerous substances only as they enhanced life, never to escape or to diminish life.

Perhaps it’s windmill tilting on my part, but I am led to urge that in Jewish homes we end the practice of social drinking. We are contaminating our future generations with a horrible, debilitating disease. Social drinking adds no spiritual or moral content to a time or place which is Judaism’s prerequisite for alcohol use. To model for children, at sacred occasions, a casual attitude toward this addictive poison, and to make alcohol an acceptable option for social relaxation, is to invite addiction. How utterly shameful! There should be no alcohol served at a bar/bat mitzvah celebration or at a brit, except for the kiddush.

The value of Judaism over the ages has been its influence on human life. We have produced in the past positive and wholesome human beings, because we stress day by day, moment by moment, the pervasive and compelling command to make life holy. The theme of our community committed to the dignity of Jewish family life came from the Torah's precept: "I the Lord your God am holy, therefore, be you holy!"

It's time to reclaim that redemptive mandate. Then shall we truly bless our children with life.

Bult
AS I SEE IT...

Not since the Lebanese war has the Jewish community experienced such anguish or internal conflict. Rabbis reflect the discordant and increasingly polarized view of layman and Israelis who are perhaps even more at odds with one another than are American Jews.

A colleague called recently to ventilate his anger against Israel's policy, in his words, of violently repressing the Arab population. I listened to his harsh condemnation. He advocated that Jews cut off contributions to their local federation. I asked him: Do you feel your freedom to speak from the pulpit on controversial political issues should be threatened by those who refuse to pay their congregational dues? By the same token, how can you therefore refuse to pay your Jewish community dues? "

The Jewish Federations serve more purposes than economic support for Israel's social structure. Without reviewing here the myriad institutions and purposes let me cite only two: aiding Jewish families through Jewish Family Service agencies, and secondly, saving Jewish lives – most recently and dramatically the rescue of Ethiopian Jewry. Is not the cutting off of funds from these life-saving projects morally abhorrent?

To the contrary, instead of cutting our tzedakah to the Jewish Federation in particular, we are obliged to recognize tzedakah is a bottom line Jewish commitment.

Giving to the Federation is Jewish taxes. Jewish taxes are an expression of moral idealism. Not to pay them should provoke internal moral debate on the most intense level. But there may be moments in history of such moral magnitude that one must refrain from paying taxes as a last resort protest. Each of us must examine our conscience to determine when such a moment has arrived.

Where do I come out then on the issue of using economic pressure to influence public policy of the American or Israeli government? Of course, there is a place and time for using one's economic power. For the love of my country, human dignity, justice and freedom, for the love of my people in Israel, I would use economic power to influence policy that I believe is destructive.

My public support for UJA does not preclude some reservations. I'm pleased that there are increasingly competing vehicles for American Jewish support. Sometimes UJA, with its necessary bureaucratic procedures, overlooks worthy new efforts to deal with social problems in Israel. These new and competing vehicles may sensitize us to new possibilities for tzedakah. As for me, this year I shall increase my contribution to the Federation.

But, I am opposed to Prime Minister Netanyahu's defense of the status quo. The status quo is morally coercive. Clearly, it is imperative that Israel gives decisive evidence of its commitment to peace. Somewhere, while Netanyahu says no, loud yes must be heard. This he has failed to do.

Nevertheless, to this day and despite the turmoil of the past months, I am proud, genuinely proud, of the moral stature of the people of Israel. I thank God for the State of Israel. I think, for the example of what a beleaguered people can do to give life to a dead land and a decimated folk, all human kind must thank God for the State of Israel. Happy Birthday at 50!

AS I SEE IT...

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Whether it is Bar/Bat Mitzvah or marriage or a Brit, the materialistic emphasis at the expense of the spiritual purpose is a corrosive sickness of our day. We look down upon the proclivity of those in public life who cross the lines of moral propriety. But we fail to see the danger to our society in the small acts of turpitude in which we engage. I refer particularly to the children's Bar/Bat Mitzvah pledge to continue responsibility for Jewish life. Specifically, I refer to their continued Jewish education. In a shameful pact with their parents, however, some break their solemn promises almost immediately following the ceremony.

AS I SEE IT...

“If there is no trust...?”

The reporter’s rhetorical question echoed hauntingly. Sam Donaldson had just concluded his remarks following the testimony of President Bill Clinton in front of the Grand Jury. The President had misled the nation. Sam Donaldson was almost impassive but not without intimations of his inner emotional turmoil. There was no escape from the fact. There had been a betrayal of trust.

“If there is not trust...?” The reporter’s background voice faded with the question. The question, however, continued to resonate.

Can a president of a democratic government of checks and balances manage its affairs and effectively govern...“ if there is no trust...?” My own thoughts fashioned a corollary question. Hadn’t we only recently passed successfully the principle that government and President can never be above the law?

The issue of eroding trust is far reaching in contemporary society. We had better see it in the broadest context. More than the presidency is being subverted.

Gary Hart’s candidacy collapsed like water running out of the sea because newspaper revelations undermined the public’s ability to trust him. Still, this too is not the most outrageous example of defining eroding trust.

Once, trust permitted us to leave our doors unlocked, to walk with confidence in streets at night, to hear words of instruction from the pulpit, to give contributions to causes believing that our money would be spent judiciously.

We trust in each other when we take a bus, fly an airplane, ride a train, send our children to school, borrow or lend, receive a blood transfusion, submit to a surgeon’s scalpel. Everything we do participates in the atmosphere of trust. Trust is crucial to every human undertaking. Life is animated by trust. We survive daily because we trust one another. Now we trust only in the gain from our contentious litigation.

What has happened to trust in our society is profoundly shocking. We look over our shoulder at every step we take and in every way we act. The engineer driving the train, the pilot guiding majestic jet planes: do they take drugs? Is the watchman at the nuclear plant asleep? Are there too many planes in the sky? Are our children being abused by nursery school teachers? Who can we trust, if there is no trust?

Will not eroding trust deflate our confidence in one another to the point where trust ceases to exist at all? Then what? Chaos? A step over the edge to incoherence. Should we all live in a private fortress, protected from human connections? Can we survive a life fragmented by endless confusion born of intolerable suspicion? How gruesome the life lived without trust. Can we test blood for trust, if not for AIDS?

Trust is the glue of civilization. Trust makes us human. Trust is neighbors who are warmed by friendship. Trust is the love of man and woman overcoming weaknesses and frailty to walk hand-in-hand, heart joining to heart. Trust is the worshipper's sense of sanctity weaving a bond with a cohesive, trusting community. Trust is the infant child adored by a loving mother. Trust is the citizen, confident that the public well-being is served by office holders of integrity. Trust is a home without electronic fences.

We are indeed haunted by the question: "If there is no trust? More than the power of armies and the storehouse of weapons, the future of civilization, of freedom and decency are linked to trust. Perhaps, like depleting the ozone in our atmosphere, we stupidly spend what we preciously require without care for consequences.

Can we reverse this dreadful course? Trust is earned. Only our behavior generates trust. We must be deserving of the trust of our mates, our children, our friends. All depends on trust. For God's sake let us begin with ourselves. For God's sake let us begin now. Let us reclaim with our integrity trust in one another.

"Repentance, prayer and charity: these return us to our God" (Gates of Repentance)*

AS I SEE IT...

Ever watch a breakfast cereal commercial on television? The Cornflakes, Cocoa Puffs or Special K never seem to lose their crunch no matter how much milk has been poured into the bowl.

You might think these cereals have been fortified against soggianness or that trick-photography and special-effects lighting has been used.

According to a consumer watch-dog magazine, cereal does not turn to mush on TV because of Elmer's glue. Advertisers have discovered glue does not jeopardize crispiness. This also explains why cereal can appear moored to spoons during commercials.

Another television "sneaky sale" concerns the frothy, tempting bubbles floating on the top of mugs brimming with instant hot chocolate. They come courtesy of dishwashing detergent.

Why do we permit the routine sacrifice of truth before the altar of profit maximization and allow fraud to masquerade as salesmanship? Why do we accept and sometimes even laud disingenuous advertising practices? Because "caveat emptor", let the buyer beware, is a hallmark of a free market economy. It's considered part of the game.

What a contrast to the principles of mutual responsibility and absolute morality established by the Bible and Talmud for Jewish economic life! Sellers are held to the highest ethical standard. For example, Jewish commercial law explicitly forbids representing products to others in a false light.

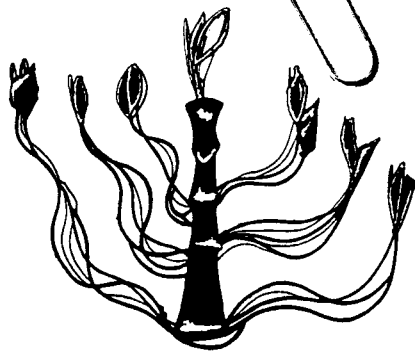
This value is enshrined in the Torah: "Thou shalt not put a stumbling block before the blind" [Leviticus 19:13]. In reference to selling goods or a service, blindness was interpreted to mean taking advantage of another's lack of information. According to the Shulkhan Arukah. "One is forbidden to beautify the article being sold in order to create a false impression. One is not allowed to paint old baskets to make them new nor to soak meat in water to make it white and look fat."

Jewish law roots commercial activity in economic empathy. Transgressions between buyers and sellers are regarded as holy acts. The ultimate objective is to transform the marketplace into the Temple.

Obviously, the aggressive and often viciously exploitative nature of capitalist economies makes adherence to the strict code of business ethics envisioned by Jewish law very difficult. Yet these economies, including our own, have begun to sink deeper and deeper into a mire of widespread greed, commercial mistrust and grave disparities of wealth.

