

שמע קולנו
Shema Koleinu



A compilation of Torah Insights,
Experiences, and Wisdom from the
Beth Jacob Atlanta Community



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In memory of our parents.

Chuck Azer, Elaine and Elan Miller

*in memory of our beloved Danny Miller, z"l, on his 20th yabrtzeit.
May his memory be a blessing.*

Rabbi Yitzchok & Russy Tendler

Wishing everyone a K'sivah, v'chasima tova - a happy, sweet new year!

Doreen & Burt Wittenberg

In memory of Liam bat Asher and her great-grandmother Bluma.



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PREFACE

If this is your first time picking up a copy of *Shema Koleinu* - welcome to Beth Jacob! What you are holding in your hand is the sixteenth edition of a compilation of Rosh Hashanah essays, thoughts and musings from members of our community, assembled with the hope of adding understanding and meaning to these special days. Beth Jacob is the spiritual home to a wide range of congregants, and *Shema Koleinu* celebrates this mix of threads and colors which comprise the fabric of our community. Taken as a whole, this publication is a beautiful expression of the wonderfully diverse community in which we live.

Our **Life, Loss, & Legacies** section is dedicated to loved ones who have passed away. With a Shul history as rich and varied as ours, and with new members joining every year, it's a particularly special privilege to share stories that highlight some of Beth Jacob's earliest members, and enable the new generation to get to know them, in a sense.

We are sure you will find each article both insightful and thought provoking, and it is our hope that *Shema Koleinu 5782* will serve as a source of inspiration on these Holy Days.

We would like to thank the following people for their help in crafting this publication: **Mrs. Tzina Fishman** for the publication's sophisticated interior design; **Joel Alpert/Market Power** for the beautiful new front and back cover; the *Shema Koleinu* sponsors for their generosity; and the **contributing authors** for sharing their thoughts to enrich our Rosh Hashanah experience.

May Hashem hear (*Shema*) our voices (*Koleinu*) and grant us a happy, **healthy**, and sweet New Year.



OUR OWN LAST MINUTE FIELD GOAL

Harve Linder

I rarely watch football games (with the occasional limited exception involving my former hometown team, the Pittsburgh Steelers). But on a past Motzei Shabbos (prior to the pandemic), we were visiting my eldest son, his wife, and our grandchildren. As my daughter-in-law is a Florida State alumnus, she had the football game on as background noise while we all sat around and shmoozed.

The game was quite boring, the two teams were evenly mediocre, and the end was still in question until the final seconds. And then it hit me. The end is always in question until the clock runs out, i.e., our own personal clock. Not to mix a baseball metaphor with an article that is premised on a football metaphor, but as the great Baseball Hall of Famer Yogi Berra once opined: “It ain’t over till it’s over.”

Florida State was trailing with less than a minute to go. The coach utilized all kinds of strategies to move the football down the field. And every time it appeared that this final, desperate drive was over, an extraordinary call or penalty occurred, keeping the team’s razor thin hopes alive. Ultimately, there was enough intervention that the team was in position to attempt a last-second field goal to win the game.

How often do we hear of a person radically changing his or her approach to life, to tzedakah, to Hashem, at the very end of his or her life? What is it about perceiving, or even knowing, that one’s life in this world is about to come to an end, that causes one to drastically alter his lifestyle and beliefs? Is there a sudden recognition that one may have wasted his life, or at least, that he could have lived his life differently? And why is there a sudden rush to attempt to make it up?

At the end of life in this world, many are driven by a subconscious realization that there may be more than was originally thought. I suggest “subconscious” because many folks will not admit, or even realize, the existence of, or the importance of, the World to Come. But at the end, there is some primordial and unfathomable drive or desire to make up for lost ground. The football team that has not played its best game for the first 59 minutes now tries to make things right, i.e., to win in the last one minute of the game. It tries to get close enough to attempt a last second field goal.

Perhaps we should applaud those who finally see the light in the last minute of their game. Although their game calling has not been in accordance with Hashem's game plan, they have now finally glimpsed the playbook. It is never too late to call the correct play. And all such efforts are never wasted, because it is only when the final second of life ticks off the clock that the final judgment takes place. The final score is not posted until then. And our final judgment does not occur until then. Our plays, our execution of those plays, and the correction of our mistakes have no final weight until we are no longer able to remain in the game. Only then are our statistics final and sealed.

The key to winning the football game is to strictly observe the playbook, to learn how to execute the game plan properly, to learn from the best and the appropriate coaches, and to dedicate one's self to attaining victory. It is really that simple. Hashem has given us the most perfect playbook ever... the Torah. Through the interpretation of the Sages, He has given us the ways to execute the game plan. Our Rabbis are our best coaches and all we need to do is dedicate ourselves to observe what we have been given. It is a proven game plan.

By the way, after all of the last minute "miracles" afforded to the team, Florida State missed the last-second field goal and lost. Sometimes, no matter how well meaning, final efforts come too late and are insufficient. That is why we have to play hard, with vision, from the opening kickoff.



PRAYER, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY

Rachael Devorah (Siegel) Strauss

I don't think anyone knows the power of prayer until they are the recipient of each and every miracle.

On January 26, 2020 this lesson took form for me. My husband Alex and I went in for what we thought would be the simple birth of our first child. Being new parents, we idealized what this would look like - we were sending selfies, singing, and even dancing in the hospital room. Instead of having a decidedly normal birth, a fluke incident occurred and I got a hospital-borne infection known as sepsis. This happens when the body releases chemicals into the bloodstream to trigger an inflammatory response to fight an infection. Sepsis can damage multiple organs which can cause them to fail and can even, G-d forbid, result in death.

As I was brought back for an emergency C-section, I had already developed a fever and was getting quite sick during the operation. Alex realized something wasn't right when an influx of doctors suddenly came into the operating room halfway through the surgery. My blood pressure was extremely low and wasn't getting higher. There was a panicked air in the room, and the baby was delivered and immediately sent to the NICU.

The next morning, multitudes of specialists came in and out of our room and told us that I had sepsis. We didn't know what to do - and what you might not realize is that it's very hard to ask for help. You would think asking people to daven for you would be easy, but both Alex and I are optimistic people; for us to admit that we needed people to daven for me would mean we were acknowledging that there was a big problem. But the thing is, without your davening, I know with 100% certainty that I wouldn't be here. Miracles got me through each day, and since I was hospitalized for 30 days, there were too many to count, but I'm going to focus on a few.

It was determined quite quickly that my kidneys were not functioning. Kidneys are responsible for removing waste and are usually monitored by a number called the creatinine - a healthy person's creatinine ranges between 0.5 - 1.4; mine was at 14. This was extremely concerning. The doctors immediately had a dialysis port surgically placed in my neck. Dialysis is the manual process of acting like a kidney, meaning you're connected to a machine that removes blood from your body, cleans it and then returns it. I started going for two hours every other day. But days kept passing without

any change. I was becoming exhausted from the dialysis sessions, and after a few more days passed there was talk of doing a kidney biopsy. The doctors had a sinking suspicion my kidneys might have been permanently damaged and were no longer functional. I begged and pleaded against the biopsy, I was so scared I would find out that my kidneys were irreparable. I remember thinking in my head, Hashem please don't do this to me, it's just not fair, we just wanted to have a baby! At this point, word had spread about my hospitalization and people were saying tehillim, organizing challah bakes, and so much more. Just knowing we had the support of both of our amazing families and communities made us feel like we had an entire team cheering for us to make it through. On the evening before my scheduled biopsy, Hashem told my kidneys it was time to wake up. The next morning, the doctors entered the room and immediately canceled my biopsy because my kidneys were working!

