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In the Interim by Rabbi Gary Atkins

I write this article with the sun shining through my east-facing window. I am eagerly looking forward to spring. I am eagerly looking forward to Purim, starting tonight. I enjoy my “Robin Hood” costume, the latest of many I have bought and worn over the years. I feel I have been in a state of mental semi-hibernation over the winter months, or at least living with Seasonal Affective Disorder. The COVID situation, joined with the winter cold and short days to make everything hard and discouraging. Despite my many efforts, Temple Israel, like many congregations, was struggling with decreased attendance and participation.

But the coming of spring and the Spring holidays revive me. By the time you read this message, I should be back from a study period at the Holocaust Museums in New York City and Washington DC. The topic is depressing, but knowing that “Am Yisrael Chai, the Jewish people live, makes it a study in endurance that ultimately led to the Founding of the state of Israel, celebrating its 74th anniversary in early May.

The Torah portion this Shabbat is Tzav. Each week I have learned from them, and the office sends out a link to her weekly Torah sparks. What Ilana Kurshan wrote on this otherwise technical and irrelevant (because we do not sacrifice in a nonexistent Temple) portion makes the portion quite relevant and gives me a boost in spirit. She writes:

“We cannot always wait for the devotional impulse to well up inside us. In my own life I have gone through

periods when I've felt so depleted that any spiritual flame is dimmed within me. I have learned that if I establish routines—perpetual flames—in my more hopeful moments, then these practices will carry me through the difficult times. Sometimes it can feel as if I am merely going through the motions, my brain and body on autopilot. But inevitably at some point—after a few days, or a few weeks, or perhaps even longer—the fire will burn more brightly inside me.

Our parashah teaches us that in those moments when we don't feel we have anything to offer, we offer, nonetheless. We take from the leftover funds, the habits, and disciplines we have already cultivated, because they enable us to keep the fire burning. If we are fortunate, the sacrifices that come merely from the “leftover funds” inside us will eventually combust into an offering of wholeness, and we will recognize that the light of the divine presence continues to burn within us.”

For me, the disciplines (and joys) of celebrating the spring holidays have started to rekindle the fires of religious devotion that have been part of my life for 50 years. I hope that my enthusiasm will help to rekindle yours, as we celebrate Passover, Yom HaAtzmaut, and Shavuot together in the coming months... and hopefully study together in our spring Adult Education program as well!

Yom HaShoah – What is it? by Rabbi Gary Atkins

I learned a while ago that many members of the Jewish community are not familiar with this commemorative/remembrance day for the victims of the Holocaust. So, what is the day, formally?

“According to the BHebcal website, Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah (יום הזיכרון לשואה ולגבורה; “Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day”), known colloquially in Israel and abroad as Yom HaShoah (יום השואה) and in English as Holocaust Remembrance Day, or Holocaust Day, is observed as Israel's day of commemoration for the approximately six million Jews and five million others who perished in the Holocaust as a result of the actions carried out by Nazi Germany and its accessories, and for the Jewish resistance in that period. In Israel, it is a national

memorial day, and a public holiday. It was inaugurated in 1953, anchored by a law signed by the Prime Minister of Israel David Ben-Gurion and the President of Israel Yitzhak Ben-Zvi.”

So, on this date, it has become traditional for synagogues and communities to come together, to remember, and to reaffirm “Never Again.” Over the years, the number of immediate survivors has dwindled. We see photos of those survivors, now in their nineties generally, returning for commemorative events at Auschwitz or other camps... sometimes accompanied by their children, the “Second Generation” children of survivors. **It is essential to “Zachor,” to Remember.** In Manchester it has been

traditional for the community to gather together as one with a commemorative program.

This year the program will be held at on April 27 at Temple Israel, 66 Salmon Street, Manchester, at 7:30pm. At the time of this writing, the program is being developed, but it will include the lighting of memorial candles, remarks by survivors and/or their children, commemorative readings and songs.

Please put the event on your calendar and check the Temple Israel or Federation websites for updated information. We will also be livestreaming on our YouTube channel, which you can access from our website, www.templeisraelmht.org.



- Joy & Michael Sydney for their successful fund-raising efforts on behalf of the Hebrew School
- Dina Weber for her help with proofreading and mass mailings
- Our Jewish Book Club Chairs - Benay Birch, Ken Cohn, and Aida Koocher
- Liz and Larry Eckman for our kitchen and bathroom supplies
- Our Temple Board for meaningful service options and activities
- Jeff Klein for taking care of the myriad building issues
- Stephen Singer and Jeff Klein for organizing Wednesday morning minyans
- David Winthrop for maintaining our yahrzeit boards and Torahs
- Michael Sydney for continued efforts on behalf of the Manchester Hebrew Cemetery
- The Singer/Sydney family for groundskeeping services
- John Weber for his financial acumen and continued support
- Carol Sternberg Chairperson of Kitchen Krew, Lunches and Gift Shop
- Kiddush Krew - Benay Birch, Renee Brenner, Ken Cohn, Josh Nathan, Merle Paltrow, Carol Pressman, Rachel Spierer, Carol Sternberg & David Winthrop

Special thanks to:

Purim Party Planners Rabbi Gary Atkins, Rachel Fleischner, Morgan Hallock, Josh Nathan, Linda Sinkow, Marc Stober, and Emily Verbun.