The restructuring of economic systems based on Jewish business ethics may constitute a saving hope for economic progress, integrity, justice and optimism. Certainly, capitalism is not practiced to the total *laissez faire* extent of the nineteenth century. An enlightened capitalism does have moral dimensions.

Indeed, many companies today are committed to equal opportunities, they care for the children of employees and programs to help workers with family, substance abuse or alcohol related problems. They also sponsor a wide range of public service initiatives. Industry does this because it has proven to be good business. Dealing honestly with a consumer can be good business, too!



Temple Israel

TIDINGS

Founded 1871

10 Elul 5750

August 31, 1990

Vol. XLI NO. 1

WORSHIP SERVICES

Friday, August 31
7:30 p.m.

GATES OF PRAYER: The Kaddish Prayer

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
Rosalie and Milton Saylan
in honor of their 50th Anniversary

Saturday, September 1
11:15 a.m.

Torah Portion: Ki Tetze
Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19

Friday, September 7
7:30 p.m.

Early Shabbat Practice

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
the Temple Sisterhood

Saturday, September 8
11:15 a.m.

Bat Mitzvah of
Michele Kurs

daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Kurs

Torah Portion: Ki Tavo
Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8

Friday, September 14
8:15 p.m.

Guest Composer Bonia Shur
Shima Kolenu - Hear Our Voice
Special Oneg Shabbat to welcome
Cantor Karen Webber

Saturday, September 15
11:15 a.m.

Torah Portion: Nitzavim Vayeilech
Deuteronomy 29:9-31:30

Slichot Service
10:00 p.m.

Special Guests
Fanchon and Bonia Shur
Reception following
(see inside articles for details)

**Please see page 2
for schedule of
High Holy Days Services**

AS I SEE IT . . .

They asked: "Which is the good way?
Which is the evil way?"

They also inquired, "Who is wise?" and
"Who is mighty?" and "Who is rich?" and
"Who is honorable?"

But they did not ask, "Who is spiritual?"

Our sages were pragmatists. They tended
to define behavior. They researched ques-
tions that had behavioral answers. But they
guarded themselves against creedal litanies
which fire zealotry or inhibit intellectual curi-
osity. So they more often asked questions
about righteousness than about spirituality.

In other traditions, the aesthetic, the
monastic, the self denying, the abstinent,
were sometimes elevated as exemplars of
piety. These traditions cherished the spiritual-
ity of those who removed themselves from
the mundane struggles of ordinary folk. They
celebrated those who appeared pure
because they lived away from the fray that
seduces or entices the rest of us to make
errors. Piety was more an inward and solitary
state.

Our sages urged us to be of the category
of ordinary folk. They believed that to be a
holy human being, one must search for holi-
ness in life's battles. Yet, the battle is never
fair. The outcome hardly appears just.

It is not uncommon for those who daily trip
and fall, get up, walk forward and trip again,
to "burn out." Some will blame and complain
about the corrupt society or the tainted institu-
tions. The unreachable ideal is what defeats
them.

If I write now of spirituality's definition, it is
with the realization that it is a stunning mys-
tery. I venture to chart its dimensions.

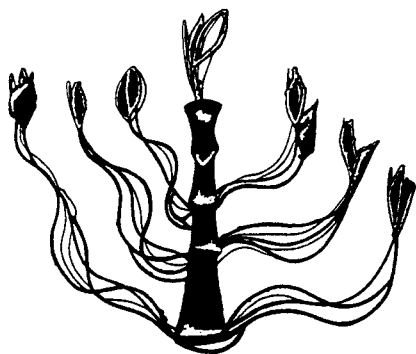
The Jewish spiritual person does not hide
from life, imprisoned with creedal dogmas or
suicidal demands for saintliness. The spiri-
tual soul sees a vision beyond human grasp,
an ideal, frail like a dream. The ideal by its
purity encourages us to preserve, by its
beauty exalts us to faith, by its inaccessibility
humbles us to cleave our Creator. What a
frightening paradox!

The Jewishly spiritual person knows the
fright and experiences, the anguish of life's
labor which is eternal and messianic. The
Jewishly spiritual person is a messianist who
does not await a messiah. He is spiritual
because he is a believing, frail, and joyously
alive human being who loves his family,
celebrates the flower, is in awe of the heav-
enly stars, and pursues righteousness. He
believes and he acts.

Avyeh Ziv

ל ש נ ה ט ו ב ה ת כ ת ב ו

The Board of Trustees of the Congregation, the Sisterhood, the Men's Club
and all the affiliates join with the rabbis, cantor and staff in wishing
all our members and friends a healthy and happy New Year.



Temple Israel

TIDINGS

Founded 1871

20 Elul 5751

August 30, 1991

Vol. XLII No. 1

WORSHIP SERVICES

Friday, August 30
7:30 p.m.
"The Moods of the Psalms"

Saturday, August 31
10:15 p.m.
Torah Portion: Ki Tavo
Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8

Slichot Service
10:00 p.m.
"On Trial"
Reception following
(see inside article for details)

Friday, September 6
8:15 p.m.
Sermon-
"The Long Difficult Repentance"
Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
the Temple Sisterhood

Saturday, September 7
11:15 a.m.
Torah Portion: Nitzavim
Deuteronomy 29:9-30:20

Sunday, September 8
ROSH HASHANAH EVE
First Service 6:30 p.m.
Second Service 8:30 p.m.

Monday, September 9
Morning Service 10:00 a.m.
Children's Service 2:00 p.m.
Family Youth Service 3:00 p.m.

Friday, September 13
7:30 p.m.
SHABBAT SHUVA
A creative worship experience
for the reconsecration
of families
Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
the Temple Sisterhood

Saturday, September 14
11:15 a.m.
Torah Portion: Vayeilech
Deuteronomy 31:1-30

Please see page 2
for schedule
of High Holy Day
Worship Services.

AS I SEE IT ...

Luckily, I have an old pair of eyeglasses. I sat on my good ones. They were fixed. Then, Leora snatched them off my nose. Again, they were fixed. While wearing the old eyeglasses, my vision was a bit blurred, and I couldn't make out the smaller print.

My vision is improvable, thank God. With eyeglasses I have 20-20 eyesight. Without them the world is a dizzying, confusing maelstrom of destructing impressions. I have no problem with vanity wearing eyeglasses. I admit openly to my infirmity. I even admit to my age.

We are about to come upon a new year. The vision with which we peer towards tomorrow may require some corrections. I believe most of us could achieve 20-20 vision for the new year, were we willing to adopt the right frame of mind.

First, one must recognize and admit to infirmity. This demands that we over come vanity and false pride. We are more ready to do this with physical frailties.

Emotional or intellectual weaknesses we take more personally. We less readily search out remedies. We are more often than not content to behold reality through prisms from childhood or adolescence, or other past times. Our inordinate pride burdens us with old perspectives and inadequate remedies.

The world changes. So do we, or should I say, so must we. The willingness to seek a remedy for ourselves is the second prerequisite for 20-20 New Year vision. Periodically, we require new eye glasses, corrections in our emotional and intellectual perspectives. Without these

new perspectives, relationships which provided rich satisfactions yesterday, are robbed of their riches tomorrow.

The family changes. Children cannot be friends to parents when they are still chronologically immature. Parents, however, must become friends of their married sons and daughters. Even if the children remain immature, when they become chronological adults, the relationship must take on adult dimensions. The needs of husbands and wives for each other must be sometimes drastically revised in the varied stages of family life. It's a new ball game after the youngest departs for college. It's a new opportunity for deepened love when both the husband and wife, in the maturity of their marriage, understand that economic achievement does not compare with joyous emotional affection and elevating spiritual sharing.

Every year we require some correction of our vision. I value my old eye glasses in a pinch. But they sure are no match for the clarity of vision my new glasses provide.

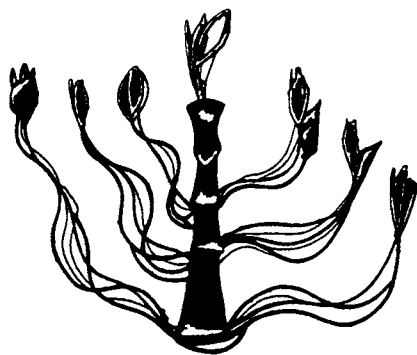
May all of us be blessed this New Year with 20-20 vision!

Shanah Tova!

Anyeh Zriel

ו ש נ ה מ ב ה ת כ ת ב ו

The Board of Trustees of the of the Congregation, the Sistehood, the Men's Club and all the affiliates join with the rabbis, cantor and staff in wishing all our members and friends a healthy and happy New Year.



Temple Israel

TIDINGS

Founded 1871

Tishri 16, 5754

October 1, 1993

Vol. XLIV No. 2

WORSHIP SERVICES

Friday, October 1
8:15 p.m.

Rabbi Azriel
"Simcha: A New Dimension"

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
Mrs. Ann Kaiman, Mrs. Ruth Luttbeg and
Mr. and Mrs. Alan Wolfson
in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of
their great nephew, David Rosen

Saturday, October 2
11:15 a.m.

Bar Mitzvah of
David Joseph Rosen
son of Margo and Bill Rosen

Simcha B'Shabbat
(alternative Torah Study Service
in the Chapel)

Torah Portion: Exodus 33:12-34:26

Wednesday, October 6
7:00 p.m.

Evening Simchat Torah
Consecrations

New Religious School Students
in Kindergarten and First Grade
will be called to the Bima

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
the Temple Sisterhood

Thursday, October 7
11:15 a.m.

Simchat Torah
in Yizkor

Torah and Haftarah Readers:
Marc Brookstein, Ali Lerner, Alex Lund
Rachel Roberts, Brian Siff

Torah Portion: Deuteronomy 33:1-34:12

continued on page 2

AS I SEE IT...