But the miracles didn't stop there. After my kidneys started functioning, fluid was located in my abdomen in an MRI, but a few days later a new MRI showed no fluid! Then there was talk about removing my uterus due to a possible infection, something no woman should ever have to hear. It was mentioned at the start of Shabbos, it was already past candle lighting, and I was sitting with my mom and sister when I just lost it. I was sobbing and crying, thinking, "When will this end?"

That Shabbos, many tehillim groups were held where the entire sefer Tehillim was completed. On Sunday, that verdict was ruled out - the infection had been contained and was being treated successfully with antibiotics. At that point, I became incredibly anemic and it was determined that I needed blood transfusions, but then a few days later my red blood cell count returned to normal. I'm telling you that these things happened continuously. With every dose of 'bad' news, a few days later - while people continuously davened for me - good news would come our way.

I always knew that I grew up in a special place among incredible people. The community of Atlanta davened and helped me return home to my beautiful new baby. Every day I look at our now 18-month-old daughter and thank Hashem for giving me the opportunity to enjoy every moment with her and my husband.

It's terrifying to think how short life can be - every moment counts and needs to be celebrated. I learned a lot from this experience, but the most important lesson I learned was that we actually do have the power to change an outcome. I'm not saying that everything can be cured with davening, but what it can do is make the outcome so much better. Knowing people were davening for me gave me strength to get through each day. Thank you for helping me be here today - every single tefillah enabled me to keep going.



FROM THIS WAR

Dovi Halpern

My heart calls out in the darkness
My tears frozen deep within
Trembling with an echo of prayer
In my shell of indignation

Sealing my truth from my lips
Before You I stand mute
Wishing I could connect the dots between
How I feel and what I do

Guide my footsteps from this war
Shield me from the chaos
Keep my foes at bay and lift me up
Raise my voice
Crash through these waves
From this war
Please Hashem
Lift me up today

Hollowed by a fire of self contempt
Alone shivering on the floor
Once sated by the venom of emptiness
Buried alive, still my embers burn with faith inside

Stand tall in the face of these false gods
Masked in a voice of temptation
Shelter and conceal me from this fight
In this darkness Hashem you are my light

Guide my footsteps from this war
Shield me from the chaos
Keep my foes at bay and lift me up
Raise my voice
Crash through these waves
From this war
Please Hashem
Lift me up today



WHO BY FIRE

Anonymous

"Mi yichyeh u'mi yamus... mi b'mayim u'mi b'aish..." (Who will live and who will die...who by water and who by fire...)

The lights are out and it is hours after bedtime in their home of 50 years. From an overheated cord, the fire has been smoldering and spreading for hours in the basement, slowly building in size and strength. All at once, it explodes into an inferno and thick billowing clouds of suffocating poisonous smoke rush into every nook and cranny. It seeps up through the ceiling and through the carpeting into the main floor. The superheated air is melting everything plastic and baking the house plants. The windows are solid black from the soot and no light enters or exits. Everything alive inside the home has had the life choked out of it. A person in a passing car sees smoke coming out of the house and calls 911.

Firefighters wake from the alarm, jump into their protective clothes, and rush to the trucks with hearts pounding and adrenaline flowing. The lights flash and the siren pierces the silence of the night. Minutes that feel like hours pass before they pull in front of the house. Years of training go into action. With about 80 pounds of safety equipment and breathing apparatus they run to their duty, risking injury and life in the process. Ladders are flung against the house, power saws rip through doors, hoses bring water to extinguish the flames. The teams split up - one to fight the blaze, the other to find and rescue the occupants. Frantically they search each room, hoping to reach them in time.

Just over a mile away, all is quiet on this Friday night. Everyone is nestled in bed fast asleep, three generations of family members experiencing the peace of Shabbos. Through the night they slumber. This one snores, this one goes to the restroom, this one checks the clock and goes back to sleep. They awaken in the morning and begin the day. Some of them head to Shul, others daven at home and prepare for the Shabbos meal. Sometime that morning someone puts a note on their car. Those who went to Shul return and join the rest of the family in a simple and joyous Shabbos lunch. Afterwards, some nap while others go back to Shul to daven Mincha and learn in the Kollel. Shalosh Seudas is followed by Maariv and Havdala and then the note is found on the hood of their car, left by a neighbor. They wanted to tell you what happened, but no one answered the phone calls or the knock on the door.

Tragedy. There was a fire at your parents' home. The firefighters battled the blaze and remarkably saved the structure, but ...

As the realization of what has happened begins to settle in, they all exclaim with tremendous joy, "Baruch Hashem!" Your parents have been spending Shabbos with you for years, and although their house is ruined, they are safe. Observing Shabbos has saved their lives, literally. Just like we sing in the zemiros, "*Ki Eshmera Shabbos, Keil Yishmerein*" (If I safeguard the Shabbos, Hashem will safeguard me)!

"U'Teshuva, U'Tefillah, U'Tzedakah, ma'avirin es roah ha'gezeirah" (But repentance, prayer and charity remove the evil of the decree.)

Wishing all of *Klal Yisroel a K'sivah v'Chasima Tova!*



MANN PLANS AND G-D SMILES

Michael Mann

I moved to Atlanta on June 5, 2018, to live here for a limited amount of time to be one of the producers on a film being shot in Atlanta. But after three months, I decided to relocate here permanently because I found the Shul and all involved to be very caring, and sensitive to my needs. In my first few months in Atlanta, I got to meet many wonderful people waiting for our film to commence.

After one particular Shabbos service during kiddush, a bubbly, delightful, and animated woman complimented me on my purple socks! I was surprisingly touched by her observation, and that was the first moment I was aware that Mira Bergen existed. Shortly after, Mira celebrated her 1,000th Shabbat observance with a big kiddush and many family members flew in for the event. It was then that I saw how much light surrounded her beautiful *neshama*, and I realized why I was really destined to come to Atlanta.

Having been married before and being the proud father of six children and twelve grandchildren, the furthest thing on my mind was getting married again. I invited Mira to my home for the first night of chol hamoed Sukkot and got to meet the Mira everyone loves and cherishes one-on-one. And an upside of COVID was that we got to spend more time together than would have been possible otherwise. We got married on the 19th of Elul with everyone's blessings - it was an open miracle!!





YA NEVER KNOW

Helen Gerchikov

This past summer we were driving home from our vacation on the back roads of Virginia. When we saw signs for “farm fresh” veggies and fruits, we decided to pull over and buy fresh produce from the farm stand by the side of the road. We got out of the van and saw that the stand was run, much to our surprise, by a family of Menonites.

They were dressed in their traditional clothing, the men all sprouted long beards, and the women had long dresses that looked straight out of “Little House on the Prairie”, with their long hair pinned up under lace bonnets. I guess we also looked very distinct to them, as after a few minutes of small talk about the vegetables, one of the men asked my son what the “skull cap” on his head was called, and we were quickly identified as Jews.

We talked to them for a bit, mostly about their farm, made our selection, and paid. What struck me about the whole encounter was that one of the women just couldn’t stop smiling. The smile was truly genuine, her eyes were friendly, and she was so eager to help, hopping into her golf cart several times to bring us some more sweet corn and fresh picked blueberries. As we drove away, I thought that if we lived in the same city I wouldn’t mind getting to know her better, as her friendly face reflected her *tzelem Elokim*.

