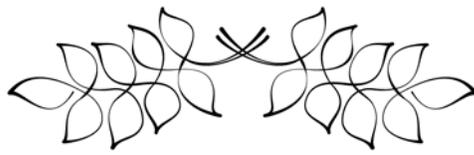


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CONGREGATION  
SUKKAT SHALOM  
**Bulletin**

## Rabbi's Message

by Rabbi Sam Gordon

As summer approaches, I offer a rabbi's somewhat eclectic recommendations for beach, pool, patio, mountain or airplane reading.

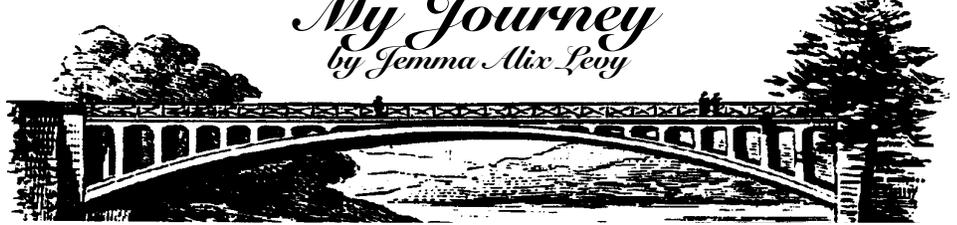
My own personal list of books to be read includes the non-fiction *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*, by Robert Putnam and David Campbell. Putnam is the author of *Bowling Alone* and has now tackled the topic of religion in America. He explores the growing polarization between religious conservatives and secular liberals while also looking at the increasing tolerance for religious diversity -- in part a result of interfaith marriage. I plan to speak about this book during the High Holy Days.



Another non-fiction work is by my friend, Jonathan Sarna, of Brandeis University. His new book is *When General Grant Expelled the Jews*. It is a fascinating story of an event in the Civil War which helped shape American Jewish attitudes towards politics and leadership. The book has received very favorable reviews, including from the New York Times.

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## *My Journey* by Gemma Alix Levy



Years ago a friend of mine, after having a child, decided to take some time away from her job as a lawyer. She picked up belly dancing...and Shakespeare. For some reason, she decided to read his complete works. Knowing that I was a Shakespeare scholar and a stage director, she would call me periodically with questions: "Is it okay that I hate Hamlet? He's such a kvetch!" "I'm at the end of *A Winter's Tale* and I have to know -- is she really a statue?" "How can he write so well?" And, finally, "Is Shakespeare God?"

*"Shakespeare's plays, I now realize, sounded like our dinner conversations -- especially the ones at Seder."*

That last question inspired some laughter on both our parts. Recently, however, it came back to me. Because in my life, Judaism has always had a lot to do with educating and being educated; with being involved in and aware of the world; with questioning perceptions and ideas, and reveling in language and wordplay. These are exactly the same ideas that have always drawn me to Shakespeare.

I began attending Sunday School when I was six. I began attending Shakespeare plays when I was seven.

My mother was a go-to-services-for-High-Holy-days-if-it-won't-interfere-too-much-with-work Jew. My father was a semi-agnostic-how-fast-can-we-get-this-Seder-over-with Jew. But they both thought it was important to raise me as a Jew -- not for particularly religious reasons, but to instill in me the importance and joy of learning and questioning. And while our family always read voraciously, they were also insistent on providing real-world learning opportunities. Thus, in addition to visiting foreign countries, museums, political rallies and science camps, we found ourselves at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival at least twice every year.

I instantly loved the language and storytelling. As I got older, I also loved the cachet of knowing more than my English teachers; of being the only undergraduate theater major who had seen every work in the canon (except *Timon of Athens*, but who's even heard of that one?) More than anything, I loved that I *understood*. Shakespeare wrote about people like me, even when he was writing about kings or fairies or monsters or madmen. He wrote about problems without solutions. He wrote about emotions that could not be explained or rationalized. And he wrote about the power of language, no matter who was speaking.

please turn to page 2

## From the Rabbi, cont'd

Another weighty book is Simon Sebag Montefiore's, *Jerusalem, The Biography*. I continue to be drawn to the story of this holy city. This new book takes its place alongside Karen Armstrong's *Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths*, and Michael Oren's *Power, Faith, and Fantasy, America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present*.

