



THE SHOFAR
שופר

United Synagogue of Hoboken

IYYAR / SIVAN 5779

June 2019

A Jewish Ghost Story – and Second Chances

By Rabbi Robert Scheinberg



One of the most fascinating rabbis in the time of the Talmud was Rabbi Akiba. Growing up in meager circumstances, he never had the chance to attend school as a child, so he was illiterate until age 40 and worked as a shepherd. When he fell in love with Rachel, the daughter of one of the wealthy philanthropists of Jerusalem, her family effectively disowned her because they were so appalled that she was marrying someone without education or social standing.

But at age 40, perhaps as part of a mid-life crisis, Akiba decided to see if he could learn. At that time, he had a school-age son, so he went to kindergarten alongside his son. Before too long, it was clear that he had an aptitude for study, so he continued his studies in the rabbinical academy. Not only was he ordained as a rabbi, but he became one of the most illustrious rabbinic leaders and teachers of his generation.

Rabbi Akiba became a prime example of someone who got a second chance in his life, and he continues to be a special source of inspiration for those who find their path to serious engagement with Judaism as adults, including many people in this congregation who developed their Jewish commitments as adults, not as children.

In the Torah portion of Behaalotecha (read this year on June 22), we read that each year, exactly one month after the first night of Passover, there should be another holiday, known as Pesach Sheni, or Second Passover. This is not really a holiday for everyone, but specifically for those who, for whatever reason, missed the observance of Passover at its appropriate time. Perhaps they were ill, or on a journey, during Passover and weren't able to bring the prescribed Passover offering at its appropriate time. They get a second chance and can bring the offering exactly one month later. Surprisingly, Rashi's commentary on this passage tells us that to participate in the ritual of Pesach Sheni, you didn't even need a particularly compelling excuse for why you missed Passover the first time around. In fact, even someone who was right outside the doors of the Tabernacle, who for some reason didn't go in, could still fulfill the Passover ritual on Pesach Sheni. In other words, there is maximum openness to granting this second chance.

Similarly, the crucial concept of Teshuvah - repentance - which is so important during the high holidays is predicated on the notion that there are very few mistakes we can make that are truly irreversible. Most often, we can get a second chance to come up with a different set of life priorities, to change our conduct and our attitude. **(continued on Page 2)**

UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE 2019

- 8 Tikkun Layl Erev Shavuot Torah Study 9pm
- 9 Shavuot (1st day) at USH 9:30am
- 10 Shavuot (2nd day) at USH, **Yizkor**
- 10 USH ANNUAL MEETING 7:45pm
- 18 Women's Torah Study Group 7:30pm
- 30 Softball TRIBE w/USH and Beth El 10am

Friday night services 7:00 pm
Saturday morning services 9:30 am
Thursday Torah Study 9:30am

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



UNITED
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OF HOBOKEN

Tikkun Leyl Shavuot

Shavuot eve Torah study

Sat., June 8, 8pm until early morning



For centuries, Jews have gathered for study and discussion on the evening of the holiday of Shavu'ot, studying Torah well into the night... (and eating blintzes and cheesecake too...)



Topics including:

"What is the line between anti-Israel sentiment and antisemitism?"

"A Jewish story of transforming silence"

"Wisdom for daily living from the Psalms"

"Is there a Jewish view on Roe vs Wade?"

115 Park Ave... free; feel free to drop in...
info.hobokensynagogue.org

Works with: ProJudaism.com

(continued from Page 1)

There is yet another famous story about Rabbi Akiba that is connected to this theme. However, rather than being 2000 years old like the other Rabbi Akiba stories, this story is just about 900 years old (which in Jewish history is just yesterday!). This story, found in the medieval work called *Or Zarua*, is our earliest source of the practice of the Mourner's Kaddish, the tradition of mourners to rise to recite the Kaddish prayer when they are in mourning or on the anniversary of the date of death. That tradition is also only about 900 years old.