Another interesting meeting happened to us a couple of weeks later when we were driving home (again) from Baltimore and we stopped at 7-11 to get some gas and slushies. As we were getting back into our van in the parking lot, a man approached us and asked if we were Jewish. Upon hearing the affirmative, he said “Do y’all want to hear a song that I wrote in Hebrew?” After we nodded, he proceeded to sing “*Baruch Elokim (using Hashem’s name) et hashamayim v’eretz!*” This was accompanied by air guitar noises. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed the brave attempt by my children not to laugh. We politely listened to his song and after he finished, he told us that he writes Hebrew spirituals. “I have more in my repertoire,” he boasted, “but I see that you need to go so I won’t sing any more of them now.” I won’t describe our conversation in the van after that, but my kids can really belt out that song now.

These two roadside incidents highlight the very real fact that everyone is created and has a *tzelem Elokim* (image of G-d), whether the Menonite farmer or the 7-11 singer, and there is something to learn from everyone. I can smile more at people. Maybe I won't sing to random strangers, but I could sing to my family or just keep in mind that yes, Hashem did create heaven and earth.

Most importantly, both times we were clearly identified as Jews and a connection was made based on that fact. So when I smile (or sing), the world will see a Jewish person smiling and will see the *tzelem Elokim* in me. It's Elul, with Rosh Hashanah around the corner, the time when the whole world passes in front of Hashem. We are connected and we're all in this together. And be ready, because ya' never know what encounters await you on your next road trip!



JUST A THOUGHT

Chantza Lawrence

Remembering that everything comes from Hashem, I tried to figure out what we could learn and how we can benefit from this COVID plague. It's difficult to deal with, but if we look hard enough we might be able to find some perks.

Perk number one: I try very hard to observe the laws of being *shomer negiah* - it is halachically forbidden to touch males not in our own family. Most of the time I don't have a problem with this, but when I go to my doctor he always wants to shake my hand. How does one explain that it's okay to examine me, but not shake hands?? Now when I go for a checkup he doesn't offer his hand and that makes me very happy and a whole lot more comfortable!

Perk number two: To say I intensely dislike wearing a mask is an understatement. However, I believe there are other perks aside from the obvious. Masks are not comfortable - I am very aware of it on my face and talk a whole lot less with it on. I might even watch what I say so I don't speak *lashon hara*. The mask brings my attention more to my mouth and the source of *lashon hara*. It then reminds me of all the trouble we got into by speaking *lashon hara*. Rabbi Akiva's students were all on a very high level, but didn't treat each other with respect. They were great *tzadikim*, but they were severely punished with the death of 24,000 students! This can be a reminder to us how serious it is to not show others the respect they deserve. We can also be more tolerant of people who we think don't deserve our respect. We want people to be tolerant of us, so why shouldn't we be more tolerant of them?

After the first round of COVID when we socialized less, there was less *lashon hara* spoken and less physical contact with friends. The disease abated for a while. Then I think we went back to our old habits, and what happened? Round two of COVID. I think we all need to try and be mindful of every word that comes out of our mouths. Much of the Torah asks us to pay attention to not hurting other people's feelings.

Perk number three: After round one started, it seemed to me that people were and are still helping each other more. Isn't that what Hashem wants us to do? We have to be a friend to have a friend.

May Hashem give us the *seichel* (common sense) to say and do what's right so that we can see Moshiach now!



CAR 'WOA'S

David Kayser

Last year, a little more than a week before Rosh Hashana - while we were all still deep in the COVID tunnel longing to see some light at the end that was not a speeding train coming our way - I had three "local" factories to audit. I started out early after Shul and made great time (remember how light traffic was during the early days of COVID?). I reached the exit for the furthest plant and pulled into a gas station to fill my tank. But when I tried to start the car after filling up, nothing happened. I had full power, all the lights worked, and the fan blew - but when I turned the key, the dash lights turned off and nothing happened. Knowing just a little about cars and being over 60 miles south of home, I called for roadside service. They said it would be about 45 minutes.

I called the factory and told them I would have to reschedule as soon as my car was fixed. I thanked Hashem for the cool weather and grabbed a *sefer* and started learning. After about 90 minutes, I called to check on the truck and was told that he had to make a stop before me, but he was only 15 minutes away. I found out where the closest dealership was and decided that the car should be towed there. About 30 minutes later, I saw the tow truck drive past me so I called to be sure they knew exactly where I was. They told me he was turning around and coming to get me, which he did - 45 minutes later! We made it to the dealership before they closed for the day. I explained the problem and asked them to also change the oil and do an alignment.

The next day while I was kashering some tanker trucks in Decatur, Alabama, the repair shop called to say the car would be ready the following day - they had to replace a circuit board, and asked if I wanted them to replace a leaking hose also. I gratefully told them to do so. The following day, after retracing my steps from two days before and finishing three audits, I dropped off the rental car, paid for the repairs, and drove my car home. Coming out an hour later to go somewhere, I was shocked to find my car would not start. It had the exact same problem as before! I left a message at the dealership because it was after hours. They called the next day and agreed to cover the cost of towing it back to them. Thankfully, I was able to use our van for work. Three days later the car was finally towed to the dealer. Two days after that the service manager called to say that the only possible cause was an expensive part that cost about \$900, but he would discount it down to their cost. Erev Rosh Hashana they called to say it was ready and good as new (with 190,000 miles). I told them I would come after the holiday.

On Tzom Gedaliah, I went back to the dealership, paid for the repairs and headed to a factory to kasher some equipment. As I was driving, I was doing some math in my head about the repairs. I was pretty sure that the cost of the repairs directly related to the car not starting came to about \$1000. I could hardly contain myself. Why? The Sunday before Rosh Hashana, Eliezer from Lichazek called to inform me that I won \$1000 in the summer learning raffle. As soon as I got home, I took out the first invoice and added the cost of the circuit board replacement to the second invoice and with tax the cost came to \$1004 and some pennies. I was completely overwhelmed with Hakaros Hatov (gratefulness) to Hashem. Just before Rosh Hashana, He provided me with an unexpected \$1000 - in the middle of the pandemic - to cover the costs to repair my car. His role in this was obscured, but with some scrutiny, it was completely obvious. Hashem had been caring for me (us) all along and He even covered my car repairs.

Our sages teach us that on Rosh Hashana, every facet of our lives for the coming year is decreed. Our health, our earnings, and all the aspects of our lives are decided. Teshuva, tzedaka, and tefilla all impact the decrees. I have no way of knowing what tipped the scales to get the repairs covered on top of all the other wonderful things in my life. I pray that you and I find the right stuff to tip the scales in our merit for the coming year, *b'ezras Hashem*.



THE SUKKAH THAT ALMOST WASN'T

Jonathan Levin

It was September of 1968. My twin brother David and his wife had just moved to Chicago to begin a *semicha* program at Skokie Yeshiva. The best they could afford to rent was a third-story walk-up apartment in West Rogers Park. There, and almost everywhere, no one built sukkot at home - the one at the synagogue served everyone. There was no Home Depot or Lowe's, or Sukkah Depot with plans and pre-fab parts to make things easy. But that was not going to stop David. David was going to have a sukkah.