Mishloach Manot Cookie Packers: Carl & Morgan Hallock, Josh Nathan, and John Weber

Mishloach Manot Delivery Drivers: Christy Aberg, Iris & Rabbi Gary Atkins, Benay Birch, Ruth Chevion, Ken Cohn, Michael & Catherine Davidow, Debbi & Greg DePasse, Ian & Staci Felder, Brian Grodman, Morgan Hallock, Karen Jacobs, Jeff & Michelle Kelman, Jeff & Michelle Klein, Ami & Lindsay Kilchevsky, Aida Koocher, Josh Nathan, Norri Oberlander, Jeff & Gigi Oxman, Julia Preis, Rachel Russell, Harry & Barb Shepler, Liz Sommers, Bob & Carol Sternberg, Emily & Alex Verbun, John & Dina Weber, and Amy & Mitchell Weinberg

Memorial Tzedaka

Celine & Duston Belanger in memory of Georges Hania
Carol & Bill Cohen in memory of Danny Levine
Barbara Hania in memory of Georges Hania
Anne Miller in memory of Jayson Levine
Robert Smith in memory of Lillian Smith
Nancy & Morris Steinbock in memory of Henry Poster

Renee Brenner in memory of Samuel Sidman
Carolyn Corliss in memory of David Kniager
Phyllis Levine in memory of Nathan Levine
Barbara Platt in memory of Milton Novak
Carol Sternberg in memory of Herbert Paul (Sonny) Kaplan
Ruth & Jay Zax in memory of Louis Zax

Other Donations

Iris & Rabbi Gary Atkins in honor of Gary Singer
Ken Cohn in honor of Jeff Salloway
Jane Silberberg in memory of Toni Gasser

Ruth Chevion in honor of Christine Dame
Ken Cohn for Shabbaton
Joy & Michael Sydney in memory of Charlotte Krentzel

A Holocaust Survival Story for April - by Ruth Chevion

There came a time in 1943, when my father and his brother needed to make a decision because their father was being evicted from his hiding place. Their father did not speak perfect Polish - his language was Yiddish. He did not have good false papers, and he could not pass for Polish. The ideal solution, the two brothers reasoned, would be to get their father out of Poland altogether, to Palestine if possible.

An undertaking of this dimension required discussion and planning. The first obstacle the brothers faced was how to get together to discuss it. A cardinal rule for Jews seeking not to be caught, was to avoid being seen with other Jews. It was said that one Jew alone could blend. Two Jews together looked like Jews. Above all, the rule was, never be seen with a member of your family.

How to discuss a plan without being seen together? There was no safe place indoors. Actually, each of the brothers, both my father and my uncle, maintained three different living places at the same time. This was in order to avoid becoming friends with anybody who might ask personal questions. They could always say they were just stopping by for a short stay on the way to somewhere else. The idea was to avoid making friends. My uncle's words: "People will ask the most personal questions when they think they know you."

Thus, while they had six "homes" between them, in none of these six places could they safely meet. And certainly, in no public place would they risk being seen together. But they had a solution . . .

The two brothers made their way, each independently, to a park in which there was a lake where you could rent kayaks at docks on opposite sides of the lake. Each one rented a kayak from a different dock and paddled in a leisurely fashion toward the middle of the lake. When they were in hearing distance of each other, they slowed down while continuing to paddle. There, in the middle of the lake, they talked and argued as their kayaks crossed each other.

The major decision they had to make was which of them, my uncle Alex, or my father, would be the one to accompany their father out of Poland. Clearly, he could not go alone. He was too old, and too Jewish looking. He needed cover. Meantime, neither brother was in a hurry to leave.

Both brothers were successfully hiding in plain view. My father had joined the Polish resistance, Armia Krajowa, where he was caught and beaten one time and left for dead just like his fellow fighters, but only for the crime of resisting the Nazis, not for being Jewish. He developed a brusque personality that discouraged friendship.

Alex meantime, was running black market gasoline from Russia to Poland, actually making money if you can believe it. Alex had a wonderful Polish appearance. Even into old age he could have passed for a Polish farmer with those hooded steely blue eyes, high cheekbones, and thick eyebrows.