Brace yourself - because this is a Jewish ghost story. In this story, Rabbi Akiba is walking near a cemetery, and he sees a ghost - an obviously dead person - who is carrying a huge and heavy load, back and forth, back and forth, and is obviously suffering a great deal. Rabbi Akiba asks: "Is there any way I can help you? You seem to be suffering terribly!" And the ghost answers: "No, there's nothing you can do. I am being punished for my deeds during my lifetime, and I'm fated to spend eternity carrying this heavy load back and forth." Rabbi Akiba says: "What were your sins?" The man responds: "I was a tax collector." (Parenthetically: as much as some of us might not be so fond of the IRS, that's not what he's talking about here. In ancient Israel under the dominion of the Romans, the tax collectors were seen as extracting money from people who were desperately poor to pay for the luxurious upkeep of the king or the emperor - and they were Jews who had thrown in their lot with the empire, with the oppressors, rather than with their Jewish brothers and sisters.) Rabbi Akiba says: "There must be SOME way that you can become free from this punishment!" The ghost responds: "They did tell me one way that I could be released, but it will never happen. They said that if my son ever leads prayers in the synagogue, and recites the Kaddish prayer such that everyone responds with the congregational response, *yehei shmei rabbah mevarach*, 'May God's great name be praised,' then I would be released. But it will never happen. My son doesn't even realize that he is a Jew. I have provided for him absolutely no Jewish education, absolutely no Jewish identity." But Rabbi Akiba is determined. He asks the dead man: "What is your name?" And to Rabbi Akiba's surprise, the dead man says: "My name is Akiba." (Cue the Twilight Zone music....)

Rabbi Akiba then tracks down this dead tax collector's village, on a quest to find this man's son to teach him to lead the prayers in the synagogue. When he reaches the village, he finds that this tax collector was the most despised person in the whole village, and his wife was a close second. When Rabbi Akiba inquired about their son, he was told, "the son has absolutely no connection with the Jewish community whatsoever, and never has throughout his life."

Rabbi Akiba eventually found the son. With tremendous patience, after numerous frustrations, Rabbi Akiba was able to convince him to embrace his Jewish identity, and eventually was able to teach him the words of the Kaddish. The next week, during Saturday evening services, the son led the congregation in prayer and recited the Kaddish, and everyone who was present responded with the refrain, *Yehei shmei rabbah mevarach*, "May God's great name be praised."

That night, Rabbi Akiba had a dream in which he saw the ghost, now a free man, no longer struggling under his burden. He said, "Rabbi, May it be the will of the Lord that your soul find delight in the Garden of Eden, for you have saved me from the punishments of hell." This concludes the story.

Truly, I find it hard to believe that the purpose of saying Mourner's Kaddish is to liberate the souls of the deceased from the punishments of hell. My personal beliefs about what happens to the soul after death are somewhat different than what's presented in this story. However, I find this to be an intensely powerful story about second chances. I think about how Rabbi Akiba and the ghost share the same name, as in some ways they share the same story: they each have a part of their life they wish they could reverse and undo, but it seems too late.

But in Jewish tradition, it is almost never too late. The second chances we are granted, to make our lives into what we truly wish they could be, are abundant. In the words of Hillel, another rabbi whose Jewish commitment evolved as an adult, "And if not now, when?" ☆

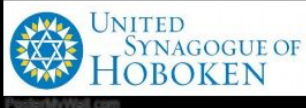
FIRST FRIDAYS: WELCOME SHABBAT WITH MUSIC AT USH

Fri, June 7 and
July 12, 7pm



Welcome Shabbat with vibrant music and community - for all ages. With Adam Laden, Rabbi Rob Scheinberg, Siobhan Barry-Bratcher, Adam Parker, Howard Olah-Reiken, Pamela Strell, and other musicians from our community!

Free and open to the public, followed by refreshments.



115 Park Avenue, Hoboken NJ. More info: hobokensynagogue.org

SHABBAT IN THE PARK

Join us for song, prayer and friends
to welcome Shabbat!

Bring a Picnic Dinner (Kosher or Vegetarian, Please!)
and We'll Provide the Challah and Grape Juice!

Free and open to the community, special activities for families with
children 5 and under. RSVP appreciated

FRIDAYS AT 6 PM

•WEATHER PERMITTING•

(Please note: regularly scheduled service takes
place at the synagogue at 7pm as usual.)

2019 Dates & Locations*

- | | |
|--------|---|
| May 31 | Church Sq. Park - Ice Cream Party! (5th btw Park & Willow) |
| Jun 14 | Maxwell Place Park (11th and the river) |
| Jul 12 | Church Sq. Park |
| Jul 26 | Van Vorst Park (Montgomery
btw Jersey & Barrow in Jersey City) |
| Sept 6 | USH - Pizza Party! (115 Park Ave)
(5:30pm start time) |