What almost stopped him, though, was where he would put it. He couldn't use the roof. There was no balcony for his apartment. Chicago apartments were not known for their expansive lawns. Still, David contacted the landlord and requested permission to build a sukkah on the little parcel of land in front of the apartment. The landlord granted him permission but on one condition: if any of the other residents complained, it had to come down immediately. David was thrilled.

That is, until he realized what a task this was going to be. Let me say that we boys inherited my father's complete confidence contrasted with a total lack of builder's skill. David planned what he was doing and purchased the material, but the execution of this first sukkah left a lot on paper and not in the building. It was ragged, looked and was unsteady, and was not ever done the same way again. Still, it appeared to be a kosher sukkah. (Ask a Daf Yomi participant if you need particulars.)

He was just ready to place the *s'bach* on when a thought struck him. So much for the planning, how was he going to have light in the sukkah? He lived three stories up. The sukkah was on the ground. He would need a really long and expensive extension cord.

As this thought spread its gloom, the window beside the sukkah opened and a very gruff, accented voice yelled, "Vat you doing?" David could see all his effort going for naught. He would have to tear down the sukkah even before he could use it. He politely explained to the man that this was a small hut that he would live in for eight days and would then tear down. The man looked puzzled and then slowly spoke. "Is that a *sukki*? I haven't been in a *sukki* since before the camps. Could I have a meal in the *sukki*?" Overjoyed, David immediately invited the man to eat all the meals with them in the

sukkah. “Is there anything I can do to help?”, asked the man. “As a matter of fact”, said David, “do you have an electric outlet near that window that we could use to plug in our light?”

After 23+ years, a Jewish Holocaust survivor was able to eat in a sukkah. When you put forth the effort to reach out to Hashem, he can make everything possible not only so that you can enjoy the mitzvah, but so that others around you can connect to Him as well.



THREE BASHERTS IN ONE DAY

Barbara Fisher

Wednesday, September 20, 2019:

Morning: For the first time in months, the closet where I stored large quantities of fabrics was neat and organized. So when I didn't see the fabric I needed, I knew it wasn't there. I searched every other area of my studio and couldn't find it. At 11:00am, I made the decision to go to the fabric store and buy something to replace the fabric that I could not find. As I searched, I knew that Hashem had something in mind for me but I had no idea what it could be and I was curious. When I also could not locate my cell phone after another search of the whole house, I was not worried a bit and remembered that for many years we actually went places and did things without a cell phone! I felt I would be OK. It was close to noon when I arrived at Joann Fabrics, and I had a leisurely walk around the store before making my selection. I then proceeded to the table in the rear of the store where the fabrics are cut and priced.

One person was ahead of me - a man of medium height who was talking to the store worker. I heard him ask her if she did any sewing, to which she responded, "No, we just cut fabric for our customers." I spoke up and asked if he needed someone to do some sewing for him, and I told him that I knew how to sew. He showed me two small zippered cases. He said they were going to be used by the US military and he had thought of an improvement. Looking them over, I told him that I was sure I could make those changes. "What will you charge me?" he asked. "What will you offer to pay?" I replied. His answer was, "\$75 each". "I'll do it for \$100 each," I responded, and he agreed.

It was then that I realized Hashem's hand in every aspect of my morning to arrange for me to be at that exact spot to meet the man who needed the sewing. Had I gotten there one minute later or one minute earlier, I would not have been there to get this job. I felt amazingly blessed and I marveled at how this had turned out - and I was not at all surprised. I was happy that I could see this Divine Providence so clearly.

Afternoon: It was just a few days away from Shabbos, so I decided to call our friends the Koffskys to see if they wanted to join us for Friday night dinner. Lynn said they couldn't join that week as they were travelling for a Bar Mitzvah. For some reason, I asked where she was going, and she told me Chicago. "Wow, that's amazing." I said to Lynn, "my daughter in Chicago has been trying to get

me a package that we can bring to our grandson in Yeshiva in Israel.” Lynn agreed to bring the package back for us, of course. These small items were some of his favorite things, and as Mark and I were planning to travel to Israel in just a few days, we were thrilled to be able to bring them to him.

Evening: It was going on three weeks and there seemed to be no sign of our beloved challah knife. Mark and I had searched all 18 cabinets and drawers in the kitchen and dining room. Our son-in-law had kindly taken us out for dinner that night and when he dropped us off at our house, he asked if we had any small trays that Sara could use to create candy gift trays for a friend who was making a bar mitzvah. “I’m sure I do,” I quickly replied. “I have a number of them in the cabinet above the refrigerator. I’ll just get a chair and take a look.” I moved one of the kitchen chairs to that place near the fridge and climbed up (I’m proud that I can still do that!) And at that moment, I gave out a call of wonder. There, on top of the refrigerator was our challah knife. What a terrific surprise: Our third ‘Bashert’ of the day.



PAGE 448

Eli Graiser

On page 448 of most Artscroll Siddurim is the “Yekum Purkan” (may salvation arise) prayer. We say this every Shabbos that we are in shul. If you attended Beth Jacob on Shabbos about thirty-three years ago, you might remember that I was the little boy “page turner” running the page number display. So I know well what page “Yekum Purkan” is on.

Back then, there was the One and Only Beth Jacob Shabbos minyan davening to the One and Only G-d, Rabbi Emanuel Feldman sat on the “big chair” before the Aron, and I was a young boy turning those pages. We all knew nothing of COVID, I had no worries, and when turning those numbers I was too young to be mindful of the detailed laws of *borer* (sorting or selecting) on Shabbos that can govern the numbers job. Thank G-d we’ve all grown since then; Rabbi Emanuel Feldman now lives near the Kosel, I know more about *borer*, and our shul has a variety of flavors of Shabbos minyanim that help all connect to the One Hashem.

Shabbos Parshas Eikev saw significant change with the COVID situation in our community and nationally. I’m human, and I felt uneasy with changes to what I had hoped was a waning pandemic. I was away from Atlanta that Shabbos, davening at a sunrise minyan, but awake enough to feel the anxiety in the room, in part demonstrated by those who the previous Shabbos were unmasked and now were masking. I found strength in the words of the Navi Yeshaya 50:10, in the Haftarah; he praises those who listen to the Navi, even if they “walk in the darkness of a yet to come salvation” and the Prophet tells me to trust in Hashem and rely on him (as Rashi explains). Yeshaya HaNavi is talking to me. “Just rely on and trust in Hashem,” he says.

Then our minyan moved onto “Yekum Purkan”, and that prayer helped with more of my emotional neediness. Our minyan prayed for all of my anxieties and issues - Moshiach, children, health, enough food, Hashem’s help, everything I could ever want! What a powerful prayer.

We say “Yekum Purkan” every Shabbos of the year, even if it is Yom Kippur or a Yom Tov. It is always there, waiting to be used by us to cry out to Hashem for our needs. It even discusses shul and communal security, asking that we be saved from any unfortunate incidents. Please read the translation, the Gaonim who wrote it 1,500 years ago expressed it much better than I can.

I realized this while in shul that Shabbos: Hashem sent this COVID to the world, and expects us to use it to connect to Him. Davening, teshuvah, and Torah study are among our powerful tools that we know will work to help us. The scary truth is that as I write this, five weeks before Rosh Hashanah, no human knows what the COVID situation will be on Rosh Hashanah 5782. Just think of the tragedy that 9/11 brought a week before Rosh Hashanah 5762, twenty years ago.