Because of confidentiality, I have changed some details in this accounting.

An attractive middle-aged Jewish woman sat across from me in my office the other afternoon. As I listened to her for over two hours, I felt as if I were watching a movie where someone had accidentally dubbed in the wrong sound. The words she spoke did not fit with the image I saw. Until the tears. The tears left no doubt.

"You should emphasize the children's angle," she said. "The children are not fooled. Adults only fool themselves thinking that the children don't know what's going on." It became increasingly difficult for her to talk through the intense anger and frustration. And the tears. "The children are so vulnerable..."

"X" grew up in an observant Jewish family in Brooklyn. She was the older of two girls. Her father was a New York City police officer. Jewish values were taught by example. It would seem to be the model Jewish home: loving father, a caring mother, daughters who loved and honored them in return.

But "X" knew differently. Throughout her childhood, she harbored a terrible and burdensome secret. The peace of her model Jewish childhood was often shattered by the screams and blows of her father beating her mother.

She told no one of the hell she had to endure. She shared with no one the emotional confusion she was feeling. She spent as much time as she could at school, where she was a model student, and in synagogue. She feared what she might find when she returned home. Had someone asked, she shared in retrospect, she would have spilled her guts out. But no one did. Not even the next door neighbors in an apartment building where the walls were paper thin.

She sits across from me, the napkin shredding slowly. It wasn't designed to absorb an hour's tears. As an adult, she has learned to face her past. She has confronted her parents and the abusive behavior has

diminished. I began to feel relieved at the thought of a happy ending. But the tears continued, unabated. "My twenty-two-year-old son just told me that his grandfather, my father, had sexually abused him until the age of eighteen."

"Yes, you can share my story," she said, "as long as I can remain anonymous. If it helps just one family in your congregation...if it helps just one child..."

I couldn't help but finish her thought. "A person who saves a single life is as one who has saved an entire world." A Jewish value that she, too, had once learned.

I share this with you now because it is on my mind and because the ties to the holiday of Sukkot are irresistible.

The Sukkah reminds us of the booth in which our forebearers dwelled during the harvest period. It was a fragile but adequate shelter from the often harsh environment. So, too, our homes are shelters from the often harsh world around. If we cannot find safety in our homes, then what safe space is there for us?

The Reform Movement sponsors a committee on the Jewish family which is currently investigating ways to prevent family violence in the Jewish community. The Central Conference of American Rabbis' committee on family life is working to share information and resources with its membership. The UAHC Department of Education published a family violence prevention curriculum. There are professionals in our city who can adequately deal with abuses in families.

This Sukkot, as we pause to give thanks for the bounty of our material and spiritual harvests, let us also be aware of the deeper significance of the shelter in our own lives. If it is there, we offer thanks. If it is lacking, know that Temple is a place to begin.

Anyeh Azriel



Temple Israel

TIDINGS

Founded 1871

Elul 17, 5753

September 3, 1993

Vol. XLIV No. 1

WORSHIP SERVICES

Friday, September 3
7:30 p.m.
"Wisdom of the Sages"

Saturday, September 4
10:15 a.m.

Torah Portion: Ki Tavo
Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8

Friday, September 10
8:15 p.m.

Jeffrey Taxman
"The Dialogue of Abraham and Isaac:
A Musical Interpretation of Genesis, Chapter 22"

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
Laurie and Jim Clark

Saturday, September 11
11:15 a.m.

Bar Mitzvah of
Jesse Aaron Bordy
son of Linda and Joe Bordy

Simcha B'Shabbat
(Alternative Torah Study Service in the Chapel)

Torah Portion: Nitzavim-Vayelech
Deuteronomy 29:9-31:30

Slichot Service
10:00 p.m.
"Art History and Ethics"

Reception preceding (see inside for details)

Wednesday, September 15
ROSH HASHANAH EVE
First Service 6:30 p.m.
Second Service 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, September 16
Morning Service 10:00 a.m.
Children's Service 2:00 p.m.
Family Youth Service 3:00 p.m.

Friday, September 17
7:30 p.m.

SHABBAT SHUVA
A creative worship experience for the
reconsecration of families

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
Sandy and Jeff Passer in honor of
the birthdays of their sons, Joel and Aaron

Saturday, September 18
11:15 a.m.

Torah Portion: Ha'azinu
Deuteronomy 32:1-52

Friday, September 24
YOM KIPPUR EVE
First Service 6:30 p.m.
Second Service 8:30 p.m.

Saturday, September 25
Morning Service 10:00 a.m.
"Ethics Panel" following Morning Service
Young children's Service 1:30 p.m.
Family Youth Service 2:15 p.m.
Afternoon Service 3:15 p.m.
Yizkor and Netiah Service 4:30 p.m.

Wednesday, September 29
7:00 p.m.

EREV SUKKOT

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
the Temple Sisterhood

Thursday, September 30
11:15 a.m.

Torah Portion: Leviticus 23:33-44

SLICHOT SERVICE

Saturday, September 11
10 p.m.
Wine and Cheese at 9:30 p.m.

Slichot means pardon or forgiveness, and the special service which marks the beginning of the Yamim Noraim, the Days of Awe, is traditionally held the Saturday before Rosh Hashanah.

Rabbi Azriel, Rabbi Fink, and Dr. Michael Yablonski will conduct the service.

Dr. Martin Rosenberg, Associate Professor of Art History at UNO and Director of Education at B'nai Israel in Council Bluffs, will guide us through a program blending art history and ethics. Discussion will center on theological, ethical, and moral messages of the art works.

Members of Congregation B'nai Israel have been invited to join us for this special evening.

This special Slichot Service and program will delight the senses as we prepare for the Days of Awe.

The Board of Trustees of the Congregation, the Sisterhood, the Men's Club and all the affiliates join with the rabbis, cantor and staff in wishing all our members and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

AS I SEE IT....

The ability to change is the most valuable facet of our humanity. How ghastly it would be if all mistakes were irretrievable! How dismal our lives would be if we were doomed to repeat them over and over again! How oppressive it would be if a lie were to be forever preserved.

We are not condemned to repeat our mistakes. We can change. This truth astounds me anew every High Holy Day season as I hear its powerful message. I can change and, with God's help, I will change. Inertia, false pride and pessimism thrust me into a rut. I feel overwhelmed. My good intentions evaporate but during the High Holy Day season I renew my faith; I can change.

I do not mean to suggest that people can shape their lives as readily as a potter can transform clay. Human nature is not that flexible. According to tradition, however, no life is so rigid that it can not be improved by determined effort. Our ancestors gave a name to that effort. They called it Teshuva.

Teshuva means "a return." On the High Holy Days, we seek to return to the values and goals of Judaism. During this season, we attempt to cut through all the cynicism and disappointment that encumber our lives. We try to locate ourselves on the map of life and ask ourselves: are we traveling down the right road? Have we wandered away from where we want to go? Have we gotten lost?

Teshuva in our tradition, is confirmation of astounding human truth. We can turn away from past mistakes. We can change.

Soul searching is painful. Still, I believe that it is worth facing the ugliness that was, in order to shape the beauty that can be.

This year I know that I must refuse to let yesterday's errors break my back. Where I was dishonest, I must turn to a new honesty. Where I have been cruel, I must strive for a reconciliation. I must find the courage to say "I am sorry."

Please see page 2.

"AS I SEE IT" Cont.

Perhaps then, I will feel, in the words of our tradition, Lev Chadash V'ruach Chadasha, a new heart and a new spirit. Perhaps then, the new year will become palpably "new."

I love the High Holiday season because it energizes me with this spirit. I love this time because it tells me I can start over again. I love it because it triggers in me the awesome power I possess. I can change. Tomorrow can be better.

L'shana Tova Tikatevu

Angel Azriel

"DIALOGUE OF ABRAHAM AND ISAAC" PRESENTED

Friday, September 10
8:15 p.m. Worship

Cantorial Soloist Jeff Taxman will perform this piece written by Donald Sutherland.

This musical setting of the Akeda, the binding of Isaac, brings a unique perspective to this story, a central part of the High Holy Days liturgy.

Sutherland is a well-known composer of vocal music, including choral settings of many sacred and secular works.

ETHICS PANEL DISCUSSION

Following Yom Kippur Morning Services, the Ethics Committee will facilitate a discussion regarding the intergenerational issues: what we owe our children and parents; what our children and parents owe us.

The panel will consist of members of our congregation who have expertise in this area, as well as the rabbis who will offer a Jewish perspective.

OUTREACH

SIN AND ATONEMENT THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN VIEWS

Join Outreach as Rabbi Azriel and a member of the Christian clergy present their respective views on subjects that are at the core of our High Holy Day season.

We will meet at 10 a.m. in the Milder Center on Sunday, September 19. A bagel brunch will be provided.

HIGH HOLY DAY AND FESTIVAL WORSHIP SERVICES

SLICHOT SERVICE
Saturday, September 11
10:00 p.m.

ROSH HASHANAH EVE
Wednesday, September 15
First Service 6:30 p.m.
Second Service 8:30 p.m.

Tuesday, September 16
Morning Service 10:00 a.m.
Young Children's Service 2:00-2:30 p.m.
Family Youth Service 3:00-4:00 p.m.

SHABBAT SHUVA
Family Reconsecration Service
Friday, September 17
7:30 p.m.

MEMORIAL SERVICE
Sunday, September 19
Temple Israel Cemetery
1:00 p.m.

YOM KIPPUR EVE
Friday, September 24
First Service 6:30 p.m.
Second Service 8:30 p.m.