*Starts at 6pm unless otherwise noted



To RSVP or for more information please
contact ushpreschool@gmail.com

115 Park Ave Hoboken, NJ 201-653-8666 www.kaplancooperativepreschool.org

5/2019



TRIBE is a new young professional group for the rapidly expanding twenty, thirty, and forty something Jewish community in both Hoboken & Jersey City. The branding of the group as “TRIBE” comes from the typical term you may hear millennial or gen x Jews use to reference themselves or others Jews in their age group. When discussing the group’s overarching purpose, recent Upper West Side transplant and TRIBE Board Member Gabby Becker explained that coming to Hoboken with little connections to the area, TRIBE was such a great opportunity for Gabby and her husband, Jake, to meet new people, make friends, and feel like part of the Hoboken Jewish community. Joshua Sotomayor Einstein, Hoboken Moishe House founder, describes TRIBE as: “an opportunity in our Jewish lives, to outreach to other Jews as a value add that they can plug into, whether they are spiritual and not cultural, or cultural and not spiritual, and overall about leveraging the growing Jewish community.” TRIBE has received buzz in Chicpea JC (<https://www.chicpeajc.com/community/tribe-jersey-city-and-hoboken-empowering-a-jewish-community/>) and the Jewish Standard. (<https://jewishstandard.timesofisrael.com/a-tribe-is-born/>). With past successful events such as Sushi in the Sukkah, Israeli Pride Shabbat Dinner (with Shuk Snacks!) as well as a Wine and Chocolate event at the Symposia Bookstore. TRIBE will be co-sponsoring this month’s softball game between Jersey City and Hoboken as their June event, and will be hosting many social and networking events over the summer! Bios of the founding Board are below:



Lauren Braun:

Lauren is one of the co-founders of TRIBE and is committed to helping Jewish young professionals connect with each other and to their Jewish roots. Lauren and her husband Daniel are long-time members of USH; Lauren serves on USH's Board of Directors, as well as is the chair of its Development Committee. When Lauren is not working or studying for her MPA, she loves powerlifting -- a weight lifting sport -- and invites all readers to pump some iron with her and Daniel any time!



Corinne Bernstein:

Corinne is part of the Tribe group planning committee. She has been a part of the Jewish community in Hoboken since she first moved here nearly 5 years ago. The first event that she planned and hosted with Tribe was a planting and brunch event at USH for young professionals. She loves being a part of the Hoboken Jewish community and contributing as much as she can!



Gabby Becker:

Gabby is a newer member of the TRIBE planning committee having moved to Hoboken from NYC last August. Gabby and her husband Jake are active members of USH and have loved becoming a part of the local Jewish community. In her free time she enjoys cooking, reading outside at Pier A, and exploring the Hoboken and Jersey City area!

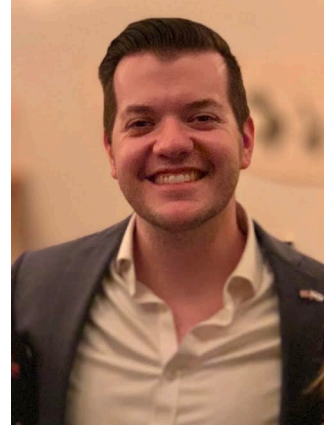
Keren and Avi Siegel:

Keren and Avi Siegel both grew up in the Conservative shul world both in California and New Jersey. After their stint living in NYC it was tough to find a community that felt so welcoming and inclusive for people in their early 20's. Thankfully the 6th borough of Hoboken proved to be that place. "After moving in and coming to the synagogue for the first time we knew there was something special here. At first there was not a big push for young adult events but thankfully with the help of Lauren, Daniel, Melissa, Kaveh, and Krista we put together a lay committee and created a space for it in our shul. It is incredible to see how much it has grown in the last 4 years."



Adam Parker and Irina Shutovsky Parker:

Adam has lived in Jersey City for over 5 years. As a Financial Advisor he specializes in educating fellow millennials in financial literacy and helping his peers through his work as president of his local Toastmasters chapter. Adam has been drumming since the fourth grade and can be heard playing for musical Shabbat on Friday nights. Adam found USH while converting to Judaism and wants to create a safe place for young professionals to explore Judaism on their own for the first time. Irina has been a main staple in the Jersey City millennial community for over six years and can often be found walking her dog Bagel with her husband Adam. As an educator, Irina has been helping high schoolers be excited to learn about biology. This summer, she will be returning to Israel for TALMA, a program that helps teach English to elementary aged students. Irina hopes to see TRIBE grow into a community where Jewish young professionals can grow and become closer to Judaism.