I am fascinated by Madeleine Albright's new memoir of her childhood as a refugee from Nazi Europe. It is titled: *Prague Winter: A Personal Story of Remembrance and War, 1937-1948*.

As for fiction, I would recommend Nathan Englander's *What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank*. He is the author of *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges* and is one of the most important young Jewish authors.

I have been urged to read *Suite Francaise* by Irène Némirovsky. It was published 64 years after she wrote it. She perished in Auschwitz at the age of 39.

A number of congregants are reading Milton Steinberg's *As A Driven Leaf*. It is a wonderful work of historical fiction set in the time of the early rabbis and the beginnings of Christianity. I return to it often, and highly recommend it.

Joseph Epstein's new set of essays is *Gossip: The Untrivial Pursuit*. It follows his *Snobbery: The American Version*. I am a great fan of his short stories, *Fabulous Small Jews* and *The Love Song of A. Jerome Minkoff*.

I hope that might be enough to keep all of us busy this summer. I would love to hear your suggestions as well. My very best for the coming summer months.

We are saddened by the passing of our beloved congregant, **Joseph M. Andalman**, husband of Joan Andalman, father of Judy and Larry Buckman, grandfather of Ali Buckman and Amy and David Israel, great-grandfather of Charlotte Israel. May his memory be an abiding blessing.

## Journey, cont'd

Shakespeare's plays, I now realize, sounded like our dinner conversations -- especially the ones at Seder, when my extended family would join in. No, we were not speaking in blank verse. But there were arguments and discussions about ethics, politics, art and words. Somebody always cried, and we usually ended the night laughing so hard we couldn't stay in our chairs. Nothing was off limits: no question too silly, no subject too inappropriate. It was education as whirlwind. Those family Seders are among my fondest memories from childhood.

And perhaps that is what I try to replicate when I direct Shakespeare's plays. My company, Muse of Fire Theatre Company, focuses on clarity of language and of storytelling.



The whirlwind is exuberant and enlightening, but never overwhelming -- not even for the kids' table. We work to educate our audiences not by dumbing anything down, but by asking them to sit at the table with us. We allow them to question, to listen, to participate.

We don't use traditional theater venues because they can be intimidating. Our actors and audience are on the same level, in the same light, and therefore able to interact. We don't ignore the sneeze, the cell phone, the airplane overhead. We assume that audiences will step into the world of the play because they *want* to join us there. And we assume they will understand the plays because the people on stage are *people*, and because the plays Shakespeare wrote are about life in all its delightful, messy, problematic glory.

Most important, just like at Passover everyone is invited. We don't charge admission to any of our productions. While that makes it difficult to sustain the company financially, it is nonetheless central to our mission. Because it is vital that no stranger be turned away from the Seder table -- from the chance to discuss, to celebrate, to learn, to argue, and to understand each other and ourselves a little better.

Do I think Shakespeare is God? No. (Nor do I think Shakespeare is Edward de Vere, Queen Elizabeth I, Christopher Marlowe, or anybody else whose name is not William Shakespeare.) But I do admire him and seek to hold myself to a higher standard because of his work. Does it inspire me to be compassionate, to push myself, to reach out to others and to follow my own crazy dreams? Without a doubt. That is what makes me a passionate artist, teacher and advocate for the arts. It is also, I believe, the most important part of what makes me Jewish.

[For more information about the Muse of Fire Theatre Company, visit [www.museoffire.org](http://www.museoffire.org)]

# Cantor's Corner: Riding 4 Reform - One Kilometer at a Time

by Cantor Jason Kaufman

How many more kilometers? Is it uphill? Are we almost there? Most important, what's for lunch?