We hope to all be alive and well, but no human knows what will be in the near or distant future. Our lives are completely dependent on Hashem. We are totally dependent; He is totally Independent.

As Rabbi Yitzchok Berkovitz said following the Meiron tragedy, we can realize that 99.9% of the time, everything goes just fine, and 99.9% of the time is from the same Hashem that caused the one time where everything was not so fine. Hashem has pumped my heart millions of times, but He could stop it any moment. As long as He pumps it, I can thank Him, connect to Him. I have not worried these millions of times about each heartbeat, so why worry about COVID? Or income? Or health? Or safety? Just trust in Hashem and ask Hashem to help. And then, from that powerful place, take the next step and consult with a Rabbi (and doctors as needed) about details and practicalities of any situation.

This Shabbos, Shabbos Shuvah, please recite “Yekum Purkan” with extra *kavannah* (intention). Please beg and plead with Hashem that our greatest needs be fulfilled. “Yekum Purkan” has so much packed into its Aramaic lines. Daven for salvation from *galus* (exile), Moshiach, long healthy lives, healthy children, that our children can learn Torah in school, in Yeshiva, mask-free, in person, safely, and in good health. That we can visit family across the street or across the ocean easily and freely. Hashem can do ANYTHING in the blink of an eye. He wants us to feel dependent, feel our place vis a vis Him, and connect to Him.

Inspired by, and in memory of, Rav Noach Weinberg, zt”l, founder and Rosh Yeshiva of Aish HaTorah.



ESTATE SALE RESCUE MISSION

Nachi Friedman

It all began with a post.

It was an ordinary post on social media promoting an estate sale in Stone Mountain. The sale included various used household items, and there were pictures of items in the dining room, bedrooms, closets, basement, etc. Most of the pictures were not very notable, but one of them caught my eye. There was a small section in the dining room picture that had Judaica items - an oil painting of a Rabbi, menorahs, and various other Judaica items.

Upon zooming in, I noticed something special. Inside of a shoebox in the dining room appeared to be a pair of תפילין. My first instinct was to assume they were fake. But what really surprised and intrigued me was the way they were wrapped. Someone knew what they were doing, as they were wrapped in the fashion I would wrap my own תפילין. There was a good chance this pair of תפילין were real. Even if they were not kosher, they would need to be buried and treated properly as with other items deemed to be *sheimos*. I was concerned that the estate sale manager would throw out the pair if they didn't sell, or further desecrate the holy item in transit or storage.

I had the following halachic questions:

- 1: Do I have an obligation to go buy the תפילין? Stone Mountain, GA is not a Jewish area, so I assume they are *pasul* or fake. However, they were wrapped properly indicating someone knew how to treat them. Is there a mitzvah/obligation on me to go there and buy them so I can ensure they will be treated with respect and disposed of properly?
- 2: If yes, how much should I be willing to pay for them as I do not want to encourage future תפילין sales (by non-Jews)?

Per the Shulchan Aruch [OC 39:9], there is an obligation to redeem תפילין if they are in the hands of a gentile. However, the Shulchan Aruch qualifies that one should not pay too much as it may encourage thefts of תפילין. There is a debate in the commentaries as to what is meant by not paying too much, and the consensus is that one should pay a fair price. The approximate value of a used pair of תפילין is \$100. So I was prepared to spend up to \$100 to redeem/purchase this pair of תפילין. My daughter was home from school that

afternoon so I brought her along with me and told her we were off to save a sefer Torah (Inside of each pair of תפילין is Torah parchment with four paragraphs from the Torah).

When we arrived, we found the תפילין sitting in a shoebox just as we saw in the post's picture. I immediately grabbed the box, thankful both boxes were there. One thing I noticed, unlike other items at the sale, was that it did not have a sticker demarcating its value. I brought the shoebox to the salesman and asked him to provide a price. He had no idea what they were or how to price them.



He started opening the רצועות and throwing the בתים around the box like dice. I recall cringing as he threw one of the תפילין boxes, hoping he would hand the box back to me. He asked me what they were and how much they were worth. I told him they were phylacteries, and they are not worth a lot. To validate the situation, I informed him that I was a Rabbi and my intent was to bury the תפילין thereby disposing of them in a fitting and respectful manner. He thought for a moment and then asked if I would buy them for \$10 as “he would like to get his client some money for their items”. I happily agreed and our rescue mission was complete. My daughter was grinning ear to ear as we had saved a “Sefer Torah”! (Although she questioned me as to why the Torah was so small.)

When I returned to Toco Hills, I dropped the pair off at Rabbi Asa’s shop. After a quick initial check, it was determined that the pair was actually kosher! Rabbi Asa estimated the tefillin were approximately 80 years old. While used and withered with age, they were in surprisingly good shape. The exciting part occurred when we opened the boxes. The parchment looked to be in mint condition and appeared to be kosher, as well. It was arguably the best \$10 I ever spent.

Upon hearing this great news, I told R’ Asa that I would like to fix up the תפילין to be used as a spare pair of תפילין at shul. He told me he is going to

first examine the תפילין a little more to ensure they are truly Kosher. This great news was exciting, but a new *shaila* came about:

3: Do I have to go back to the estate sale company and offer to pay more as I didn't tell him they might be kosher? Is it *gneivas daas* (acting deceitful) or *ona'as devarim* (using words for negative intent) that I am no longer burying it? Alternatively, is the nature of an estate sale *mochel* (forgiving) on the fact that the business strategy sells items at discounts? Buyers are attracted to the estate sales on the chance that the appraisers messed up on an item's valuation and they can buy the item below market value? If so, this is merely a situation where the buyer knew the valuation better than the seller. Or is it different because the seller asked me - the buyer - for advice as to how to evaluate the item?

While I do not believe I had deceived the estate salesman, I decided to call the company to clarify the situation. I informed him that after investigating the Judaica item, I determined I may be able to use the item for more than I had originally stated. I offered to pay him more money. He appreciated the offer, but declined the additional payment and informed me of his upcoming sale. Unfortunately, the next sale did not contain any Torahs.

The story taught me two very nice lessons.

1) Sometimes kiddush Hashem can be a proactive event. Even if the salesman would have requested additional funds, how amazing would it be to pay to make a kiddush Hashem. It was even better when he said no thank you, and I was able to accomplish this mitzvah for free!

2) Opportunities can come from anywhere and can turn into more opportunities. Scrolling through social media postings of estate sales, which is a fun, distracting hobby, can result in the chance to do several mitzvos, and to make a kiddush Hashem. How amazing is this world where we can accomplish so much when we have our eyes open!

Postscript: In the end, Rabbi Asa's second examination determined that the תפילין were unfortunately not kosher.



MUSSAR FROM MY DOG

Bev Fermon

“From all who have taught me have I gained understanding.” [Tehillim 119:99]

Lesson #1: Waking Up: *Wake Up with Joy*

Each morning, when I take my first deep breath, my dog Samantha begins to prance. Her back legs stay grounded, but her front legs click a staccato rhythm on the wood floor. There is a wiggling and a wagging accompanied by head tossing and some sort of happy vocalizations. She is ecstatic that I am up.

As for me, I draw back the cover, shift into a sitting position with my feet on the floor. I sigh and begin Modeh Ani – but then I look over at my dog. Her joy makes me smile.

What if I wake up like that? What if, when I take that first breath, I stretch, look around, and grin, joyous to be alive. If I greeted the day the way Sammy greets me, would Hashem look at me and smile?

