



Spirit Soars by Susan Schwarz (used with the artist's permission)

Pathways

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PATHWAYS

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Identity

A note from the editor

Our theme for this issue is *Identity*. We hope you'll be intrigued by the poetry selection; you'll also find a thought-provoking blog post from the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ). Sam Gruber's *Temple Treasures* column shines a light on one of the most identity-challenged figures in our history: Moses. As always, we invite your comments. Write to the editor at sallyfcutler@gmail.com.

United Jewish Appeal

By Michael Blumenthal

My grandmother was eighty-nine and blind
and I was a young boy hungry for quarters,
so, in the waning light
of Sunday afternoons, my parents gone,
I would ring the doorbell
(my friend Raymond smirking
from behind the stairwell) and listen
for the slow shuffle of slippers
in the hall, the soft thump
of her body against the closet.
She would come to the door,
my parakeet Jerry trapped in her hairnet,
stammering a "Who's there?" in minimal English,
between the chain and the doorjamb,
and, without hesitancy or shame,
in a cracked, mock-Hassidic voice,
I'd answer: "United Jewish Appeal,"
swaying my hand, like a small plane
moving over an airstrip, toward her.
She would open the door—tentative,
timid, charity having won out over terror—
and reach a palm out into the hallway,
the way she reached out under the candles
to bless me on Sabbath. "My daughter . . ."
she would stammer, "she is not home now,"
poking her eyes like Borges into the vastness.
A better heart than mine was
might have stopped there, but I was a boy
ravenous for malteds and baseball cards,
so I repeated the words of my small litany,
"United Jewish Appeal," and reached my hand out again
until it almost touched the blue print of her smock.

All the while my parakeet sat there,
dropping small coils of bird shit onto her hair
until she retreated again down the long yellow hallway,
reading the braille of the walls
with her hands. And I would wink
at my good friend Raymond behind the stairwell
when the rattle of change clanged out
from my parents' bedroom, and we heard again
the slow sweep of her feet, and, at last,
the shiny fruits of cleverness and hunger
fell into my palm, and my grandmother Johanna,
the parakeet still flapping like a crazed duck
in her hairnet, closed the door behind her,
leaving me and my friend Raymond
to frolic off into the sun-licked,
agnostic streets of Washington Heights,
full of the love of grandmothers
and of change, forever singing the praises
of the United Jewish Appeal.

From *The Wages of Goodness*, published by University of Missouri Press. Copyright © 1992 by Michael Blumenthal. Used by permission of the author.

Michael Blumenthal (b. 1949)

Born in Vineland, New Jersey, on March 8, 1949, Michael Blumenthal grew up in a German-speaking home in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan. He received his BA in philosophy from the State University of New York in Binghamton in 1969 and his JD from Cornell Law School in 1974. From 1985 to 1986, he studied clinical psychology at Antioch University and worked in private practice as a psychotherapist with Anglophone expatriates in Budapest.

He is the author of eight poetry collections, three works of nonfiction, one story collection, and one novel. He can be reached through www.michael-blumenthal.com.



Do You Have to Believe in God to Be a Jew?

By Rabbi John L. Rosove (Blog post on *reformJudaism.org* on 1/19/2018; accessed 4/2/2018)

Many Jews say to me with reticence or a mildly defiant tone, “Rabbi, I don’t believe in God.” I sometimes think that on some level, they expect me to cast them out when I hear their confession.

One says, “I’m a religious person in that I feel a connection to something eternal and infinite that’s in my soul and in yours. But I don’t believe in a personal God, and all this talk about God as king and me as servant is meaningless to me.” Another says, “I’m grateful for the gifts of health, meaningful work, and love. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed by gratitude and a sense of inadequacy to express how blessed I feel, and that’s about as close as I come to prayer. But that prayer is addressed to life itself—to no one in particular, and surely not to ‘God.’”

The conversation gets interesting if we talk about the nature of the God they find so incredible. Often it turns out to be the white-haired figure touching fingers with Adam on the Sistine Chapel ceiling—the commanding, rewarding, and punishing God of the High Holidays prayer book.