Saturday, September 25
Morning Service 10:00 a.m.
"Ethics Panel Discussion"
following Morning Service
Young Children's Service 1:30-2:00 p.m.
Family Youth Service 2:15-3:00 p.m.
Afternoon Service 3:15 p.m.
Yizkor and Neilah Service 4:30 p.m.

EREV SUKKOT
Wednesday, September 29
7:00 p.m.

Thursday, September 30
11:15 a.m.

EREV SIMCHAT TORAH
Wednesday, October 6
7:00 p.m.

SIMCHAT TORAH AND YIZKOR
Thursday, October 7
11:15 a.m.

SING A NEW SONG

Cantor Karen Webber-Gilat

Why are these High Holy Days different from all others? This High Holy Day Season, Ronen and I will be welcoming a new member to our family and, will it be different! It will be a joyous time for us. The creation of a new life echoing the creation of the world. The cycle renews itself.

Beginning with the weekend of Slichot and extending through Thanksgiving, you will be seeing different yet familiar faces on and hearing different yet familiar voices from the Bimah. Jeff Taxman and Dr. Michael Yablonski will serve as Cantorial soloists for the Yamim Noraim - Days of Awe - the fall Holiday cycle and shabbatot during my maternity leave.

Ronen and I wish you all a happy, healthy New Year - truly a Shanah Tovah, a good year!

CANTORIAL SOLOISTS TO SHARE LITURGICAL DUTIES



Jeff Taxman



Dr. Michael Yablonski

During Cantor Karen Webber-Gilat's maternity leave this fall, Jeff Taxman and Dr. Michael Yablonski will sing the musical liturgies for the High Holy Days, festivals and Shabbat worship services.

Jeff Taxman is an Omaha native and life-long Temple Israel member. He has taught music and classes in our religious school, kindergarten through high school, since 1981 and is a familiar face to local theater audiences.

Mr. Taxman has been a cantorial soloist at Temple Israel since 1972 and has sung the High Holy Day services several times for the Jewish Community at Offutt Air Force Base. A music and theater major at Trinity University, he holds an MBA from the State University of New York in Binghamton.

He and his wife Sherry have four children.

Dr. Michael Yablonski moved to Omaha three years ago to become Chairman of the Ophthalmology Department at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. A native of Minneapolis, he supported himself during college and medical school as a substitute cantor at several Twin Cities synagogues.

A life-long Labor Zionist, he lived and worked at Kibbutz Kfar Blum as a teen; his daughter Deborah lives in Jerusalem.

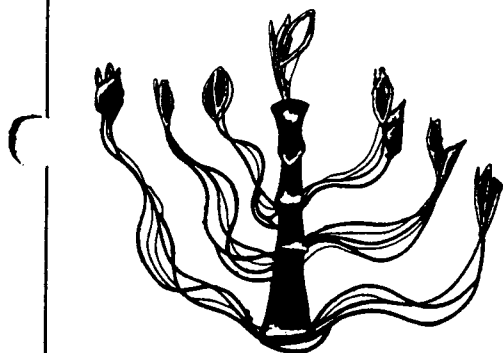
Dr. Yablonski spent the thirteen years before coming to Omaha in New York City, where he was on the faculty at Mount Sinai Medical School and Cornell Medical School. During this time, he studied voice at Juilliard.

He and his wife Anne have four children.

SHABBAT SHUVA

Family Reconsecration Service
Friday, September 17
7:30 p.m.

The Shabbat between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, known as the "Sabbath of Return," marks the renewal of our covenant with God. Shabbat Shuva has a special liturgy whose theme is the turning of family members to one another in understanding and compassion. The generations - grandparents, parents and children - are urged to experience the healing themes of this rejuvenating occasion.



Temple Israel

TIDINGS

Founded 1871

Elul 26, 5754

September 2, 1994

Vol. XLV No. 1

WORSHIP SERVICES

Friday, September 2
7:30 p.m.

**"Finding our Way: the Path to
Jewish Spirituality"**

Saturday, September 3
10:15 a.m.

Torah Portion: Nitzavim
Deuteronomy 29:9-30:20

Monday, September 5
ROSH HASHANAH EVE
First Service 6:30 p.m.
Second Service 8:30 p.m.

Tuesday, September 6
Morning Service 10:00 a.m.
Children's Service 2:00 p.m.
Family Youth Service 3:00 p.m.

Friday, September 9
7:30 p.m.

SHABBAT SHUVA

A creative worship experience for the
reconsecration of families

Oneg shabbat sponsored by
the Temple Sisterhood

Saturday, September 10
11:15 a.m.

Torah Portion: Vayelech
Deuteronomy 31:1-30

Wednesday, September 14
YOM KIPPUR EVE
First Service 6:30 p.m.
Second Service 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, September 15
Morning Service 10:00 a.m.
Ethics Panel following Morning Service
Young Children's Service 1:30 p.m.
Family Youth Service 2:30 p.m.
Afternoon Service 3:30 p.m.
Yizkor and Neilah Service 4:45 p.m.

Friday, September 16
8:15 p.m.

Sermon
Rabbi Stiel

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
the Temple Sisterhood

Saturday, September 17
11:15 a.m.

Bar Mitzvah of
Nicholas Bohbot
son of Menasse Bohbot
Simcha B'Shabbat
(Alternative Torah Study Service in the Chapel)

Torah Portion: Ha'azinu
Deuteronomy 32:1-52

Monday, September 19
7:00 p.m.

EREV SUKKOT

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
the Temple Sisterhood

Tuesday, September 20
11:15 a.m.

Torah Portion: Leviticus 23:33-44

Friday, September 23
8:15 p.m.

Sermon
Rabbi Azriel

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
Shari and Richard Lipshutz in honor
of the Bar Mitzvah of their son

Saturday, September 24
11:15 a.m.

Bar Mitzvah of
David Brian Lipshutz
son of Shari and Richard Lipshutz
Simcha B'Shabbat
(Alternative Torah Study Service in the Chapel)

Torah Portion: Exodus 33:12-34:26

Continued, p.2

AS I SEE IT . . .

I love magic shows. I always have. The sleight of hand sorcery is promise of irrevocable logic conquered, of inevitable destiny turned on its head, of impossible alchemy wondrously manufactured. When the occult takes over, we are released from the discipline of the mind and from the probity of reality. Without sweat or tears, our world is miraculously, effortlessly transformed. Fantasy reigns forever.

I guess one never really outgrows a zest for fantasy. Nevertheless, those who achieve emotional maturity recognize fantasy, the occult, and magic for what they are - the invention of a fertile imagination. Given free reign or the encouragement of drugs, the mind is a magician's wand - even, a conjuror's carpet. Sometimes the mind, abused by the imagination or drugs, takes individuals into a world of darkness with frightening superstitions and psychic distortions.

New Age practices appear very much to encourage this fearful dip into mindless spirituality. As defined recently in the *New York Times* the term New Age encompasses a wide range of beliefs that stress the paranormal or the harnessing of untapped mental powers through such means as rock crystals, clairvoyance and astrology. The underlying principle is that life is essentially a magic show.

I have been concerned of late about this quest for New Age spirituality. Spirituality has a legitimacy in the Jewish tradition. Some young people, however, fall prey to the New Age sleight of hand practices. They yearn for escape from spiritual experiences that stress the cultivation of mind and responsibility, instead of the release from logic and the escape from personal duty.

Judaism drew an unbridgeable chasm between itself and fairy tales. I have emphasized, in the past, the three major

Continued, p.2

Worship, Continued

Monday, September 26
7:00 p.m.

Erev Simchat Torah Consecration

New Religious School Students
in Kindergarten and First Grade
will be called to the Bima

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
the Temple Sisterhood

Tuesday, September 27
11:15 a.m.

Simchat Torah Yizkor

Torah Portion: Deuteronomy 33:1-34:12

SHABBAT SHUVA

Family Reconsecration Service

Friday, September 9

7:30 p.m.

The Shabbat between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, known as the "Sabbath of Return," marks the renewal of our covenant with God. Shabbat Shuva has a special liturgy whose theme is the turning of family members to one another in understanding and compassion. The generations - grandparents, parents and children - are urged to experience the healing themes of this rejuvenating occasion.

ETHICS PANEL DISCUSSION

Following Yom Kippur Morning Services, the Ethics Committee will facilitate a discussion on the topic "This is My God: Our Personal Journeys."

The panel will consist of members of our congregation as well as the rabbis.

Aryeh Aziel.....	Rabbi
Debbie S. Stiel.....	Rabbi
Sidney H. Brooks.....	Rabbi Emeritus
Dr. Michael Yablonski.....	Cantor
Ann Kibel Schwartz.....	Dir. of Education
Dorothy Spizman.....	Executive Director
Keith Singer.....	Youth Advisor
Robert L. Freeman.....	President
Jane Rips.....	Vice-President
Dr. Michael Walts.....	Vice-President
Sandy Passer.....	Vice-President
Sally Kaplan.....	Secretary
Spencer Brookstein.....	Treasurer
Jerome J. Milder.....	Past President
Sally Zipursky.....	Sisterhood President
Alan Fredricks.....	Men's Club President
Josh Katelman.....	OTYG President

As I See It, Continued

spiritual pathways of our heritage: first, Torah - the honing of the intellect. Spirituality is in the experience of sharing the Books' truths. Come and witness the Saturday morning Simcha B'Shabbat Torah study in the Chapel from 11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. It is spiritually a delight.

The second pathway to Jewish spirituality I have called "at homeness." Being at home with venerable traditions and historic memories is an antidote to alienation and loss of identity. "At homeness" shapes our rootedness in life and eternity. We establish a continuum of meaning and destiny that warms the heart day by day when we practice Judaism in our homes and in our families. "At home" in the world, we also sense the awesome beauty of God's universe. Nature's handiwork reveals God's rationality, not a demon's malevolence.