Joshua Sotomayor Einstein:

Joshua Sotomayor Einstein has been involved in Jewish life in Hudson County since January 2007 when he co-founded Moishe House Hoboken. He continued his dedication to Jewish life as a co-founder of the Hudson County Regional Jewish Council, a subsidiary of the Jewish Federation of Northern NJ (of which, alongside Rabbi Scheinberg, he served on the board of trustee's as a non-voting transitional member). He has a regular column in the Jewish Standard, North Jersey's Jewish newspaper, and was one of the founders of TRIBE in 2018. Einstein is an elected member of the New Jersey Republican State Committee and has been published in dozens of newspapers and websites on Jewish and policy topics. He is the political analyst on The Pulse with Peter B., Hoboken's only TV and online show highlighting sports analysis, local food reviews, and local politics/government breakdown.





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

David Swirnoff

By the time this issue of the Shofar reaches you, the new USH board of trustees will have been voted in, so I'd like to take this opportunity to say thank you to everyone at USH, on behalf of the out-going board members, for your participation in this community. I know that we're not unique...that there are many synagogues throughout the country, but, for obvious reasons, I have a stronger feeling about this one and know that we're special and so want to thank all of you. Having said that, I want to share some information that impacts us as we prepare to move into our new fiscal year.

First an update on our security measures. Preparation continues on our improvements to the front (office) and rear entrances to the buildings (materials have been ordered, are being manufactured, and should be installed by the middle of the Summer). We have also taken the opportunity to apply for additional grants that the state is offering for physical security improvements. The new board President will update you when and if we are awarded these funds. In the meantime, the board voted to include, in the upcoming year's membership fees, a separate and mandatory security surcharge of \$100 per member unit (family members and single members count as one member unit). These funds will be used for the express purposes of providing security personnel and access control for religious and special events. We understand that it is our responsibility to ensure that proper and reasonable efforts are made to limit access to the building to those who have a legitimate need to be here and believe that this surcharge is an appropriate way to guarantee that we have funds available for this purpose. As always, the board President, the head of our security team (Ron Rosenberg) and the head of our board's security committee (Adam Berkowitz) would be happy to speak with you about any concerns you might have. Security associated strictly with the KPS and Learning Center will be organized and addressed by the Directors of those educational programs as well as the board President and security committee.

Second, I would like to formally announce that as of the middle of June, former KPS educator Ruthy Tyroler has accepted the position of Administrative Director for USH. Ruthy's role will be to ensure the oversight of the administrative functions of USH (office management, payroll, some purchasing, facilities, website maintenance and marketing, insurance, and other tasks), ensuring that the board is able to fulfill its role of oversight and guidance without attempting to directly manage daily administrative tasks. Ruthy brings several years of corporate project management and process design from large corporations. She founded and ran a business in Hoboken and sat as a trustee of the Hoboken Board of Education, sitting as President for more than two years. As such, she has the skill set necessary to effectively manage the administrative burden of this organization with almost 70 staff and 400 members.

As always, I hope you'll join us at our monthly board meetings and lend your voice to our management. We could not help to guide this organization and its future without your continued support and participation☆

Shalom,

David Swirnoff

Board Meeting: Tuesday June 11th 7:45 pm in the Social Hall at USH

Please join **Welcome Home Jersey City** (the volunteer organization that offers support to refugees as they resettle) for **World Refugee Day** on Thursday, June 20th, from 6-8 p.m. at the Church of the Latter-Day Saints, 140 Sip Avenue, near Journal Square in Jersey City. The Welcome Home community, including clients, elected officials, volunteers, and community leaders will turn out to help us advocate on behalf of refugees and asylees. Events include a panel with three refugee clients, sharing their experiences coming to the U.S., a keynote speaker from HIAS who will talk about advocacy, a potluck dinner featuring dishes from our clients' respective countries, and activities for children, including a photo booth and other surprises! **Reserve your free ticket at welcomehomejc.brownpapertickets.com** Questions? Contact Alain@welcomehomerefugees.org.

אהבתם את הֵגֵר כִּי־גֵרִים הֵייתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt



The USH "Pair for Prayer" Initiative

The skill of leading Jewish prayer services has long been an important aspect of Jewish leadership. A knowledgeable Jewish community like ours has many people who have these skills (and all bar/bat mitzvah students in our community acquire some of these skills), but we can always use more. You are invited to fill out the form at http://bit.ly/pair_for_prayer_USH_2019, to indicate what skills you have and what skills you are willing to teach as a volunteer. We will then make an effort to pair people together to acquire these skills. Many recordings, texts, etc are available to assist you, whether you are a teacher or a learner, at rabbischeinberg.blogspot.com.