These were the pressing questions that I asked each day as I participated in the ninth annual "Riding 4 Reform" bike-a-thon in Israel this past March. Over five days, spanning about 250 miles, from the heights of Haifa to the slopes of the Judean Hills, I rode, walked, fell and got back up again -- all in support of liberal Judaism in the State of Israel.

In the United States, liberal Judaism is a respected and, in fact, dominant Jewish expression. But Reform Judaism has had to fight for its very right to exist in Israel. The leaders of Israeli Reform congregations, both clergy and lay, are my heroes. They are truly in the trenches -- teaching, inspiring and, when necessary, arguing that there is, in fact, more than one way to be a Jew.

Though the majority of Israelis certainly live a liberal, religious life, Israeli society has been dominated for far too long by right-wing religious zealots who have insisted that their way is the only way. The Israeli Movement for Progressive Judaism (IMPJ) exists to provide Israeli society with another option.

*“Every time an Israeli Reform synagogue stands witness to a girl becoming a Bat Mitzvah, a grandmother dancing with the Torah, or a same-sex marriage ceremony, the face of Israeli Judaism changes for the better.”*

This was the fourth time I participated in the Ride 4 Reform and in many ways it was the most exciting. With each successive bike ride, I have been able to see the fruits of our collective labor. Reform synagogues, kindergartens and community centers are flourishing and multiplying in Israel. I am proud to know that the funds raised from this bike ride help to support these essential initiatives.

Though the number of liberal congregations and congregants increases each year, we realize that this is not the only way to measure the impact of the IMPJ. Every time an Israeli Reform synagogue stands witness to a girl becoming a Bat Mitzvah, a grandmother dancing with the Torah, or a same-sex marriage ceremony, the face of Israeli Judaism changes for the better.

There is an interesting dance that occurs between the liberal Jewish community in the U.S. and the one that exists in Israel. Reform leaders in Israel often share that it was a life-changing experience with American Judaism that taught them how Judaism can be a creative, tolerant and innovative force. On the other hand, we must be sensitive to the fact that Reform Judaism in Israel cannot be seen merely as an American transplant, but rather a sincere, authentic and legitimate Israeli religious

expression. And that's where the bike-ride across Israel comes in.

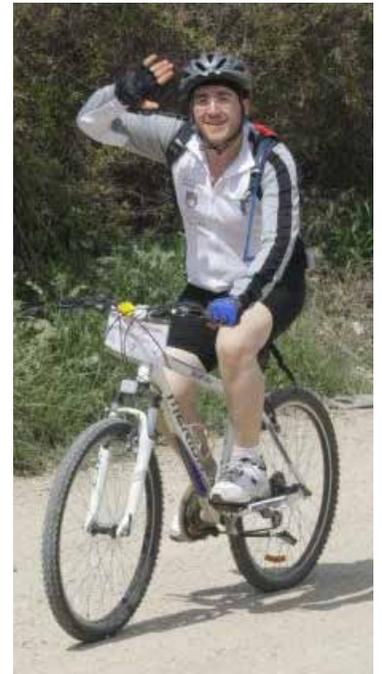
I have never been someone who enjoys extreme exercise. Nevertheless, the ride always has excited me, because it forces me to dream bigger than my own imagination. How could I possibly bike across Israel, when my third floor walk-up apartment would make me lose my breath?

During my first ride, I relied on the constant support, and even the occasional physical push, from riders all around me to propel me to the finish line. That was a challenging and physically painful experience. I knew I had to continue participating with the ride until I could complete every last inch of it.

Every time this year that I had the opportunity to sit on the bus or opt out of a certain section of the ride, my response was: "No way -- I didn't come to Israel to sit on a bus." *Adayin Chai* -- "I'm still alive" -- was my other response. As long as I was alive I would keep trying, because the alternative is giving up and that's just not an option.