Both Alex and my father spoke perfect Polish and either one could hold his own drinking shots of vodka when in company.

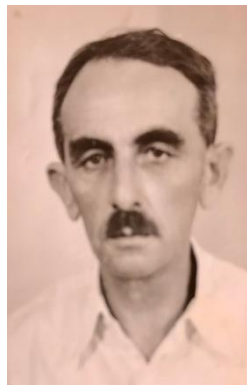
In end, it was decided that my father would stay, and Alex would go with their father. The decisive reason was that the two women in the family - mother and sister - could not manage on their own. They were in hiding in an apartment in Krakow, and it had been my father all along who was their emergency contact. He had been to their place and had been seen on the stairs and in the hallway. It was impossible now, for a different man to be seen going in there, especially a man who looked somewhat similar to the previous man.

And so it was, that Alex successfully got their father out of Poland, first by train to Czechoslovakia, the older man posing as a drunken peasant, while Alex kept watch from a distance. Once in Czechoslovakia, they met a guide who took them over the mountains, where unfortunately grandfather had a heart attack on the way and had to be carried. Local non-Jewish Czechs had set up a series of way stations that escorted them to Hungary. In Hungary they went to jail for three weeks for entering the country illegally but escaped and with help from the Jewish community made it to Romania, and from there to Turkey on the steamship "Bulbul."

The steamships Bulbul and Mefkure were last two ships to carry refugees from Turkey to Israel in WWII. My uncle and grandfather were aboard the Bulbul when she sailed on August 5, 1944. But her twin ship, the Mefkure, was bombed by the Germans and sunk in sight of the passengers on the Bulbul. Only the few who were able to swim to the Bulbul survived. My uncle shared with me his sad feelings of seeing people from the Mefkure desperately trying to swim to the Bulbul, and how one pregnant woman made it, along with just a few others, while hundreds drowned, both passengers and crew.

The whole story was reported the next day in the New York Times on page 5.

No wonder my parents always maintained that survival had nothing to do with cleverness. It was all about luck they always said. But Alex and my grandfather did make it to Israel before the end of the war, and my father survived also, and so did my grandmother Miriam and my aunt Chava.



My father, Paul Fessel.



My uncle, Alex Chevion

Never forget . . .



Adar II-29
to
Nisan 29



Apr 1 - Neil Guttman
Apr 1 - Mirabel Welch
Apr 2 - Jeremy Geller
Apr 6 - Dali Belanger
Apr 6 - Judson Belmont

Apr 7 - Brian Grodman
Apr 8 - John Weber
Apr 9 - Sherri Keizman
Apr 10 - Niza Preis
Apr 13 - Lea Themea

Apr 14 - Lindsay Kilchevsky
Apr 16 - Carol Pressman
Apr 18 - Dustin Belanger
Apr 19 - Shayden Oberlander
Apr 23 - Nancy Steinbock

Debbie & Peter Manning
April 12 - 36 years

Sedra Michaelson
& Ron Deeter
April 27 - 36 years



My name is Leslie Belanger and for my joint Bat Mitzvah and Black Belt project I am raising money for The Bedford Bobcats, a branch of Special Olympics New Hampshire, whose mission is to: *"provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience*

joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community." The Bedford Bobcats uphold Jewish values by being inclusive (Lifnei Aver), respecting everyone (Kavod), and honoring humanity (K'vod HaB'riot).

I chose this organization because I am friends with multiple people who benefit from Bedford Bobcats. One of my friends tells me about all the different sports he plays, like basketball and bowling. Whenever he talks about them, he gets really excited, and I think it helps him to interact with people and do things he would usually not get the chance to do.

With the money I raise, I plan to fund the purchase of sports equipment including basketballs, softballs, javelins, and shot puts for field events. The money would also go towards buying uniforms for state competitions. My fundraising goal is \$5,000.

To donate, please make checks payable to Bedford Bobcats and mail to me @ 145 Pulpit Road, Bedford, NH 03110. I will deliver them to the Bedford Bobcats. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me at lesliebelanger052809@gmail.com.



Jonas Welch Bar Mitzvah Reprisal

Jonas Welch will reprise his Bar Mitzvah at 9:30am on Saturday, April 16, followed by Day 8 Passover service at 10:00am with Yizkor circa 11:15am, and Kiddush in honor of Jonas. Please RSVP directly to: ariellemargot@gmail.com by April 6 so that the family can have a head count for the caterer. It is not necessary to RSVP if you do not plan to attend the Kiddush.



**The Passover
Gift Shop is Open!**

Email
carolsnh@myfairpoint.net
To schedule a visit!



Thinking of buying or selling your home?
Contact fellow Temple Israel member
and local REALTOR® Céline Belanger.
Cell: 310-500-5702
Office: 603.471.0777
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