Jewish spirituality is cultivated as well by connections to community, the third pathway. These connections are the product of a communally shared commitment to shape history for the better.

Intrinsic to Judaism is an unyielding belief in tomorrow, a celebration of life. We demonstrate our confidence in history by shaping a caring community through "Tzadakah." "Tzadakah" requires a sharing of our well being with others. The joyous uplift from "Tzadakah" is authentic Jewish spirituality.

Jewish spirituality, in short, is a doorway into life; not an escape hatch out of it. We welcome the bright corridor to 5755 with joyous expectation. The future is ours!

L'shanah Tova Tikatevu

Aryeh Aziel

YOM KIPPUR REMINDER

PLEASE NOTE:

There is **no parking** at the First Methodist Church or the Playhouse on Erev Yom Kippur, Wednesday evening, September 14.

Please be good neighbors and honor their requests.

You may park at **Lewis and Clark Junior High**. Enter from Burt. There will be a shuttle to bring you to Temple.

The Board of Trustees of the Congregation, the Sisterhood, the Men's Club and all the affiliates join with the rabbis, cantor and staff in wishing all our members and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

HIGH HOLY DAY AND FESTIVAL WORSHIP SERVICES

ROSH HASHANAH EVE

Monday, September 5

First Service 6:30 p.m.

Second Service 8:30 p.m.

Tuesday, September 6

Morning Service 10:00 a.m.

Young Children's Service 2:00-2:45 p.m.

Family Youth Service 3:00-4:00 p.m.

SHABBAT SHUVA

Family Reconsecration Service

Friday, September 9

7:30 p.m.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

Sunday, September 11

Temple Israel Cemetery

1:00 p.m.

YOM KIPPUR EVE

Wednesday, September 14

First Service 6:30 p.m.

Second Service 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, September 15

Morning Service 10:00 a.m.

"Ethics Panel Discussion"

following Morning Service

Young Children's Service 1:30-2:15 p.m.

Family Youth Service 2:30-3:15 p.m.

Afternoon Service 2:30 p.m.

Yizkor and Neilah Service 4:45 p.m.

EREV SUKKOT

Monday, September 19

7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, September 20

11:15 a.m.

EREV SIMCHAT TORAH

Monday, September 26

7:00 p.m.

SIMCHAT TORAH AND YIZKOR

Tuesday, September 27

11:15 a.m.

YIZKOR

If you would like to have names of your loved ones read at the morning Simchat Torah and Yizkor Service Tuesday, September 27, call the Temple office, 556-6536, with the names to be read. Please phone by Thursday, September 22.



Temple Israel

TIDINGS

Founded 1871

Elul 6, 5755

September 1, 1995

Vol. XLVI No. 1

WORSHIP SERVICES

Friday, September 1
7:30 p.m.

Sermon
Rabbi Azriel

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
Janis and Donald Yale in honor of
the Bar Mitzvah of their son

Saturday, September 2
11:15 a.m.

Bar Mitzvah of
Andrew Jacob Yale
son of Janis and Donald Yale

Simcha B'Shabbat
(Alternative Torah Study Service in the Chapel)

Torah Portion: Shofetim
Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9

Friday, September 8
8:15 p.m.

Sermon in Song
"Melodies of the High Holy Days"

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
the Temple Sisterhood

Saturday, September 9
11:15 a.m.

Bat Mitzvah of
Rachel Louise Flatowicz
daughter of Roberta Flatowicz and
Pierre Flatowicz

Simcha B'Shabbat
(Alternative Torah Study Service in the Chapel)

Torah Portion: Ki Tetze
Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19

Continued on Page 2

AS I SEE IT...

There is a foreboding sense of intensifying hostility and anger fracturing our national psyche. The more obvious source of this insidious canker sore that poisons the public atmosphere is the hate groups. The skin heads, for example, are outright murderers. They plot to eradicate minorities, Jews, immigrants, non-Christians.

Their mindless venom unfortunately spills over to influence those who would disavow bigotry, ordinarily. More and more minorities and immigrants have become targets for exclusion and scapegoats for economic ills presently suffered by so many.

Match this with an increasing number of dysfunctional families and we begin to understand why hostility and anger seep into the lives of children, why our tolerance for diversity and economic stress has diminished. Exploding tempers produce disaffected and alienated employees who kill without reason. Children with guns kill for sneakers and jackets. This growing callousness, a shocking indifference to life, testifies to the frustration and anger gnawing at the souls of so many Americans.

If this tendency to violence, self-indulgence, and uncontrolled hostility were not so wide-spread, infecting diverse segments of society, we might feel less outraged. But in suburbs and cities, in every economic level, the immature and T.V.-mutilated intelligence responds to real or imagined exasperation with violent destructiveness.

Adolescents defy their parents and govern their lives by peer dominated values. Parents and their children attack one

another as their lives become submerged with adverse pressures and emotional or spiritual emptiness, leading to quarrelsome anger. Family and home is no longer a life sustaining inspiration. Civility and decency are at risk. Common courtesy is an endangered species.

Yet, recently, all over America, hundreds of thousands of young Catholics paid homage to spiritual and moral values. They confirmed that young people can transcend a materialistic culture to identify with elevating purposes, disciplines and ideals. They demonstrated a refreshing allegiance to a noble calling.

I was deeply moved by the report about these young Catholic religious enthusiasts. They were bright, thinking, spiritually responsive and morally sensitive individuals. [Whether or not one agrees with the Pope's moral principles, the gatherings all over America witnessed to the yearning in young people for heroic models and values.]

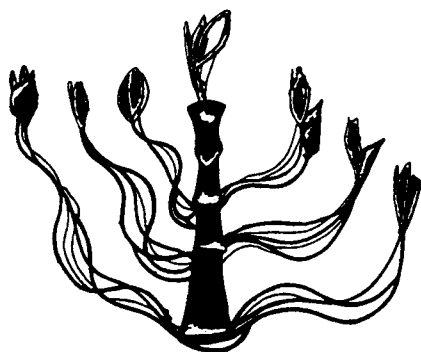
This New Year, I shall appeal to our Reform Jewish youth in a similar vein. I believe that they yearn for values and life uplifted with singular idealism. They are inheritors of a great and powerful tradition which on Yom Kippur summons them "to choose life!"

May they, and we, hear the ennobling echoes of the God of Israel calling us to an exalted mission as a covenanted people to redeem history. Like Jacob, I pray that we may share the vision of the ladder uniting heaven and earth to awaken us from a morose, moral slumber, to exclaim, "This is the place of God!"

Aryeh Azriel

SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE DANNY SIEGEL

See page 2



Temple Israel

TIDINGS

Founded 1871

Tishri 2, 5758

October 3, 1997

Vol. XLVIII No. 2

WORSHIP SERVICES

Friday, October 3

7:00 p.m.
Tot Shabbat

8:00 p.m.

Shabbat Shuva
Reconsecration Service

D'var Torah
Josh Zweiback

Oneg Shabbat sponsored by
Natha and John Waldbaum
In honor of their 15th wedding anniversary

Saturday, October 4
10:30 a.m.

Torah Portion: Ha'azinu
Deuteronomy 32:1-52

TASHLICH
Following Service

AS I SEE IT...

Even if you cannot build a sukkah, you still can take Sukkot's spiritual journey.

Reflect with us, if you will, on the intriguing requirement of the sukkah's roof. The roof must be sufficiently sturdy to create more shade than sunlight. Yet, it must be open enough to see the stars and sky. The sukkah, thus, is a delicate balance. We are reminded of God's sheltering presence but also we must experience life's precocious nature. Sukkot is about "wilderness consciousness." The sukkah takes us on a journey to fill us with awe and wonderment over God's creative artistry.

As does Passover, Sukkot teaches us that our people were wanderers. They were forced to wander, barely capable of meeting the challenges freedom imposed. They found themselves embittered by insecurity and doubt, backsliding in the wilderness of their souls, as they marched through inward deserts.

The great sage Maimonides taught, "Just as the matza of Passover reminds us of our sojourning in the land of Egypt and our desert experience, the fragile sukkah reminds us of our transient past, our wilderness of the soul."

Even if you cannot build a sukkah, you can still dare to take the Jewish spiritual journey celebrated by this thanksgiving time. Here is what you can do!

- Join the congregation in the sukkah within the sanctuary and outside the sanctuary. Let its symbolism ignite your spirit, to see, touch and smell the harvest season.
- Spend time during the season in nature's embrace, somewhere in the outdoors, underneath the stars and sky. Invest in your personal commitment to a "wilderness consciousness" that inspires environmental efforts to preserve the health and well being of God's creation. Include in your concern the tobacco, drug and alcohol abuse which destroy life.
- Contemplate the meaning of "home" and "homelessness." Demand of yourself an act of "tzedakah," because Sukkot is a journey of caring for others.
- Arouse your moral imagination. For instance, fulfill the mitzvah of Sukkot by welcoming a guest into your heart and home to share in the harvest of life's blessings. Offer your hospitality to friends and special guests, including those who live alone. This is a practice similar to inviting Elijah to our table at the Passover Seder.

Sukkot is a spiritual quest. Looking at our finitude, in the framework of eternity, the sukkah launches us on a journey with God. "Chag Samay-ach!"

Anyeh Zvi

**Our congregation extends its condolences to Rabbi Debbie Stiel
on the death of her father, Philip Shelton**

AS I SEE IT...

I confess to a hang-up about celebrating my birthday. It makes me uncomfortable.

I'd rather the day just slip by unnoticed.

The aging process doesn't annoy me. The usual banter about aging is that the alternative is worse. Perhaps it's the self-centeredness of the day that leaves me less than enthusiastic.

