



THE SHOFAR

שׁוֹפָר

United Synagogue of Hoboken

SHEVAT / ADAR 5778

FEBRUARY 2018

UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY 2018

- 4 Speakers Brunch *The Book Smugglers* 10:30am
- 10 Film, *Footnote*, 7:30pm
- 23 Young professionals shabbat dinner, 8pm
- 25 Family Purim party 10am
- 28 Purim eve events: Very young children 5:30pm; children 6:15pm; adult shpiel & reading 7pm

MARCH 2018

- 3 Casino Night, Elks Club, 7pm
- 11 Radiance Chamber ensemble 3pm
- 16 Jonatas Chimen on *Jews of Brazil* 7pm
- 17 Parenting with Jewish Values: How can Judaism help us respond to illness and death? 10:30am

Friday night services 7pm

Saturday morning services 9:30am

See www.hobokensynagogue.org & USH Facebook page for more info on these and other upcoming events!

Cursing or Critiquing Leaders?

by Rabbi Robert Scheinberg



The Torah includes some commandments that are easier than others. Easy commandments include, for example, that one is forbidden to marry an Ammonite or Moabite. (This commandment is not too difficult these days as there aren't anymore.) Also, among the foods that are not kosher are various disgusting things that you probably wouldn't have thought to eat anyway.

But there are some commandments that are more difficult. One commandment that is often difficult is found in the book of Exodus, Parashat Mishpatim (to be read in synagogues on February 10, 2018). This verse begins: *Elohim lo tekalel* -- "do not curse God." That part may not be so difficult.

The harder part is the remainder of the verse, which says *ve-nasi be-am'cha lo ta'or*. "Don't curse a leader among your people." (In modern Hebrew, the word *nasi* means "president," but in the Torah it can refer to any leader.)

Can you imagine: cursing leaders is prohibited by the Torah! This sounds so contrary to the American way of life, or the Israeli way of life. In both of those societies, cursing the political leaders feels like a national pastime. But the Torah seems to encourage us otherwise.

What exactly is the Torah saying here? Is the Torah saying that one's leaders are above criticism, that leaders should be followed blindly, even when they are flawed or if they are terribly unjust? Apparently not. There are numerous examples in the Bible of leaders having significant flaws, and of other people pointing out those flaws. Earlier in the book of Exodus, we read about Moses' father-in-law, Yitro, who offers some very pointed critiques of Moses' leadership style. Perhaps the most well-known example of a trenchant critique of a leader in the Bible is in the story of King David.

[\(Continued on next page\)](#)



A FABULOUS AND FUN JOSH WARSHAWSKY CONCERT

by Adam Strosberg

USH was delighted to welcome back Josh Warshawsky for an artist-in-residence weekend, capped off by a concert on Saturday evening, January 6th.

It was a fun time had by all. We started with a warm and meaningful Havdalah, despite the very cold temperatures outside!

Many of the members of the audience have Camp Ramah ties, where Josh has been a song leader.

We were delighted to learn about Josh's travels and the events and backstories that led to the creation of his songs, many of which are his new melodies to ancient Jewish texts,

Josh and his talented friends that joined him on-stage did a fantastic job involving the audience.

We all enjoyed singing along.

It was a fun night highlighting unity and peace. ✨



While serving as king, King David had an extra-marital affair, and he arranged for the death of his lover's husband so that he could marry her. (We usually don't teach this story in the Learning Center.) Famously, it was Natan, the court prophet, who called King David to task, speaking with him very harshly and encouraging him to begin a process of *teshuvah*, of repentance for his severe sins.

How could Yitro, and Natan, and any number of other examples of critics of Jewish leaders over the centuries, have done what they did, when the Torah includes a commandment that ordains such a high level of respect for public officials?