The fact is, most modern liberal Jews today don’t rationally accept the notion of such a God, especially given the fact that all around us innocent people do suffer and the all-knowing, all-powerful, all-good God of tradition either ignores them or doesn’t exist.

When people tell me that they don’t believe in God—either because they have seen no empirical evidence that God exists or because they can’t rationally accept the God of the Bible and of the medieval rabbis—I understand completely. I don’t believe in that God either. We live in a vastly different world from that of our ancestors, whose ideas of God evolved from the social models that surrounded them. Modernity, which emphasizes the uniqueness of the individual, free from the shackles of convention and tradition, has produced very different kinds of Jews, some of whom traditional Judaism wouldn’t recognize as particularly Jewish at all.

I believe spiritual searchers can all draw inspiration from both the lessons of modernity and the mystical tradition of Judaism, which speaks about God as an inner spark, not in terms of thunderbolts.

Instead of asking, “Do you believe in God?” let us ask ourselves, “How can I experience myself as a spiritual being?” The mystics taught that the individual isn’t separate from God. God is the mystery within us—inside every soul, in the love that inspires generosity and compassion. Every mystical experience of godlikeness revitalizes us and breaks down unnecessary barriers between people, giving us a more inclusive and expansive vision of Jewish life and humankind as a whole. Every peak emotional moment of joy, appreciation, and gratitude is a revelation of some deeper truth, and a reminder that we are part of something far greater than ourselves.

Modernity, for all its benefits, has tended to reject the teachings of the great Jewish mystics as non-rational, non-linear intuitive thinking, which is contrary to the rationalism that characterized the Enlightenment and informed classical Reform Judaism. But now we’re hungry for the spiritual answers that our linear, rational minds can’t deliver. “The search of reason,” said Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, “ends at the shore of the known; on the immense expanse beyond it only the sense of the ineffable can glide...and the sense of the ineffable is out of place where we measure, where we weigh.”

We do not need to put aside our left-brain training as we open ourselves to what the mystics can teach us. Rather, we can ask the questions that will bring us greater awareness of our souls: “How can I connect to what’s eternal and infinite within me and the world? How can I experience a sense of awe and wonder in my life?” This search, whether or not we use the word “God,” pulls us into the deep and vital current of Judaism. And it doesn’t demand that the atheists and agnostics among us suspend their doubts and disbelief.

Judaism is embracing enough to welcome us all.

Adapted from *Why Judaism Matters: Letters of a Liberal Rabbi to His Children and the Millennial Generation*. Rabbi John L. Rosove is senior rabbi of Temple Israel of Hollywood (Los Angeles, CA).

Temple Treasures: *Moses* by Ivan Meštrović

By Samuel D. Gruber

Temple Treasures, by Sam Gruber, is an occasional feature of Pathways. Sam is a cultural heritage consultant involved in a wide variety of documentation, research, preservation, planning, publication, exhibition, and education projects in America and abroad. For 25 years his special expertise has developed in Jewish art, architecture, and historic sites.

Visit his Blogspot at <http://samgrubersjewishartmonuments.blogspot.com/>

Moses by Ivan Meštrović

For almost 65 years, a bronze statue of Moses by renowned Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović has presided over the activities of the Jacobs Social Hall. The statue was donated by Meštrović himself to Rabbi Benjamin Friedman, who then presented the work to the congregation on May 15, 1953. Rabbi Friedman had a special affinity for Moses. He had an image of Michelangelo's statue on his personal bookplate (designed by Hilda Putzinger and still visible in many of our library's older volumes).

Meštrović (1883 – 1962), who was considered by many to be the greatest sculptor of his generation, was a refugee after World War II. Syracuse University Chancellor Tolley invited him to teach sculpture at the university, which he did from 1947 until 1955.

The work in our Social Hall is one of many representations of Moses by Meštrović, dating back to 1915. The Temple Concord version is a bronze cast made possible through the generosity of Joseph and Emily Lowe, and it was probably a model for an early version of the planned Holocaust Memorial for Riverside Park in New York City, which Meštrović and German-Jewish refugee architect Eric Mendelsohn labored on from 1949 until 1955. At some point in the process, the two replaced the large seated Moses figure with a more dynamic one. The monument was never built, but a fullsize, newer version of Moses was cast *circa* 1980 and can be seen on the Syracuse University campus.