Shabbat Dinner Initiative

We would like to try a new approach to encouraging people in our community to share shabbat meals together. We invite you to fill out this questionnaire (http://bit.ly/USH_Shabbat_Dinner_Initiative_2019) and to indicate if you are interested in hosting a shabbat dinner and inviting others from our community, and/or in being a guest at a shabbat dinner. We also invite you to indicate your approximate age and life stage, if you would be interested in connecting with others who are demographically similar to you. We will then work with the hosts to help them to invite people who have indicated a desire to be guests. We also have resources available to help people to learn and lead the Shabbat evening rituals (see <http://rabbischeinberg.blogspot.com/p/resources-for-hosting-shabbat-dinner.html>). It is our hope that this initiative will strengthen the bonds that connect us to each other, as well as strengthen our connection to Shabbat. There is also an opportunity on the questionnaire to indicate if you would like to assist in organizing this initiative.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS:

General Fund

Charles & Janet Hollander, in honor of the Yahrzeit of Carl Hollander
Stephanie D'Ambrosio
Alix Biel
Karen Nemet-Nejat

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Susan Brenner & Michael Edwards, in honor of Rabbi Scheinberg
Fran Davis, in memory of Arlene Heiden
Jenny Labendz, in memory of Ralph W. Labendz
Mark & Sheera Glass
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Janice Springer, in memory of Louis Springer
Ceil Chait, in memory of Sidney Salkovitz

PJ Library Fund

Marisa Kolodny

Adult Education

Leslie Duverge

Chesed Fund

Janice Springer in honor of Florence Hetterich & Grace Schulman

Security Services

Hope Koturo

THANK YOU FOR SPONSORING KIDDUSH:

May 4th: The Novosyolok family in honor of Ben's bar mitzvah.
May 11: The Sapira family in honor of Samantha's bat mitzvah.
May 18: The Messner family in honor of Seijan's bar mitzvah.

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Ben Novosyolok on his bar mitzvah and to his parents Anna & Ari and to his brother Zachary.

Samantha Sapira on her bat mitzvah and to her parents Lauren & Valdi and to her brother Joshua.

Seijan Messner on his bar mitzvah and to her parents Jon & Phyllis and to her sister Sierra.

CONDOLENCES TO:

Steve Schulman on the loss of his mother, Anita Schulman.
Monica Plotka on the loss of her mother Florence Hetterich.
Diana London on the loss of her mother Gladys Schuman.
Marian Sepinwall on the loss of her mother, Cima Klein

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Wednesday, June 19, 2019
7:30-9pm
led by Rabbi Rob Scheinberg
Free for USH members;
\$25/couple for non-members
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RSVP: 201-659-4000 or
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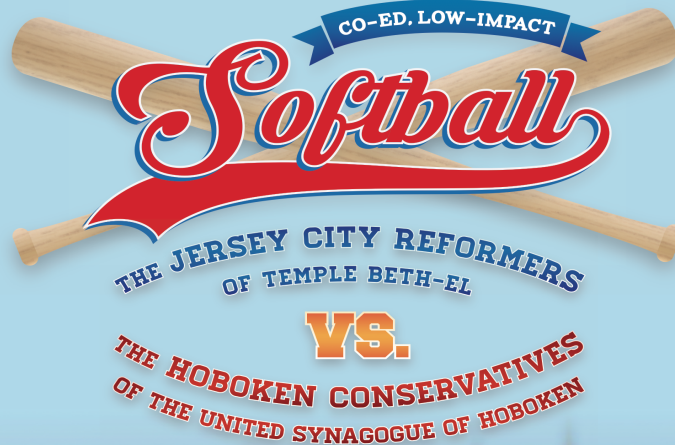
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CALLING ALL SOFTBALL PLAYERS & PARK LOVERS!

This is a great chance to play some ball, get outside, have some fun, and meet other members of the growing Hudson County Jewish Community. Game 2 in a 3 game series, following a 16-13 victory by Jersey City in Game 1.

SUNDAY JUNE 30 10 AM
Lincoln Park WEST, Field #2

(over the bridge)

Bagels with cream cheese and water
provided.

PLEASE RSVP!

Beth-El Contact: Neil Schulman nasjc1@aol.com and at
(201) 622-8048

USH Contact: Jordan Firestein, jfirestein@gmail.com CO-SPONSORED WITH TRIBE!!!!!!
and at (908) 510-8467




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