We should note that the Torah does not say "don't ridicule a leader," or "don't criticize a leader." We should be very thankful for this! Every generation of the human family has included leaders who are absolutely deserving of critique and even ridicule. In fact, my sense is that no one truly objects to critique of leaders and ridicule of leaders on principle. Those who get most upset about satire or ridicule of leaders are people who happen to be on the receiving end of that satire or ridicule at the current moment. We don't want to have leaders who can't take criticism, because receiving negative feedback graciously, and learning from it, is such an important part of being a functioning adult and a great leader.

"Critique of leaders is needed, to help our society to grow and improve. But cursing leaders is appropriately discouraged by the Torah."

My colleague and friend Rabbi Neal Loevinger suggests that the explanation of this verse from the book of Exodus relies on differentiating curses from criticism. After all, the verse says, "do not **curse** a leader among your people." Different people criticize leaders in different ways. Some criticize leaders with the hope that those leaders will change. Others have no such hope; rather, they criticize leaders because it's much easier to gripe than it is to help a society to make a constructive change. At election time, it's so much easier to say, "To hell with all the candidates," than to figure out how to actually tell them apart and to judge who would be better for the society. And once they are governing, it's so much easier to say, 'to hell with the government' than to identify who within the government is part of the solution, and how each individual can act to influence the government for the better. But simply cursing the leaders does not actually help to solve any of the problems that are being complained about.



Rabbi Menachem Recanati

The 14th century Italian sage, Rabbi Menachem Recanati, wrote that part of the purpose of this law in the Torah is that the more people curse the leadership, the more people become convinced that leadership is a thankless task, and the fewer talented people who will consider a career in public service. When we contemplate the challenges of political leadership -- stress; loss of privacy; conflict; disingenuousness of so many people who interact with the leader; and many other challenges -- it is clear that those who pursue political leadership are already overcoming very strong negatives.

Critique of leaders is needed, to help our society to grow and improve. But cursing leaders is appropriately discouraged by the Torah. We should be able to hold leaders accountable for their actions -- and to punish leaders when appropriate, even harshly when appropriate -- while at the same time remembering that leaders may be powerful people, but they are still people, and the same general rules of interpersonal conduct apply even to our interactions with our leaders.

If, hypothetically, you should ever feel an urge to curse a leader, the Torah would counsel you to transform that curse into positive action that can end up being a source of blessing for your community and your society. ☆



MISHLOACH MANOT.
Deadline to participate -
February 16

Sign up on Hoboksynagogue.org

CASINO NIGHT MARCH 3
Sponsors needed

Email casinonight@hobokensynagogue.org for info



President's Report

David Swirnoff



My wife and I were talking about an event coming up and she mentioned something that her late mother had said to her several times over the years. That Judaism isn't just about going to services, but it's about art and music and culture. This got me thinking about the USH role as a Beit Kneset – or house of meeting or gathering.

Some of us come to USH for services and the opportunities for spiritual exploration are certainly varied and it's probably one of the first things that we think of, as adults at least, when we consider our synagogue. But looking through the list of events that the programming and events committee put together, there are so many other things going on that look at the artistic and historic side of Judaism.

"Judaism isn't just about going to services. It's also about art and music and culture."

For example, the movie late last year about the Streits' Matzah factory. It was a fascinating look at the history of this family-owned business, so much a part of our individual experiences as Jews (I'm sure that most of us are either Manischewitz or Streits matzah eaters during the holidays). And the brunch series brings diverse and fascinating speakers who, more often than not, bring to us stories about Jewish culture. And there was Iron Chef Pesach that took place about 2 years ago. I remember my team lost to Shamira Malekar's - to be fair, her Passover-inspired Indian dishes were far better than our deep-fried matzoh balls with dipping sauce.

Anyway, I hope you'll consider coming out to one of these events in the future. They're really a blast. And a great opportunity to hang out for a little while with your friends. Here's hoping to see you in the social hall soon. ☆



by Jeremy Morley

Since October, Rabbi Scheinberg has been leading an adult course on Tuesday evenings on *The Ethical Life*. The course is well-attended and always provokes a tremendous response among the group. The course is created by The Jewish Theological Seminary and is presented in the form of videos and written materials led by the rabbi.