Lesson #2: Gratitude: *Know that everything comes from Hashem.*

I had no idea training Sammy would be so difficult. For one thing, she growled at me whenever I fed her. I tried coaxing and scolding and taking the food away when she growled. Nothing worked. I needed help.

The Humane Society has a canine therapist (!), and I went for a consultation. Mailey suggested that I make Sammy sit, put the food down, and leave the room. It worked! She sat quietly and waited while I slipped away. Then, she ate peacefully.

Wait a minute. Doesn't she understand that I am the one who brings the food? I work to earn money to buy the food. Does she think the food just appears and therefore it's hers - that I have nothing to do with it?

Now, when I prepare her food, Sammy does the same happy dance as when I wake up. After thirteen years, I still give her space when she is eating, but there are no growls - just a happy dance.

And me? Do I stop to think about where the food comes from? What about my home, my clothes, my job? Do I remember that there is a Higher Power that provides everything for me? Hmm...

Lesson #3: Hide and Seek: *When Hashem plays hide and seek, He wants to be found.*

One of our favorite games is “Hide the Human.” Sammy stays, while I hide in another room.

“Sammy,” I call out. “Find!”

In the beginning, I had to hide practically in plain sight. I made sure that at least part of me was visible. Over the months, I made it harder to find me. Sammy stopped using her eyes and began to sniff me out. I slipped behind the back of doors. I ducked beside oversized furniture, hid under a blanket, and crouched behind big boxes. I even stood up in the bathtub. No matter how hard I made it, she found me and I gave her a treat. I wanted her to find me.

Does Hashem do that with me? Does He do something big to see if I will notice? If I see that, do the hints get more subtle? Does He delight whenever I see the “Hidden Hand of Hashem”?

Now, I notice the “coincidences.” Sometimes I am running late, but I get to work on time, because no one turns left onto North Druid Hills. One Shabbos, I step outside to see snow floating gently to the ground, all around me. It’s the parsha of *manna* falling in the *midbar* (desert).

Lesson #4: Unconditional Love: *Look with loving eyes and see the good.*

When Samantha first came, I would forget that she was just a puppy doing puppy things. I remember changing the sheets and shaking out the top sheet over the bed. She leapt onto the bed and grabbed at the sheet. “No. Down,” I demanded. I am embarrassed to admit it, but I even said, “Bad dog.” Then, one day, I heard a woman speak to her dog with such a loving voice. It had a slightly higher pitch, much like people talk to babies. Soon, I heard myself speaking to Sammy the same way. She had taken a shoe and I crooned, “Aw, have you got my shoe?” I asked again softly, “Have you got my shoe?”

She stopped in her tracks and looked up at me with adoring eyes. “Yes, I took it. Do you want it back?” She dropped the shoe and wagged her tail. I began to look with loving eyes, and guess what I found? Loving eyes gazing back at me. Sammy taught me the power of unconditional love.



SURELY NOTHING IS BY CHANCE

Sharon Harris

My son David came for a visit from Israel in the late 1980s when we were living in Athens, Georgia, and he caused quite a stir. Decked out in tallis, tefillin and kippah, his new identity as a kosher-eating, Shabbos-keeping Jew caught us all off guard. So off guard, in fact, that his infatuation became our infatuation, and soon the only proper way we wanted to live as Jews.

Before I go any farther into this story, I need to heartily thank Rabbi Eli Sloush and Dr. Rita Shloush who all those years ago kindly opened their home to us for the kosher Shabbos lunch David needed. During that very special Shabbos lunch, I mentioned that due to where our family had been living, our younger son Doron had not yet had his Bar Mitzvah. I said I thought it would be great for us to go to Israel at some point so Doron could have his Bar Mitzvah at the Kotel with David's help.

Rabbi Shloush's response was simple and plainly to the point, David's here now, and we need to have Doron's Bar Mitzvah as soon as possible. Those of you who have had the joy of knowing Rabbi Shloush know that when he speaks, you listen. He speaks to what he knows and he knows what he speaks. And so it was done. That Sunday I went to Beth Jacob and scheduled Doron's Bar Mitzvah for the next Monday morning, just seven days away.

Doron was not at that Shabbos table, he was back in Athens at the time. When we came home and asked if he'd like to become a Bar Mitzvah in approximately a week's time, he didn't hesitate. David and Doron - and I suspect Hashem - went directly to the incredible task of making it happen.

During that visit, David became his brother Doron's *chavruta* for learning his Bar Mitzvah Torah portion and the laws of laying tefillin. Literally in a matter of days, Doron's call to the Torah, delayed for four years, blessedly took place in the Daily Shul at Beth Jacob.

It was during his Monday morning Bar Mitzvah that Doron later told me he looked up at the raised Torah and said he could feel the Torah's deepest meaning as it reached into his very soul. He knew he would need it in his life everyday, just as he needs the air he breathes.

Fast forward to Doron's very large family and extended family in Israel, to his

amazing wife and all of her family, and to his children, grandchildren, and sons in law - all guardians of the Torah, all progeny of that Monday morning Bar Mitzvah.

We, as a family, have our own personal relationship with Hashem, as do each of you, and each in their way is deeply committed to the joy of Torah.

For the last few years, David has been living in Vietnam as an English teacher bringing his mysterious infectious joy to all who meet him.

Their precious sister Alisa Haber, now living on the Georgia coast with her husband, loves her walks on the beaches and marshes beside the ever changing ocean's personality on Jekyll Island. She takes in intimately Hashem's very nature. She is filled with joy.

Our family joined Beth Jacob in 1966 not because we were Orthodox or Shomer Shabbos or kosher, but because of what we felt to be its authenticity. Throughout the years on occasion I'd step away from Beth Jacob for what I like to call "my lessons to be learned time". Now Beth Jacob has become my place, my consistent home for the last 35 years. Of course I'm still learning lessons, but fortunately I no longer need to step away and can now learn these lessons in my own backyard.

I met my husband Stan at Beth Jacob where we married in that very same Daily Shul. We are now married nearly 25 years.

Life keeps changing, Hashem keeps testing and we find almost daily the reason for everything that occurs. You just need to keep your eyes open and your soul connected and of course - count your blessings.

Sometimes I look back at the fragile circumstances that brought David to be *shomer* Shabbos on that particular visit at that particular Shabbos table in that particular space in time. Surely nothing is by chance.

And to Hashem's countless miracles and blessings I can only say thank you again and again and again.



PACKAGES ON THE

Ruby Grossblatt Katz

One afternoon, at the start of the pandemic, my husband and I walked out our front door. The young father next door was on his porch and asked, “Where are you going?” That startled me. He never asked where we were going.

“To the drugstore,” I told him.

“You shouldn’t go,” he said, “I’m telling my parents not to go out also.”

“But we’re only going to the drugstore,” I stated.

Another young neighbor heard the conversation and said, “We can shop for you.”

I thanked both of them for caring, then got in our car. But hearing their concern, we circled around the block and came back.

That’s when packages started appearing on our porch.

First, they contained essential food items shopped by volunteers from our shul. They left bags from the supermarket and were already in their cars before I could thank them. This went on for several weeks.

As Pesach approached, I knew I needed more than food and sundries for daily use. I needed a whole new set of kitchenware. Three years earlier, packing up for my move up North, I looked at the boxes of Pesach dishes accumulated over 40 years and gave them to my daughter. My husband and I planned to spend part of the *chag* each year in Atlanta and the other part with my husband’s children in Far Rockaway.