The birthday theme of Rosh Hashanah, on the other hand, is very satisfying. To start life anew, to overcome yesterday's errors, to begin again when liberated by refreshed hope, to discover new possibilities, to wake up to the excitement of surprises for tomorrow...that is the spirit of the Jewish New Year. I prefer celebrating Rosh Hashanah's emphasis on the birthday of the world, rather than my own.

Frankly, I am as uncomfortable with the observance of the secular New Year, with its raucous celebrations, as I am about my birthday. Surely, some of the themes of the Jewish New Year are present as well on the eve of January. But there is another side to the secular celebration.

Drinking is the most universal image of New Year's Eve. This Bacchanalian dimension commends these attitudes: Forget the world; have a wild time; relax and enjoy; raise your glass on high and escape from it all.

I don't believe these purposes are fruitful, or even beneficial. The next day is nothing more than a hangover, instead of an opportunity.

We all require respite from the pressures of our routine and challenges. There is nothing wrong, I believe, with such a purpose. But is the intent of this renewing of life—the restoring of energy, joy and hope—to forget the world and to escape from it? I think not.

To discover the world and to embrace it in a different way; to find healing that diminishes old hurts with balms of tenderness and forgiveness; to pause by a gurgling brook somewhere in a woody place where are heard only whispers of hidden things in God's splendid world—celebrated this way, the New Year becomes an embrace of life instead of its repudiation.

To grasp the hand of a loved one and, bound together in spirit, to walk in a crisp winter's night; to be enticed in wonder at a city and its majestic architecture soaring upwards into worshipful awe; to hear the music of a symphony or the voices of a choir; to respond to the stage whose drama is a catharsis—these are a thousand more human, loving ways to embrace the world, thereby celebrating life, love, family, friends.

For the New Year, I yearn for an end to cruelty, to poverty, to loneliness, to sham, to hypocrisy. I yearn for a rainbow in God's heaven, the promise of contentment and peace. Wasn't that God's promise in Noah's time? If God won't do it alone, then let us determine to do so as instruments of God's will.

Make a rainbow for your New Year's celebration this year. It's far better than a hangover. The spiritual uplift will be deeply satisfying. Life is amazingly serene with blessing when there is a rainbow in the house.

Aryeh Azriel

The Sukkot and Simchat Torah worship will be enhanced again this year by the magnificent Sukkah built and given by Ajon Farber and adorned beautifully by Bakers Florists.

WARMEST WISHES FOR THE NEW YEAR

The Board of Trustees of the Congregation, the Sisterhood, the Men's Club and all the affiliates join with the rabbis, hazzan and staff in wishing all our members and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Aryeh Azriel	Rabbi
Debbie S. Stiel	Rabbi
Sidney H. Brooks	Rabbi Emeritus
Erik L.F. Contzius	Hazzan
Ann Kibel Schwartz	Dir. of Education
Dorothy Spizman	Executive Director
Mark Spizman	Youth Advisor
Jane Rips	President
Dr. Larry Roffman	Vice President
Paul Epstein	Vice President
Dr. Michael Walts	Vice President
Angela Krieger	Secretary
Spencer Brookstein	Treasurer
Robert L. Freeman	Past President
Jeanne Angalet	Sisterhood President
James Clark	Men's Club President
Katie Kaplan	OTYG President



TREE OF LIFE

Commemorating the joyous moments in families' and friends' lives.

The following stone has been added to our Tree of Life:

**In honor of
Frances and Louie Blumkin**
with love, Roz Friedman,
Harriet and Lazier Singer,
Anna Lee and Irving Rubin,
Phyllis and Harvey Aronson and
Sondra and Norman Waxman

The following leaf has been added to our Tree of Life:

**In celebration of the life of
Lazier Singer**
Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Aronson,
Mr. and Mrs. Sandy Kasner,
Mr. and Mrs. Don Kneeter,
Mr. and Mrs. Irving Veitzer and
Mr. and Mrs. Norman Veitzer

OUTREACH MISSION MEETING

Israeli guide Alex Fleischer will speak about the Federation Outreach Mission September 9, 7:30 p.m., at the Residence Clubhouse, One Pacific Place, 1364 South 101.

Please call Lana in the Federation office, 334-6430, to make your reservation for the meeting.

Honorary chairmen Rabbi Aryeh and Elyce Azriel will lead the mission, scheduled for February 16-25, 1997.

For more information, call Jan Perelman, Federation Missions Director, at 334-6427.

AS I SEE IT...

A Vote Against 416

Homosexuals marched with Jews into the flames during the Shoah. We cannot let our gay-lesbian brothers and sisters march alone now.

We will keep the lights burning bright in the sanctuary the entire night of November 9th. All over the world synagogues will be illumined all night long. We will thereby symbolize the triumph of light over darkness. You, too, must remember Kristallnacht. The Jew must never forget.

Some cringe at the responsibility. Why remember tragedy? Why pay such tribute to so ugly a time? Why must Jews never forget? Doesn't Judaism emphasize life? Why must we forever recall tragedy, oppression and suffering?

We remember so many ugly times. Each time had its own special magnitude of diabolical adversity. Look at what we recall: Egypt and slavery; the destruction of The Temple, first by Babylon and then by Rome; exile and dispersion; blood libels and pogroms; Inquisition and expulsions; degradation in ghettos; and the Holocaust beginning with Kristallnacht. Horror has haunted the Jewish people sufficient for eternity.

And some believe we remember it all as if we relished the memory of our agony. They squeamishly demand: "Forget it!" By their indifference to memory they fail to discharge the basic Jewish responsibility.

The Torah demands: "You shall not forget!"

Some Jews confuse forgiving with forgetting. Forgiving liberates the present times for the newness of today's promise and deliverance from yesterday's error. We forgive to rescue life from debilitating anger and cynicism.

But to elevate the present and the future we need to remember. We dare not forget yesterday lest we submerge reality within the inarticulate subconsciousness. Yesterday is a hidden demon raging inside us when there is no memory of former times.

Jews must remember. Jews must not forget. "You were strangers in the land of Egypt. You know the heart of the stranger." Hard-heartedness, indifference, lack of empathy, dehumanization, reactionary politics, are born of forgetting. Don't ever tell me, a Jew, to forget. Only the bigot, the tyrant, the demagogue, demands the banishing of my memory.

But those who care about the future and its bright hopefulness, they will remember. They will look at the gleaming lights of Jewish sanctuaries on Kristallnacht. They will believe, within an awakening faith, in tomorrow. They will be awakened to

the cries of anguish still heard in our world and here in Nebraska. And they will care, and they will act to reclaim life.

They remember. They will not forget. Jews must illumine the world with memory. Jews must brighten the night with hope. Jews in Nebraska must vote against bigotry and discrimination on November 8th. Jews must vote against 416.

AS I SEE IT...

As I am getting ready for my trip to Israel, I examine the see-saw pattern of events in the Middle East with the return of the PLO to unabashed terrorism, I feel somewhat unbalanced in determining: is it good or bad for us? One thing is for sure. History is surprise after surprise. When least expected, events take an astounding turn. Bleak portends become suddenly transformed with hope. The search toward freedom is suddenly undermined by the outbreak of violent ethnic upheaval. Nothing is inevitable. Everything in life is unpredictable.

The good side of history's unpredictability was a grand feature of Biblical theology. Our patriarchs were the foremost believers of their time that history could move forward toward a sublime conclusion. With vibrant optimism they perceived that moral creativity could foster breakthroughs to reverse patterns of seeming inevitability. War was not inevitable, they believed. Injustice was not intrinsic to human affairs.

Their messianic visions judged history's fulfillment to be an infinite task. They repudiated paganism's conviction about a static reality. In their view the universe was inexhaustible. We can bring change. We can impose progress. We can choose good over evil. Judaism thought, "In ... every man shall sit under their vine and fig tree and none shall make them afraid."

But right now I'm afraid. Or at least, I am set on edge by uncertainty. The Holocaust taught me that in humanity, equal to the power for good, there resides the power for evil.

Some flee from the time's fearful uncertainty into frenzied ideologies of esoteric and mystical salvation. They hide behind theological fantasies. They escape from this world by a refusal to embrace the dynamic, if clouded, moment. They forfeit their responsibility in this world for some far-fetched world of guiltless and lifeless perfection. They call it heaven. Some aspire to live in a world

of total non-involvement and non-being. They call it Nervana. In either place, there is no fear, no questions, no answers. Right now I am more afraid than not. But, I find resiliency and strength in remembering the response of my ancestors. They possessed confidence in their power to make the right prevail. They determined to do the best they could with God's gifts of mind and spirit. They lived in the cosmic drama of Divine and human creativity. The future ages, they commanded: "Take courage! Look forward! History is a surprise." Surely, I can help to make it a good surprise. My people did it in ages past. Let us try to do it again. Shalom.

AS I SEE IT...

Hopefully, many of you have been to Israel, maybe some to Jordan as well. Then you may have noticed how the contrasts of life seem to intensify just being there. The contrasts between gardens and desert...Arab and Jew...Jew and Jew...modern and ancient...the mountains of Jerusalem and the Dead Sea below...these are not just feature stories in the media, these are hard choices that people live with in their daily lives. The people in this part of the world truly live each day on the edge, each person perched precariously on any of a number of precipices – not the least, life and death.

Our lives here in America are much more comfortable, but we are also on the edge. In just a few days we will be observing the *Yamim Noraim* – the Days of Awe, and on *Yom Kippur* we will read from Torah portion *Nitzavim* the following words..."You stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God – your tribal heads, your elders and your officials, all the men of Israel, your children, your wives, even the stranger within your camp...to enter into the Covenant...which the Lord your God is concluding with you this day...not with you alone, but both with those who are standing here with us this day and with those who are not with us here this day."