The classes have included *Advance Directives and The Ethics of End-Of-Life Care; Disabilities and the Ethics of Inclusion; Torture and Just War; and Fracking: A Case Study in the Ethics of Neighborly Relations*.

I have enjoyed being exposed to the tremendous faculty at JTS. Those we have "met" so far through insightful video clips are all not merely learned and brilliant but are engaged in current issues and the relationship between Jewish traditions and texts and the modern age.

I also have found it to be particularly stimulating to be introduced to the work of conservative leaders "in the field" who are taking a strong lead on issues of particular social concern. They include:

- **Rabbi Jill Jacobs**, who is the Executive Director of *T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights*. She is a Conservative rabbi and the author of *Where Justice Dwells: A Hands-On Guide to Doing Social Justice in Your Jewish Community*.
- **Rabbi Rachel Kahn-Troster**, the Director of Programs for T'ruah, who is a noted speaker and writer on Judaism and human rights, including speaking internationally on behalf of the U.S. State Department on the issue of human trafficking.



- **Dr. Mirele B. Goldsmith**, an environmental psychologist who founded *Jews Against Hydrofracking*, directed the Jewish Greening Fellowship, a network of 55 organizations committed to sustainability and led the Jewish mobilization for the People's Climate March.

- **Anna Hanau**, who created *Grow and Behold*, a purveyor of environmentally sustainable, humanely raised kosher meat. ☆



Fundraising by Lauren

by Jeremy Morley



Lauren Braun

Board member Lauren (Shoolman) Braun – a Powerful Woman, as we will see below, is on a magnificent mission to support the causes about which she is most passionate – our Synagogue, higher education, and the arts – and to help people direct their philanthropy, so that they can experience the joy and satisfaction that one feels when one does good for one’s community.

Lauren’s love for the arts began as a child in Toronto, Canada. She loved to dance and grew up tap- and jazz-dancing competitively. She majored in ballet and modern dance at an arts high school, and she choreographed and performed both competitively and in musicals and ensemble performances in Toronto and throughout Canada, as well as in the U.S. At university in Toronto, Lauren obtained a business degree, majoring in marketing, and then started her career in fundraising for a contemporary opera company.

Lauren met her husband, Dan Braun, in Toronto when he was a law student there. Eventually Dan moved to New York to pursue his legal career here and is currently Senior Counsel in the Commercial Litigation Division of the New York City Law Department, as well as an incoming Adjunct Assistant Professor



at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. After 4½ years of international back-and-forth Lauren joined him in Jersey City. Lauren then pursued her passion for fundraising for the arts by working in New York for a contemporary dance company, and then as the Manager of Individual Relations at the Big Apple Circus, which she admired for bringing the joy and wonder of circus arts to so many people of all ages, and for enriching the lives of children and the elderly by supporting various health initiatives.

Currently, Lauren is the Deputy Director of Leadership Giving at Baruch College. She explains that “It was important to me to fund-raise for a meaningful mission. I work with amazing alumni who do a lot to pay it forward to today’s talented students.”



Lauren & Dan's wedding

Dan discovered our synagogue when he looked for support after the loss of his dear mother, Julianna Borsa Braun, in 2009. He and Lauren loved to attend Friday night services, which they found so very special and supportive. As their connections to the shul grew, they discovered that they had found a true community, a place to make new friendships in a new city, and a meaningful way to develop and share their Jewish heritage. She explained that, “The shul is so deeply meaningful to us. We have made so many friends there. We’ve learned so much from Rabbi Scheinberg.” Indeed, they asked him to officiate at their wedding in Toronto in 2015.