I didn’t need Pesach dishes any more, but it was hard parting with them. Of course, I would still see them when I visited family in Atlanta, but I would miss the moment when I unwrapped those treasures: the large, flowered seder plate that the girls surprised me with when they were teens, the sapphire blue glass pitcher from a traveling salesman who stayed with us each year right before Pesach, a pretty, shiny cutting board that Ariella, a very close friend gave me, and the smooth pottery bowls which our dear friend Mira would bring as seder gifts. On the bottom of each piece, Mira wrote her name and

the Hebrew year. “You don’t have to *tovel* this,” she would say, “because I made it.”

Now that I was making Pesach, I wouldn’t see those special pieces that touched my heart. Instead, I ordered pots, pans, and utensils which a friend picked up at curbside. I couldn’t *tovel* the kitchenware because the rabbis closed the *toveling mikvah* so people wouldn’t gather there. My husband got on the phone with our rabbi and two other men to declare that we didn’t own the items yet and would *tovel* them later.

Our Rabbi didn’t ride in an open truck throughout the neighborhood on Friday afternoon, waving and wishing everyone a good Shabbos, but our shul (Rabbi Dovid Heber) did leave gifts on our porch. One was a lovely cellophane wrapped package of candy, cookies, grape juice, and sparkling water for a Shabbos *Mevarchim* “at-home kiddush”.

One Friday afternoon, the ‘package’ was a message emblazoned on our driveway. Holding thick colored chalk, our neighbor - a dentist - walked with his children up and down the block with the youngest trailing behind. On pavements and driveways, they wrote “Good Shabbos” or other messages to each family. I hoped it wouldn’t rain.

Still the packages kept arriving. There were a few from Amazon including a camera for my computer so I could participate in Zoom classes. My daughter sent me a lovely top so I had something new to wear for Shavuos. Another time it was flowers nestled in a cardboard carrier from my children in Atlanta.

On one Erev Shabbos, I heard a knock at the door. It was a friend whose Purim Seudah was the last social event my husband and I had attended. “You’re being shnapped!” she said.

“What?” I asked.

All she did was smile and hand me a bright yellow package tied with a red ribbon. It contained a homemade challah, a huge chocolate chip cookie, and shnapps! Later, I learned that she was part of a group who lifted the spirits of others.

A neighbor across the street lifted the spirits of many others. She knew where free food was distributed and kept getting leftovers from her grandchildren’s school box pick-ups. Daily, she walked up and down the block leaving packages on many porches. One day, she knocked and started to leave a bag

of shiny red apples on my porch. When I opened the door, instead of stepping outside and standing 6 feet away, I stood at the door because it started to rain.

“Let me give you an umbrella,” I said.

“I’ll be okay,” she answered. But then her husband, holding an umbrella over his head, ran across the street to rescue her.

“I’ll be glad when she finishes this business,” he said smiling and put his arm around her to keep her under the umbrella.

We’ll all be glad when this business of COVID is over. We are all together under a huge umbrella of rabbis, doctors, nurses, teachers, and caring neighbors protecting us from a most violent storm that shook our lives.

I want to remember those we lost and the families who suffered. But I also want to remember that in Baltimore, Atlanta, and in every city, our Jewish communities pulled together leaving messages of encouragement on the phone and on driveways, held countless classes through Zoom, and of course, left thousands of packages of love on the porch.

Shana Tova with love!



BABY STEPS

Tzipporah Wayne

Leiluy nishmas Mordechai Yisroel Tzvi ben Moshe Aaron, Rabbi Mordechai Rindenow, z"l.

With the rollercoaster of twists and turns that has accompanied Covid-19, one particularly positive outcome comes to mind. Hashem dropped in my lap a deeply powerful training which resulted in me reinventing myself as “My Happy Heart Coach”. Growing up Reform, I was thrilled to learn there was so much psychology in the Torah. Little did I know that most psychology *comes* from the Torah. Life became simplified during this recent training; it further deepened my love for Torah, and strengthened the soul connection we all strive for with Hashem, our highest selves (our *neshamas*), and others.

With the King “in the field” calling us to be close, we have the beautiful opportunity to look inside and ask ourselves “Who am I really?”

It is so easy to:

- Go through life on autopilot, personally and spiritually.
- Look back and be hard on ourselves for mistakes we’ve made over the past year.
- Stay stuck, doubting if we will ever grow and change in the areas that challenge us.
- Lose hope that our future could be brighter or different in any way.
- Think and speak negatively about ourselves and others.
- It takes zero effort to stay in this place. This can easily be our routine.

Or, we can challenge ourselves and shine our light on what is going right! Yes, I have made mistakes that are misaligned with my *neshama*. I know that everything is a test from my loving and compassionate Father who wants me to learn and grow.

What can I learn from the past year and how can I carry it into the new year? We can focus on the gift of life. If we pause for a moment from the busyness of life, we know that life is a gift, not a given.

The people in my life, even if challenging, are also a gift from Hashem. We have endless opportunities to show self-control, to give, to care, and express our appreciation. How can I turn my challenges into an opportunity to express my highest self?

With the Torah as life's greatest instruction manual, we are given clear boundaries for where to put our energy, time and efforts. This is much like a road and the lines we are told to drive within. We can be upset with the lines for being there, and the law that requires us to stay within them, or be grateful they're there for our safety. Any experience can be viewed as positive or negative. Where do I want to put my thoughts and actions?

Here is a powerful excerpt from "60 Days: A Spiritual guide to the High Holidays" by Rabbi Simon Jacobson:

"We can be certain that if G-d created life, He gave us the power to change life. If G-d gave us the ability to get into patterns and habits, then He must also have given us the power of the soul to get out of the habit. Just like we got in, we can get out."

"Any faith in G-d has to include faith in hope and faith in transformation - faith that we will be forgiven for past mistakes and faith that we can change."

As often as humanly possible, with baby steps, one day at a time, we have the ability to grow. One small step, awareness, gratitude. Psychology backs up what has long been in the Torah about the power of attaching a new small behavior to an existing routine. If we take the first step, creating an opening the size of a pinhole, we believe that Hashem blows it open, making the next steps easier and more accessible.

It is my sincere *bracha* that we all have the strength and clarity to dig deep, take baby steps and courageously shine light on what is going right, moving from darkness to light.

May Hashem bless each of us with a year filled with a "Happy Heart", health, *simcha*, and *bracha* always!



REMEMBERING

Mira Bergen

These contemplative thoughts were written by me in the magical city of Tzfat, Israel, moments before I celebrated my 86th consecutive Shabbos on August 17, in the Hebrew year 5762.

Time and Space

Go Away

When Hashem enters our soul.

We are inextricably bound-

Meshed-connected-tied

To each other's past,

Present and future.