The statue shows a seated Moses (no doubt inspired by Michelangelo's *Moses* in the church of San Pietro in Vincoli in Rome), but a prophet whose figure is animated—even agitated—as he twists and points upward with his right hand. Unlike many of Meštrović's works having smooth finishes, this bronze's texture is rough and uneven, showing the process of clay modeling before the casting. The uneven surface reinforces the agitation of the prophet, and it also indicates that this was probably a small study for the planned monument.



Rabbi Friedman and the Meštrović *Moses*.

In his sermon during Friday night services on May 15, 1953, the Shabbat before *Shavuot*, Rabbi Friedman read the Ten Commandments, spoke directly about Moses, and praised Meštrović, likening him to Moses himself: "Only a genius like Meštrović could carve this spirit in clay and bronze, because the spirit of the prophet Moses burns in Meštrović's soul and illumines his whole being.... Like Moses he was compelled to flee from his country.... Like Moses he speaks the truth to the world...through the medium of stone, wood, bronze.... A servant of the lord, who brings to us through his art a revelation from God." A special ceremony was held after services. Rabbi Friedman and congregation president H. Hiram Weisberg celebrated the sculpture, and

Meštrović himself attended, with his wife.

A smaller and slightly different Meštrović version of Moses can be seen at Menorah Park. Meštrović also donated a large marble bust of Moses to the Israel Museum, where it was an important work in the Billy Rose Sculpture garden.

Recent Fund Donations

We appreciate all donations given to support Temple funds. Listed are those who have given \$18 or more from December 20, 2017 through March 21, 2018.

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So Many Ways to Support Your Temple!

Your donation to a Temple Concord Fund can memorialize, honor, or express appreciation for someone dear to you. Your donation to a Fund or for a leaf on our *Simcha Tree* can celebrate a *simcha*—a joyous event.

Spotlight on the M.Y. and Ida G. Robinson Social Action Fund

This Fund supports social and humanitarian causes within the Temple neighborhood or greater community with a concern for the poor and underrepresented.

Secure donations may be made through the *Donations* tab on the Temple's website (www.templeconcord.org) or to the Temple office. Contact the Temple office at 315.475.9952 for information and a complete list of funds.

B'nei Mitzvah

Mazel Tov to the b'nei mitzvah and their families.

<i>Recent b'nei mitzvah</i>	April 21, 2018	Hannah Blumenthal
	April 28, 2018	Seth Albert
	May 5, 2018	Joshua Lefkowicz
<i>Upcoming b'nei mitzvah</i>	May 19, 2018	Sarah Bailey
	June 1, 2018 (Friday evening)	<i>Adult B'nei Mitzvah</i> Barbara Blumberg Micaela Cooper Meryl Lefkowicz Chana Meir
	June 2, 2018	Jonathan Braverman
	June 9, 2018	Cody Pinsky
	June 23, 2018	Nathan Warren-Faricy

Temple Concord Links

www.templeconcord.org



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Recent Deaths

The sympathy of the congregation is extended to the families of those recently departed (January 1 through April 30, 2018).

Eva Charlotte Galson – February 2, 2018 She is survived by her husband, Edgar Galson. She was the mother of Wendy (Susan Windle), Diana Galson-Kooy (Hanne Kooy), Steven (Jessie), and David (Diane Kile), and the grandmother of nine.

Tzvi Levy – February 12, 2018 She is survived by his sister, Youchi (Bruce) Holstein.