These were the words read by Moses at the foot of Mount Nebo, the last encampment of the Hebrew people before they crossed the Jordan River to the Promised Land. We read them on *Yom Kippur* to remind ourselves that we too stand at Sinai and accept the Torah; that we too stand at the foot of Mount Nebo poised to cross into Israel. We read them on *Yom Kippur* to remind ourselves that we also stand on the edge.

The High Holy Days bring us welcome comfort as we return from lazy days on the beach and trips to faraway places. I guess that is what a vacation should do – provide a short respite of escape from reality and responsibility. Now the High Holy Days are upon us. Their intent is totally the reverse of the vacation afforded. Now is the time to embrace reality, to cultivate the inner resources that enable us to courageously bear and fulfill responsibility. Now knowledge and information must be diligently sorted instead of being carefully neglected.

The High Holy Days are a time of self-discovery so that one can be propelled into life. They are days of arming oneself with a stubborn will to resist despair and cynicism. The spiritual conviction imparted by the Days of Awe simply put is this: "I can make a difference in the universe. Last year's errors will not continue to plague me, or this world, because this year I will change. I will do my utmost to bring change to the family, the home, the neighborhood, the world in which I live and in which I will strive to live with love. Surely, God is with me in this task and with His help, life and blessing shall prevail. "

In joy and awe we stand with our ancestors and the entire Jewish community on this precipice. It is where the Jewish people have always stood. At Sinai. At the foot of the Jordan River. In Spain. In shtetls. In America. In the neighborhood Gilo. The edge is ultimately what Judaism itself challenges us to tackle. Next to us, supporting us, are Moses and every Jew that has ever taken to heart these words, "Not with you alone, but also with those who are not with us here this day..." It is our inheritance. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Shana Tova u'metukah to our entire Temple family.

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As I See It...

The most remarkable part of life is its beginning. I'm deeply, joyously moved by the birth of a child. I think it's both newness and continuity which transport me. Newness is birth's remarkable, miraculous, mysterious essence. I hold the infant at baby naming ceremonies, so fearfully delicate, only a few days after their plunge into this world. Each part of them was examined by their parents with a silence, "thank God." The lips, the eyes, the tiny fingers - how awesomely wondrous!

This must be why our sages engrafted the universe's birth into Rosh Hashanah. Stirrings of hope and joy must transform our terror, sorrow, or despair. How difficult to yearly proclaim our excitement and zeal for life's challenges! But a birth and newness overcome every obstacle to our rejuvenation. The days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are called "Days of Awe" because we have embraced the spiritual and moral refreshment of creation's newness. Instead of lips and eyes and fingers so intricately formed we marvel at tasks and friendships and love restored and renewed.

There is another similarity of theme between the experience in a birthing room and the High Holiday mood. Continuity, as well as newness, compose the harmony of our soaring emotions on both occasions. We cradled our posterity in our arms, as tiny as they are. While we increasingly sense our mortality, as aging contributes an ache here and an infirmity there, the swaddled infant in our arms is a token of immortality.

While I do not relish death, I see infinite beginnings beyond my passing from this arena. The immensity and inscrutability of God's universe relieves me of anxiety about the end of my universe. There are no endings, only new beginnings in the divine abode. An infant seemed to wink at us for a second. We think of endless tomorrows, the continuity of generations, the immutable uniqueness of a human being as we hold eternity in our arms. Babies, they say, don't really smile. I'm not so sure. We wipe another tear from our cheeks.

Our emotions on Rosh Hashanah are not quite so expansive, still, when the shofar blows, I sometimes have intimations of continuity as significant to life as experienced at the birth of a child. I hear the shofar's triumphant blast no less than the newborn's squeaking plaint, and visions with elevating thoughts pour over my head. I am my people, bound to history and a resonant destiny, on Rosh Hashanah. So it was in the birthing room. So it sometimes is when the poetry of worship speaks to me of cherished yesterdays whose fruit is precious tomorrows.

The birth of every child has its unparalleled delights. So the High Holy Days. Each year is astonishingly new. I learn

from both times how good it is to be alive, and to celebrate creation.

L'shana tova!

The concept of Palestinian statehood has become a high profile topic, albeit a collateral one, as the United States and its allies wage war against terrorists in the aftermath of the September 11 attack on America.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair has endorsed independent statehood for Palestinians as part of a negotiated agreement that would guarantee 'peace and security for Israel' President Bush made clear that United States would support a Palestinian state provide the campaign on terrorism waged by Arabs against the people of Israel is halted and other conditions are met.

Interestingly, the positions articulated by the president and the Prime Minister are not really at odds with the feelings of most Israelis.

The Israeli government and the vast majority of the Israeli people long ago recognized both the justice and the inevitability of Palestinian statehood.

In 1993, as a result of the Oslo accords, something called the "peace process" was begun on the basis of the principle of "land for peace." Since then, pursuant to the Oslo accords and agreements subsequently negotiated. Israel has turned over control and administration of portions of the 'West Bank and Gaza to the Palestinian Authority (PA) and has provided the PA with arms and ammunition.

There may be complaints about how much land has been turned over to the PA or about how long the transfer has taken. However, this policy, pursued by both the Labor and the Likud governments since 1993, clearly demonstrates Israel's tangible and irrevocable commitment to the eventual creation of a Palestinian state.

For their part, Yasser Arafat and Palestinians in general have made no tangible commitments to peace, under the Oslo accords or any other agreements. Even more significantly, Arafat's intangible commitments are, as always, revocable at his convenience, or null and void from their conception. (The late King Hussein of Jordan once said, "Arafat never came to a bridge that he didn't double-cross.")

Arafat's most important commitment under the Oslo accords was his solemn promise to renounce violence and resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict only through negotiation. Progress under the Oslo accords was culminated in former Prime Minister Ehud Barak's extraordinarily generous offer at Camp David in July 2000. Barak's offer included an independent Palestinian state on 95 percent of the West Bank and Gaza, sovereignty over East Jerusalem (including more than half of the Old City) and control over all Muslim and Christian holy places in the Old City.

And what was the response to this offer? Palestinian violence and terrorism. Arab apologists have characterized the outbreak of violence in September 2000 as a spontaneous reaction to Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount. This is a spurious pretext. Arafat's communications minister, Imad Faluji, publicly admitted that the violence was not spontaneous reaction to Sharon's visit but was a planned response to the "failure" of the Camp David negotiations.

If Arafat did not find the Barak proposal acceptable and was indeed committed to negotiation, it stands to reason that he would have made a counter-proposal. At the very least, such a counter-proposal could have been the starting point for further negotiations.

Instead, Arafat released Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists from custody because he knew what they would do. Arafat used these terrorist groups as instruments of his policy in an attempt to wring further concessions from Israel. Yes, to him terrorism is a negotiating tactic. When he believes that it is in his interest to renounce violence, he renounces it. When he believes that terrorism will bolster his position, he allows it to be unleashed without hesitation or scruple.

This is the context in which today's Palestinian terrorism must be judged. It is obvious to all but the most deluded observers, that Palestinian terrorism will continue no matter what Israel offers. Hamas and Islamic Jihad have repeatedly and explicitly declared that, as a holy obligation, their goal is the eradication of the State of Israel, that anything, including the murder of Jewish children, is justified in the prosecution of their "holy war" and that they will never stop until they are successful.

The essential facts are these: Ehud Barak's offer at Camp David represented the best hope for a peaceful future that this seemingly intractable conflict has ever seen, and for fully 12 months the Palestinians have responded with the hatred and violence of the past.

The violence would stop tomorrow if the Palestinians stopped initiating it.

AS I SEE IT...

The Baal Shem Tov celebrated creation. He believed creation was the core of the Divine. I paraphrase his teaching from the 18th Century because as we kindle the light of Chanukah, his words about creation add meaning to the luminous flames gracing our chanukiyot. The literal meaning of the word Chanukah is "to rededicate." Remember, by the time the rabbis established Chanukah as a Jewish holiday they no longer countenanced celebrating a military triumph. On Chanukah, therefore, we recall the cruse of oil, and the flame that lasted not one but eight days.

The candles' light is witness to the Creator in our universe. To wake up each morning to see the world anew is to be enthralled to the Creator. This is our great faithfulness. Kindling Chanukah's candles we transform the night into morning. We become co-creators with God. Exuberantly we capture a new tomorrow and the Almighty, as it were, smiles at us.

Despite the fact that Chanukah is a relatively minor holiday on the Jewish calendar and not linked with the giving of gifts or the exchange of greeting cards, it's proximity to Christmas and the prevailing cultural norms in this country, mean that there will always be a December dilemma. There will always be the comparisons between Chanukah and Christmas. There will always be the concerns over what to say to the children or how to approach the season at the office, even for families in which there are no Christian

relatives. Although no one solution will completely remedy the dilemma, I would like to offer a few to think about:

Make the most of your own Chanukah celebration in an authentic manner. This year make a big deal about designing a family menorah or planning a Chanukah party with latkes. Read up on the story of Chanukah and do a family Maccabee pageant. Invite non-Jewish friends to experience your holiday celebration. Down-play the exchange of gifts, emphasize freedom of religion, the warmth and light of the season, the playing of dreidel, the giving of gelt.

Explain Christmas celebrations to Jewish children using the birthday analogy, when your friend has a birthday we go to his party and help him to celebrate. But we know that it is his birthday and not ours. It's okay to help others celebrate their holidays as long as we are clear that it is not ours.

Choose only one holiday to celebrate in your home and be clear about the messages you send. A Chanukah bush is a travesty to both Jews and Christians alike. It discounts the religious significance of the holiday. For Christians, it has nothing at all to do with Chanukah and its observance. It is not an accident that winter holidays make use of lights and warmth in a time of darkness. But be enlightened about the holiday you celebrate in your home. Chanukah is not a Jewish Christmas.