Lauren and Dan attended – and absolutely loved - the *Sulam* program at USH. Lauren is now delighted to

Lauren on Fund-Raising”

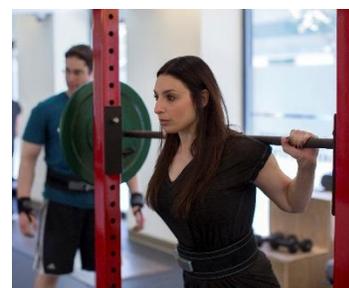
“I was inspired to pursue fundraising as a profession because it has always given me a great feeling of joy and fulfillment to be able to support meaningful causes. I also really like the fact that I not only get to work to support deserving people, but to work and build relationships with a large cross-section of people. I have found that fellow development professionals share a real passion for giving and their energy is contagious.

Additionally, I feel privileged to get to work on a daily basis with donors because I get to witness the best side of humanity - people’s generosity and compassion. It also gives me great joy to speak with and steward new donors because it gives me the opportunity to introduce them to the enjoyment and satisfaction that one feels when one helps a particular cause.”

(From left to right standing): Liron & Noam Simon (cousins from Israel); Shehan Jinapriya (brother in-law); Justine Shoolman Jinapriya (sister); Kaiden Jinapriya (nephew) Sharon Shoolman (mother); Stanley Shoolman (father); Lauren Braun; Daniel M Braun (husband); Prof. Aurel Braun (father in-law); Dr. David Braun (brother in-law); Dr. Laurie Braun (sister-in-law) [David and Laurie Braun were also married by Rabbi Scheinberg]. (From left to right sitting): Molly Simon (grandmother); Erika Borsa (Daniel's grandmother; 100-year-old Holocaust survivor).

person as a member of the USH Board of Trustees. Her focus is on building philanthropic support and engaging the young professional community. She worked extensively on the most recent Yom Kippur campaign, which was a big success. Now she is working on the development of an overall fundraising plan, including a legacy-giving program designed to provide the synagogue with a stronger long-term financial base, as well as on creating new programs with USH's Young Professionals Committee. She explains that, "Mainly, it's about community, building relationships, and connecting to everything USH has to offer. It's such an honor and privilege to serve."

"Philanthropy is a way to connect to causes that are meaningful to people. You're helping people feel good about helping others. Ben Franklin said, 'Do well by doing good' and I try to live by that motto. Philanthropy also connects me to Judaism as tzedakah is an important Jewish principle and practice."



Lauren's powerlifting training with Dan

What about the "Powerful Woman" intro? Well, it turns out that Lauren and Dan are devoted powerlifters. Dan began five years ago and now lifts competitively in the country's most major drug-tested federation, USA Powerlifting. Lauren, who totals nearly 600 lbs between the competition lifts, routinely trains together with Dan, who is also her coach. They both focus on the "Big Three": the squat, the bench press, and the deadlift. So watch out: When Lauren approaches you with fund-raising suggestions and requests, you really do need to listen. She's a tough cookie! But a very charming one.



Dan competing in powerlifting with USA Powerlifting

So: Thank You Lauren for all that you do. ✨

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS

General Fund

- Kitty Bateman
- Sarah Farenci
- Daniela Grafman
- Leonard and Gayle Helfgott in honor of Madeleine Lylah Sessa
- Marlene Jurman
- Marc Weinstein and Rabbi Stephanie Dickstein
- Rabbi's Discretionary Fund**
- Kitty Bateman in memory of her parents, Abraham and Rachel Belsky
- Joe Epstein and Lynn Danzker in honor of Rabbi Scheinberg; in honor of Cole's bar mitzvah
- David and Kayo Heafitz in honor of Taylor Shaw's bat mitzvah
- Michael Kammer in memory of his parents, Helen and Bernard Kammer
- Ricky and Beth Mason
- Maurice and Sarah Recanati in memory of Lina Recanati
- Adam and Rhonda Strosberg
- Barry and Julie Weinstein in memory of Alfred Holstein