I believe in the power of setting seemingly unrealistic goals and pushing yourself to do something out of the realm of perceived possibility. I often encourage my B'nei Mitzvah students to do the same. What have YOU always wanted to try, but life or your own fears got in the way?

Perhaps you have always wanted to take a particular class? Get another degree? Learn Hebrew? What are you waiting for? Get out there and do it! I'll be right there with you. I'll be the guy on the bike -- far, far behind in the back. There is no shame in being last. The only regret can be found in not trying.



<h2>Sukkat Shalom By the Numbers</h2>	
<b>Tzedakah collected at Family School this year:</b> .....	<b>\$4,450.96</b>
<b>Number of charities supported:</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Average donation:</b> .....	<b>\$222.55</b>

# The Wonder of Israel at 64 Years Old

You're never too old to experience the wonders of Israel or contribute to its success.

That's what I learned during a wonderful visit I made earlier this year. Sponsored by the Jewish National Fund, the program is called Canadian American Active Retirees in Israel (CAARI). It provides seniors with the opportunity to tutor English in schools, assist patients in rehab centers, visit innovative kibbutzim, help clear forests planted in sand, and listen to lectures on the successes and challenges of Israel. It also offered me the opportunity to pursue individual interests, such as visiting Petra, snorkeling in the Red Sea and smearing mud on myself at the Dead Sea.

I chose to teach at the Giborei Yisrael Elementary School in Tel Aviv, whose students come from middle-to-lower-income families. I helped them with vocabulary, creating sentences and, most important, conversation. They were eager to learn about the U.S. and loved to see pictures of my family. It was very gratifying to experience their eagerness to learn and to see their happy faces when they came to meet me.

Our service work extended to two forests. The one that most impressed me was the Carmel Forest, which was the site of the terrible 2011 forest fire. People from all over the world come and donate their time to help clear the forest and plant new trees. We met five men from the Czech Republic who were there for two weeks.

When we arrived we were handed either a machete-type tool or huge clippers and off we went into the forest. We pruned the lower dead branches and then picked up what we had lopped off to create huge piles to be shredded and used as ground cover.

Next we visited the Fire Station and met with the firemen who were the first responders to last year's tragic forest fire.

Unfortunately, 14 newly trained firemen and workers were trapped and killed in that fire. A memorial was erected to commemorate their heroism. Standing there, I could understand what had happened; the wind was coming from at least two directions.

Later, we visited some kibbutzim in the Negev Desert. The innovative dairy farm at Yotvatah Kibbutz milks cows on a carousel that rotates slowly and then sends

the first century C.E.

Kibbutz Profit's Red Mountain Therapeutic Riding Center provides horseback-riding therapy for physically and emotionally challenged children and adults. They told us about all the improvements in behavior and mobility that have been accomplished through this therapy.

As part of the Speakers Forum, we met with Kurt Rave -- an underwater arche-



*Senior volunteers clearing brush in an Israeli forest.*

the milk directly to be pasteurized and packaged. It also houses the Southern Arava Research and Development Center, whose impressive experiments have improved the size and yield of pomegranates, garlic and dates. In the 1960s, it was the first facility to develop the drip irrigation system. It has recently developed a system of feedback and control sensors that water plants only when needed.

Kibbutz Ketura is home to the Arava Institute, which has 20 acres of solar panels that supply power to the Israel Electric

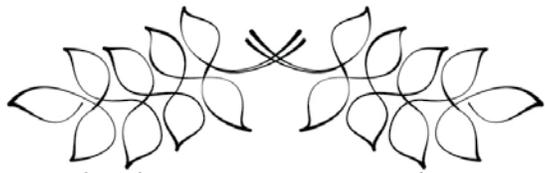
Company grid, serving four kibbutzim

in the area. The plan is to build 49 more solar fields -- each with 18,600 solar panels -- to achieve 15 percent of local power from solar energy. Also at this kibbutz, Dr. Elaine Soloway has achieved world renown for growing medicinal plants and trees. She successfully sprouted the world's oldest tree seed, dating back to

ologist who came to Israel from Holland as a volunteer in the Yom Kippur War. He stayed to become a leading archeologist in recovering ships and artifacts from thousands of years ago. His greatest find was Jesus's ship, which is now on display in the Yigal Allon Museum in Kibbutz Genoas near Tiberius. The next day we visited his museum and the site where most of the artifacts were found.