Lillian M. Feldman, Ed.D. – February 18, 2018 She was predeceased by her husband, Dr. Harry A. Feldman; her sister, Anita; her brother, Albert; and her parents, Jacob and Ida (Burko) Maltz. She is survived by her children, Dr. Ronald (Jane) Feldman, Dr. Robert (Vicki) Feldman, Jeffrey Feldman, and Donna (Neil) Weisman; her grandchildren, Jessica (Steve) Scaramuzzino, Adam (Mia) Feldman; Joshua (Gillian), and Jordan (Sarah) Weisman, Justin (Michele), Michael (Blair), James (Leslie) Feldman; and her great grandchildren, Alexis, Parker, Ethan, Brody, Sydney, Chloe, Anna, Seth, Brendan, Harry, Tess, and Tyler.

Frances Hartman – March 11, 2018 She is survived by two children, Barbara (Peter) Baum of Syracuse NY and Greenville SC, and Phillip (Diana) Hartman of San Francisco CA; six grandchildren, Ben (Charna) Baum of Greenville, Jonah (Holly) Hartman of Tampa FL, Lisa (Miika) Nevalainen of Simpsonville SC, Sam (Tessa) Hartman of San Francisco CA, Nathan (Andrea) Hartman of Tampa FL, and Alexander (Hannah) of Washington DC; and 11 great grandchildren, Zynniah, Sommer, Jayden, Jeremy, Rebecca, Eliana, Evan, Gabriel, Elliott, Sarah, and Jacob.

Ellen Ann Spitz – March 12, 2018 She is survived by her brother Steve and his wife, Wendy; her niece Cathy and her husband, Patrick deVarona; her great nieces Dalit and Ravit deVarona; Mrs. Joan Rubenstein; Ms. Susan Reed and family; Mr. and Mrs. Robert Rubenstein and family; and Mr. and Mrs. John Decker and family.

Doreen "DoDo" Eglash – March 16, 2018 She was predeceased by her parents, David and Ruth Eglash (nee Ottenstein), and brothers Norb (Judy) Eglash and Rod (Helen) Eglash. She is survived by her nieces, nephews, and other relatives, including her nephew Joe (Kari) Eglash, great niece Arielle, and great nephew Judah.

Patricia Esther Klein – March 21, 2018 She was predeceased by her daughter, Paulette. She is survived by her son, Michael Klein; grandchildren Aaron Klein, Arielle Klein, and Mardi (Mark) Black; and great grandchildren Max, Bethany, and Bailey.

Frances Davis – April 2, 2018 She is survived by her daughters Janet (Mark) Shriro and Jeri (John) Byrne II; grandchildren Stacy Shriro, Amy (Jonathan) Pollock, Garin Byrne, JP (Chantal) Byrne III; six great grandchildren; and her brother Alan (Barbara) Goldberg.

Helene (Leni) Levi Jacobs -- April 3, 2018 She is survived by her son, Gary; Susan Pasco and Caitlin Teres; son, David; Douglas Goldschmidt; niece Ingrid Cominsky and family; and nephew Sidney Cominsky and family. She was predeceased by her beloved husband, Melvin, her sister, Ruth, and her nephew Jeffrey Cominsky.

Lenore (Lee) Maliken -- April 8, 2018 She was predeceased by her husband, Alex; her parents, Sophie and Ben Goldwasser; and her brother, Stan Goldwasser. She is survived by her children, Vicki (Robert) Feldman, Jill (Claude) Heifetz, and Bruce (Sherry) Maliken; grandchildren Jessica (Steve) Scaramuzzino, Adam (Mia) Feldman, David Maliken, Dan Maliken, Jared (Rachel) Heifetz, and Shelby Heifetz; and great grandchildren Alexis, Parker, Ethan, Brody, Sydney, Chloe, and Lantz.

Gerald H. Levy -- April 29, 2018 He was predeceased by his wife, Jeanne Shimberg. He is survived by his son, M. Jeffrey Levy; grandsons Brian E. Levy and Jonathan E. Levy; three great-grandchildren; and his companion Gladys Alpert.

Ira I. Mitchell – April 29, 2018 Ira was predeceased by his parents, William and Annabelle Mitchell. He is survived by his wife, Lynn Mitchell; daughter Francine (Barry) Berg, who is Temple Concord's Cantor *Emerita*; sons Alan Mitchell and Andrew (Faye) Mitchell; and granddaughters Hannah Mitchell and Jess Mitchell.