Scholar-in-Residence Fund

- Louise Kurtz
- Adult Education Fund**
- Marty and Sheryl Hoffman
- Chesed Fund**
- Mike Marcello and Karen Jurman
- Jim and Alicia Weinstein
- Chumashim**
- Woman's Torah Study Group in honor of Louise Kurtz
- Kaplan Preschool Learning Center**
- Joe Epstein and Lynn Danzker in honor of Grace Gurman Chan
- Samuel and Rose Riemer Private Foundation
- Yom Kippur Appeal**
- Bruce and Kathy Prussack in memory of Jack and Martha Prussack and Stuart Rawitscher
- Andrew Reibman and Elizabeth Oldmixon in honor of their parents, Colette and Robert Oldmixon and Rossie and Jonathan Reibman

THANK YOU FOR SPONSORING KIDDUSH:

- Jan 6: Women's Study Group in honor of Louise Kurtz
- Jan 13: Abbe Rivers-Shaytin and Paul Shaytin in honor of Zack's bar mitzvah
- Jan 20: Sebnem Pura and Seana Weaver in memory of Sebnem's father, Taner Pura
- Jan 27: Kitty Bateman in memory of her parents, Abraham and Rachel Belsky

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Sheryl and Frederic Spieler on the birth of their daughter, Luna Zack Shaytin in honor of his bar mitzvah and to his parents, Abbe Rivers-Shaytin and Paul Shaytin

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ROULETTE

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**Did you sign up yet for the USH
Mishloach Manot
(Purim gift bag) project?**

Each year, our community participates in the tradition of Mishloach Manot-sending gifts of food to friends in honor of the holiday of Purim. On Sunday, February 25, members of our community will deliver the gift bags to those within Hudson County.

Deadline to sign up is Friday February 16!

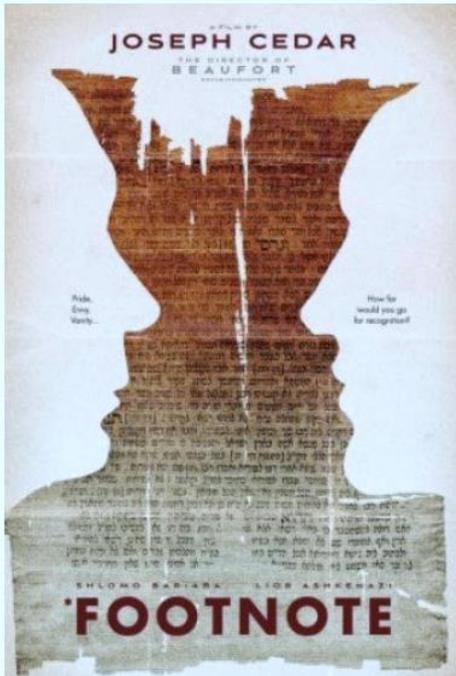
To participate, fill out the form at

<http://www.hobokensynagogue.org> (login necessary)

Sat Feb 10 (rescheduled date): Film:

FOOTNOTE

This award-winning Israeli feature film, about a rivalry between two Talmud scholars who happen to be father and son, humorously and poignantly raises issues of honesty and forgiveness. In Hebrew with English subtitles. Winner of Best Screenplay at Cannes Film Festival in 2011.



Saturday Feb 10

7:30pm

\$10 includes refreshments

United Synagogue of Hoboken, 115 Park Avenue

RSVP: 201-659-4000 or office@hobokensynagogue.org



Purim Eve

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28



**Beginning at 5:00pm:
Recommended for age
5 and under and their
families:**

abbreviated Megillah
reading,
entertainment, &
Purim snacks
(concluding 6:30pm)

**Beginning at 6:15pm:
Age 6 and up:**

Abbreviated
Megillah reading,
followed by
children's Purim
shpiels, followed by
entertainment and
Purim snacks

**Beginning at approx.
7:00pm:**

The world-renowned
USH adult Purim
shpiel, followed by
complete Megillah
reading, followed by
Purim festivities and
refreshments...

and...Thurs March 1

Morning service &
megillah reading,
7am