I especially enjoyed visiting the Rabin Center. The technology used to display the material was quite advanced and creative. The architecture of Israel's skyscrapers and museums is something to behold. Since my hotel was one block from the Mediterranean Sea, I walked on the boardwalk, watched people folk-dance, stuck my toes in the water and viewed magnificent sunsets. But most memorable of all was experiencing the people of Israel and witnessing what they have accomplished in 64 short years.

*"The architecture of Israel's skyscrapers and museums is something to behold."*



# Tikkun Olam

## Repair the World

### Social Justice Activities Provide Food for Thought

by Miles Paris

A quote attributed to Mother Teresa reads: "In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love." I reference this beloved Christian figure to help describe the Jewishness I feel when volunteering for the social justice opportunities provided by Sukkat Shalom.

From my earliest memories, the idea of being a "good Jew" was synonymous with doing something for others less fortunate.

I grew up in a non-observant Jewish family and was never a Bar Mitzvah. But sitting around our dinner table, there were constant reminders that being Jewish meant that we had a responsibility to be concerned for those who were suffering.

My father was a blue-collar worker and my mother never held a job. It wasn't until I was older that I came to realize that we lived from paycheck to paycheck. I never knew hunger or ever went without. Heck, I grew up thinking we were wealthy. But as I grew older, I came to realize that many people in this world know hunger on an intimate level, and live with the pain of not being able to provide food on a consistent basis for their children.

Not surprisingly, when I have the chance to volunteer for some of the activities organized for us by our Social Justice Committee, it usually revolves around food. Some examples:



**A Just Harvest Kitchen:** On the fourth Sunday of each month, our congregation volunteers to serve a nutritional meal to about 200 people. This is an interfaith activity as a Christian congregation provides the food and we

*"From my earliest memories, the idea of being a 'good Jew' was synonymous with doing something for others less fortunate."*

### Hineinu Means "We Are Here" for Fellow Congregants

The Hineinu Committee is continuing to do its good work with the help of many congregants who create and deliver Shabbat bags to families who experience a lifecycle event such as a birth or death. Since July of 2011, our congregation has experienced seven births and 12 deaths.

In addition to delivering the Shabbat bags once a month, the committee is available to provide meals, transportation and other means of support to congregants in times of need. The committee is always interested in finding new volunteers to support this effort. Serving on the Hineinu Committee is not a huge time commitment, but it can make a huge contribution to the community spirit of our congregation.

You can volunteer by using the form on the Sukkat Shalom website under the tool bar "getting involved" or by calling Beth Gomberg-Hirsch at (847) 251-8809.

work together to serve individuals and families a dinner with dignity. That alone is a mitzvah. But what is so joyful for me to observe is that our congregants usually bring their children to

help serve. Is there anything more inherently Jewish than teaching our children by example what it means to care for those less fortunate?

**Family Promise:** On a number of occasions, I've had the pleasure of providing and serving dinner to one or two families who were participating in the Family Promise program. This is a very intimate experience. We get the chance to share a meal with families who are in transition. We can listen to their stories and better understand the struggle of parents who are trying to make a better life for themselves and their children.

**The Greater Chicago Food Depository:** Once a year, Sukkat Shalom families volunteer at this incredible institution that provides food for the many food pantries in and around Chicago. Without question, this is one of my favorite volunteer experiences. I love watching our congregation's children compete to see how many bags of corn flakes or pasta can they fill or how many settings of plastic silverware can they wrap. Waiting as a group to hear the total poundage of food that we prepared for shipment is great fun and offers a sense of accomplishment. And standing next to other adults from our congregation while doing this work is a great way to meet or re-acquaint myself with fellow congregants.