So on the eight nights of Chanukah, we symbolize our faithfulness by kindling lights. The flame is a prayer to express our conviction. The morning's new light again will shine. Creation will be new all over again, for the dawn overtakes the night, and the sick are healed in hope and joy.

Happy Chanukah

may 2005

AS I SEE IT...

On occasion I receive letters or calls from parents of candidates for B'nai Mitzvah, taking exception with our congregation's B'nai Mitzvah policy. In many of these instances, the point is made that children are too young to understand the value of Jewish education or unable to make a pledge to follow-up the B'nai Mitzvah ceremony with continued Jewish learning.

Recently, while on sabbatical, I reread Robert Kohl's "The Spiritual Life of Children". The author's studies reveal, "There is a natural overlap between the moral and the religious life of children." Apparently, the study purports, when the religious life fails to inspire standards of moral behavior then children view organized religion as hypocritically to blame. They then become alienated from their own spiritual resources and needs.

Not a bad insight for children of tender years. I fully agree.

Organized religion must make spirituality and ethics part of a single fabric. Ceremonials must involve moral and spiritual movement. Religious symbolism must inspire behavioral patterns with deepened commitment to the content inherent in the particular ceremony or symbol.

Children readily recognize hypocrisy and sham. They do so especially in reference to their experience of Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

When parent and child make a pledge to take seriously this ceremony by proceeding with a renewed commitment to Jewish education, but quickly abandon that pledge, the child can have little respect for religion and its standards or its moral instruction. What a tragedy!

On the other hand, there are parents who do want to approach the issue with absolute integrity. They are profoundly concerned about making a pledge which they feel children are not capable of fully comprehending, or may not be able to fulfill because of life's vagaries. They are up front with their hesitation to pledge because of their reservations about an ability to follow up on the pledge. The following is my response to one such recent letter I received.

"I believe a ten-year-old is capable of making a pledge and can, as well, value important ideals and objectives. In an environment where Jewish learning and Jewish life are valued, a child can, under ordinary circumstances, accept the commitment of parents' to value spiritual and moral identity with his people and community. I am and have been in touch with thousands of children, and I can bet my life on the potential of young people to be responsive to Jewish values and practices."

"I totally agree that Reform Judaism encourages responsible and intelligent choice making. No one need decide to have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Because it was so abused, Reform for many years abandoned the practice. Given the abuse that is now so pervasive around the United States, I'm pleased that Temple Israel has the fortitude and idealism to adopt standards in line with the meaning of the occasion. Liberalism does not mean the lack of standards. Liberalism can lead to license when it disregards communal obligations. Jewishly, it is a Mitzvah [commandment] at age 13 to commit oneself to the study of Torah.

The ceremony was not an automatic and metaphysical state achieved by a single ceremony. The ceremony demonstrates the reading ability or literacy of a child, now taking on the commitment to study Torah. In historic fact, Bar Mitzvah was an initiation not a conclusion."

"The reason for the pledge is to clarify in the mind of child and parent precisely what it means to become a Bar Mitzvah. Certainly no one can predict the future. There are vagaries which produce even more fundamental changes in life than the matter at issue. No one can be held responsible for exigencies that require a shift. But the purpose of Bar Mitzvah is for the child to know that in I am 'a son/daughter of the Commandment,' and as such I am, at this time, pledging to follow the commandment requiring Torah study."

AS I SEE IT...

"...Guard your tongue from evil, and your lips from deceitful speech..."

Gossip is an ancient sin...the impact of gossip is as destructive to life as is any physical damage. With slanderous words we can destroy an individual's self-esteem and life itself.

I have seen how hurtful and damaging gossip has been. I have seen the anguish of those who are the object of gossip. Aware of its insidious nature, our tradition has vigorously condemned it. For example, the rabbis taught: "Whoever spreads malicious gossip is like one who denies God. One is also forbidden to listen to malicious gossip."

"If you hear an evil matter, bury it seven fathoms underground." "God loves not tale bearers even when they are right."

The Hasidic story illustrates that point. It is about a man who committed the sin of slander. In contrition he went with rabbi and asked, "How can I make repentance? I did not intend to hurt my neighbor with cruel and malicious words."

The rabbi replied, "I'll tell you what to do. Take this sack of feathers, go about the village and place a feather on every porch. When you have completed this assignment, come back to me." Much later he returned with the empty sack. "I've done my penance, rabbi. I am truly sorry."

"No, no," said the rabbi. "You are not done. Now return to every porch in the village and retrieve the feathers and put them in the sack."

The entire day he attempted to find the feathers. But finally he returned with an empty sack. "Rabbi, I could not find the feathers. The wind has blown them away."

"Now you understand," said the rabbi, "that's the way unkind words are. Once they leave your mouth, like feathers, you can never get them back."

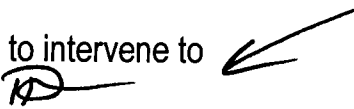
The words of our mouths bring either pain or healing, distress or strength. Our world is so filled with turmoil and conflict we should not add to it. We should seek with our words to build bridges and promote peace.

AS I SEE IT...



"It's all for the best!" So say some when life suddenly deals them a bad card. I don't believe it. Often I've heard an individual who lacks an all-accepting faith, or perhaps even an uncritical faith, speak with regret about this, especially at a time of crisis. On the surface, it seems that a blind faith in a supernatural power, which beneficently determines the course of events, can mobilize our inner resources for adequate coping. Again, I don't believe this.

Not everything happens for the best. If it were true that everything happens for the best, then there would be no need for us ever to intervene in any of nature's processes.

From the Jewish point of view, nature is amoral. We are commanded to intervene to  elevate nature with moral significance. This is how we sanctify reality. Job was not comforted by his sanctimonious friends who rationalized the way he's suffering by giving suffering a teaching function. The fact is, unrelenting suffering does not exalt us. We are debased by an unremitting diet of misfortune. Medicine, prayer, and love are ways by which we redirect misfortune into the garb of illness, apathy, despair and overwhelming guilt. They are human interventions to transform these into health and zest for life.

Nevertheless, there is evil not susceptible to our mediation.

I like God's response to Job about inexorable evil. We are too finite to know all the answers which surround life's paradoxes and ambiguities. We must dare to live with our doubts and questions to make our lives as worthwhile, morally effective, and spiritually creative as possible, despite the conundrums of accident and evil in our experience. This is

the nature of Jewish faith: to persist in living nobly, despite tragedy. It's a heroic faith for sure. But it's far more worthy of our humanity than a simplistic and uncritical creed that blindly says everything is for the best.

Of course, we require healing and sustaining ingredients in our mixed experience to sustain us in our times of trial. One of those ingredients is loyalty to family, traditions, and purposes which focus our existence on the continuity that links the generations. Continuity, through loyalty to family heritage, gives our life a bridge across the harrowing tribulations that would otherwise overwhelm us with meaninglessness. Continuity of generations is an intimation of immortality. We should truly be grateful, for the fact that despite so much that goes wrong in the world, and so many who do wrong, there is yet so much beauty, goodness, decency in so many places and people. There are godly people living on God's earth. Let us celebrate them with everlasting gratitude.

CHANUKAH

AS I SEE IT...

Glamour and gold against righteousness and responsibility. So were the opposing lines drawn.

The Greek Gods, of a debased and oppressive Hellenism, amidst sweet incense and seductive fleshpots, enticed their conquered Jewish vassals. The great sports arena symbolized civilization cheapened by a trivialization of life. To risk human life for sport made for adventure and excitement, and also, for cruelty and perversion.

Statues dedicated to the glorification of pagan pigs and the emperor Antiochus decorated the once austere sanctuary, previously devoid of tangible representations. Votaries came there now to receive power and privilege, where once pilgrims harkened to a summons arousing compassion and conscience.

Assyria's Antiochus had a master plan. He schemed to assimilate the conquered Judea, on his way to the subjugation of Egypt. When some Jews failed to abandon allegiance to their human faith and moral tradition, in anger Antiochus forbade them religious freedom. The confrontation between mighty Assyria and tiny Israel ensued.

Understand the crucial conflict because it remains the challenge to civilization, now as then. Mattathias and his sons, led by Judah, descended from the multitude.

No! They would not cheapen life with sport, at the cost of life.

No! They would not display the naked body in the public baths.

No! They would not pay homage to the festive idols symbolizing the conceits of glamour and gold, power and privilege.

No! The sports arena should not be built at the expense of feeding the hungry and housing the homeless.

No! Self gratifying sexual behavior may not undermine the love of parents for one another, nor the solidarity of the family.

This small band overcame the mighty horde. To celebrate the triumph of light over darkness, of human dignity over oppression, of freedom over tyranny. They conceived of the simplest of symbols, a tiny candle, or a cruse of oil. We still celebrate the power of right over might each Chanukah. The simple candle still is kindled in repudiation of glamour and gold.

Yet, we must remember as well, the Maccabean rebellion, and the victory of good over evil, was short-lived. Within that very generation of worthy pioneers, Judah's successors succumbed to the attractions of Hellenism. The prophetic spokesman for a humane and just social structure were silenced. The second commonwealth was no different morally than its Hellenized neighbors.

Help your children to understand the fragility of the tiny candle, and the inward moral flame it symbolizes. Inspire your children to be Jewish pioneers of Torah, not seduced assimilationists. Chanukah is not found in the glamour and gold of gifts. We are dissenters against the multitude. We are proponents of righteousness and responsibility, compassion and conscience.

So kindle in joy the Chanukiah. Celebrate dedication to Israel's God!

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