We are the continuum in

Hashem's tapestry for living

Bound by Torah

The fabric of holiness

Permeates, flows and ebbs within

And emanates

Into our daily living

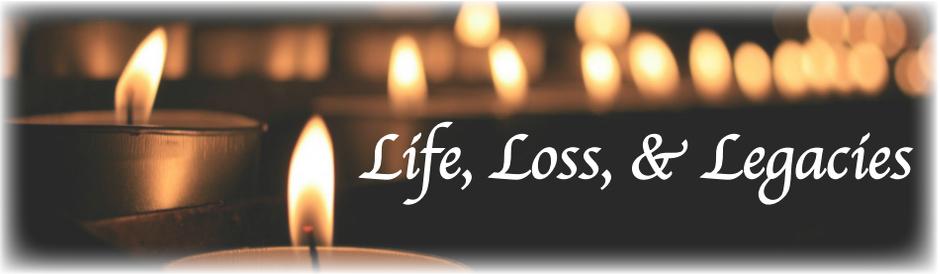
Changing

Everything

I read these words and reflect on the majesty of creating a relationship with the Creator of the Universe:

EVERYTHING changes when we crown G-d King, *Avinu Malkeinu*, our Father, our King, not only at Rosh Hashanah, but every MOMENT we are privileged to be alive!

L'Shana Tova 5782!





SHE MADE IT!

Rick Halpern



It's *motzei* Shabbos, and my mother's 24-hour yahrtzeit candle is still burning after 50 hours. I can't think of a better way of describing my Mom's last days, as we remember her seven years after she passed. My Mom was a beautiful and dignified lady who unfortunately suffered from Alzheimer's for several years, the last three living at the Jewish Home. My siblings and I thought that she was totally out of it, though her caretakers always insisted that she was very aware. I didn't see it.

Yet, I'll never forget the day I visited her to show her a picture of Vered and Aaron, who had just started dating. I did it more out of a sense of obligation, never expecting a reaction. To my surprise, when she saw the picture her face totally lit up with a big smile. I said "OMG, that was totally a reaction." Her sitter who was right there said, "I told you so." I now saw my Mom in a totally different light. This was in February, and eventually Vered and Aaron got engaged and scheduled their wedding for August.

During the Spring, my Mom almost died twice. We had been through this a couple of times before. The second time, the head nurse told us that she had stopped eating, and that they were not going to force feed her. The nurse said that it's time to say good-bye to your mom. I told her, "Who knows what's going to be? My daughter is getting married in August, and we would love her to be there. Can you please just maintain the same level of care you were giving her before?" As it turns out, my mom regained her appetite, and was feeling much better. For the next 100 days, she had four cheerleaders, me and her three sitters who kept encouraging her to hang on so she could make it to Vered's wedding. At any moment during those 100 days, she could have passed, and I would not have been able to dance at Vered's wedding. No one was more positive about it than her sitters, and they kept me optimistic.

As the day approached, the tension grew. Suddenly, it was down to the last ten days, and some relatives insisted that I not bring her to the wedding. "She doesn't really know what's going on, and she would just be disoriented," they claimed. I insisted that there was no way I was not going to bring her to the wedding, and I was speaking with the full support of her sitters. As a compromise, I promised to

have her driven back to the Jewish Home immediately after the ceremony.

On the day of Vered's wedding, my cup was already overflowing with joy. Added to that was the fact that my mom made it to the wedding. Incidentally, a photo of the crowd during the ceremony showed my Mom with her head turned like everyone else's toward the *chuppah*. She was aware.

We were busy that week with sheva brachos in Atlanta, and I did not get a chance to see my mom before we left for Dallas for the rest of the sheva brachos. On Friday, shortly before Shabbos, I got a call from my niece Robin that she was at the Jewish Home, and Mama was not doing well at all. I told her that I was in Dallas, and that Shabbos was just a few hours away. Because of the dire situation, it became very clear that this might be the last time that I will speak to my Mom. Robin put her phone on speaker so Mama could hear me. This was it. I said, "I love you Mom, and everything that I am I owe to you." Robin said that she smiled, and I said goodbye.

Over Shabbos, we celebrated the remaining sheva brachos in Dallas. After Shabbos, I retrieved a message that Mom had passed away. We roughly calculated the time and noted that she passed at about the same time that we were finishing the last of the sheva brachos. I had prayed that she could make it to the wedding, and b"H we were blessed to have her stay around without any interference during the sheva brachos week. At her funeral and during sShiva, I kept apologizing to people for being so happy. True, she was gone, but she hung on during those tense months to make a most fitting conclusion to a wonderful life. I love you Mom.



REMEMBERING DANNY MILLER, Z"l

Elaine Miller

Danny Miller's 20th yahrtzeit is approaching. As we enter the 20th year since we lost our beloved community member, husband, father, and friend, I want to use this opportunity to publicly remind you of Danny. Other than leaving his beloved family, especially his son Elan who was 6 years old at the time, his greatest regret was leaving you all, his community, and he feared being forgotten by you. He so much wanted to be a part of you. Many have come and gone in the last 20 years and some of you never knew him, but he loved you all as a whole and individually. Many of you told me after he died that losing Danny meant losing your best friend.

Life gets busy and we sometimes forget what matters and even why we are here. I hope Danny's absence helps you to remember that we are precious to each other. Also, I hope it helps you to remember that although we don't know a lot of the whys in this world and that G-d is often hidden, He is still in charge. With the loss of Danny and so many other tragedies, we often feel G-d's absence. Despite that, the people given to us in our lives are blessings that often reflect G-d's presence back to us.

I share two quotes with you that remind me of Danny's life and legacy:

Anne Frank: "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

Leo Buscaglia: "Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

Thank you to all who knew Danny Miller and made his life a true joy. May G-d bless this community and all of Israel.





A NOTE FROM BRENDA JACOBSON, Z”L

Jenny Marks

One of my mother’s favorite stories to tell was of an experience she had as a young child. Her parents had taken her to a Yom Kippur service at the local Temple. Her family wasn’t religious, and she’s not sure why they decided to go that year. But my mother sat with her parents and listened in awe as the Rabbi spoke. He explained to the congregation that on Yom Kippur, all our sins are washed away and our souls are cleansed. My mother remembers walking out of the service and telling her parents with wonder: “I’m clean!” Her parents’ response? “Of course you’re clean! You just bathed this morning!”

This story was emblematic of my mother’s lifelong yearning for connection to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. Even as a young child she was drawn to Judaism and *yiddishkeit*. Though she had no experience of an observant life, she was determined to have that life for herself and her family. My mother was instrumental in bringing our family to Beth Jacob and putting her children into Jewish schools - thankfully my father was happy to go along with her. But it was her desire to live a life in service to Hashem that brought us to this community and ultimately to Orthodox Judaism.

In her later years, things were hard for mom. She was physically frail, she was becoming forgetful and easily confused. But she was always in conversation with Hashem, asking Him for help whenever she needed and constantly thanking Him for everything. She often occupied herself making little collages filled with family pictures and Jewish symbols and little notes. She was working on one such project on the day her *neshama* was peacefully called back to her Creator. My sister and I put her project on a shelf and only looked at it days later, when we found a note attached. This note, written with a clarity that eluded mom in her later years, was a culmination of everything she believed:

“Hashem notices everything we do. He reacts to our actions. There are consequences, positive and negative, for all of our actions and attitudes. Hashem is real. What we do and say matters to Him intensely.

Hashem loves us personally. We don’t have to earn this love, but He wants effort, not results.

It is a gift to know Hashem and to be alive.

It is a gift to be a Jew.

We crown Hashem as our King.

The Creator assesses us.

We make a difference in this world, and Hashem takes care of us.

We love Hashem.”

My sister and I read this note in pure amazement. It was so clear to us that her neshama had something important to say, and she was able to leave this last message to us. My mother was the epitome of someone who “knew” Hashem, and it is her loving legacy that her children and grandchildren know Hashem, too.