For those of us who have ever volunteered in any way, we understand that we usually start out thinking that we're giving something back or helping others. But, invariably, we leave those experiences realizing that we have received much more than we can ever hope to give. I invite you to join our fellow congregants in these spiritually fulfilling and fun activities.

## Join Running Club for Evanston Race Against Hate

The Sukkat Shalom Running Club will be participating in our third annual Ricky Byrdsong Memorial Race Against Hate on Sunday, June 17th, 2012. The event includes a 10K and 5K run, a 5K walk and a Youth Mile. All races start and end at Long Field (corner of Sheridan Road and Lincoln Avenue) on the campus of Northwestern University in Evanston.



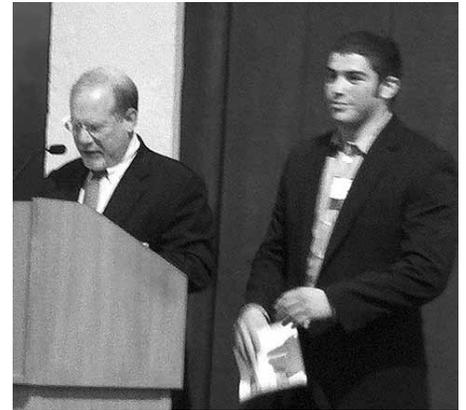
Members of the congregational running club will meet together before the race. Anyone is welcome to join. If you're interested in participating or need more information, please contact Miles Paris at: [parism@us.ibm.com](mailto:parism@us.ibm.com).

# Keeping Kids Engaged After the Bar Mitzvah

by Alissa Zuchman, Director of Family Education

Sukkat Shalom -- along with the other faith communities of Wilmette -- recently honored an outstanding young member of our congregation through the North Suburban Interfaith Leadership Coalition. The NSILC recognizes high school students who are leaders in their congregations and the community.

**Scott Schwartz** of Sukkat Shalom was one of the local young people who received the award. He followed **Emily Sciortino** and **Valerie Ceaser** of our congregation, who received the award last year. Each of these outstanding students gave their time and proved their dedication to the congregation. Each served as *madrichim* (Teacher Assistants) all four years of high school while they continued their Family School studies. They all were counselors for the Family Retreat and helped coordinate the Yom Kippur Food Drive.



*Rabbi Gordon honoring young congregant Scott Schwartz with a service award.*

Too many young people "drop out" of their engagement with Judaism and their faith community upon their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Recognizing this, the Union for Reform Judaism, the umbrella organization for Reform congregations throughout North America, has begun a new Campaign for Youth Engagement. This initiative will promote the best of what exists for post-B'nai Mitzvah students and come up with new projects to get those students actively engaged in their congregations.

We want the norm at Sukkat Shalom to be for our high school students to become *madrichim* and continue their studies. They are role models for the younger students and important contributors to the Sukkat Shalom community. Our vision from the very beginning has been one of lifelong learning, which shouldn't skip the young adult years.

*"Our vision from the very beginning has been one of lifelong learning, which shouldn't skip the young adult years."*

When it comes to educating our teens, it is our responsibility to help them connect what they are learning with what they are living. Our high school students seek knowledge and guidance in their quest for identity as individuals within their community and the world at large.

Next school year the high school students will continue as *madrichim* at Family School and participate in a monthly seminar that looks at world religions. Rabbi Gordon and I will be teaching this class, which will include an in-town retreat called "Discovering Jewish Chicago."

Our eighth graders will be participating in a new program that meets the unique needs of post-B'nai Mitzvah students and helps them clarify their values and faith in the midst of today's social trends. It is our hope and intention to keep this pivotal age-group engaged in Sukkat Shalom.

As always, if you have any questions or ideas about these or other educational issues, please feel free to contact me.



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