### MY ROSH HASHANA STORY

GEORGE WASHINGTON

LENDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

LLM

DUKE

**(50** 

MPP

BERKLEY

PHD

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSIT

Vittorio de' Medici

This is both a tale of ends and beginnings--a perfect segue into Rosh Hashana and the High Holidays.

Bear with me and it will all make sense. Before I continue, there is something that you should know about me: I was born in Peru and was

raised Catholic. At the age of 16, I encountered philosophy, and my path was forever changed. At the end of Plato's Apology, Socrates describes death as either the absence of consciousness or the migration of the soul from one place to another.

To some of you, this description may seem unproblematic. For someone like me, it was deeply distressing. Let me explain why. A dreamless sleep does not fit into Catholic eschatology. Was I wrong in believing that death is not final? I needed to find answers. So, I turned to theology and history. Ironically, the more I learned about religions, the more questions I had. My faith was crumbling. By the end of college, I was agnostic.

Let us fast forward to the end (or beginning?) of my story. I am now a Jew. How did I get here?

Sometimes we find answers in the least expected moments. For me, it was a spring evening in Washington DC. As I was walking home from law school, I was struck by a simple, yet life changing, thought. I can remember it perfectly. Moonlight gracefully illuminated the myriad shades of pink and white of the blossoming cherry trees. Lost in this scene, I could not help but wonder how could something so beautifully complex as these trees and moon be the byproduct of chance? Surely, I thought, there must be a Creator. This was the beginning of faith for me.

Some of you may know this argument as the "watchmaker analogy"—a design implies a designer. A powerful argument, but not one free of criticism. Richard Dawkins, for example, famously sets on to disprove it using Darwinian theory. But, if I learned anything on this journey, it is that there is no argument that can irrefutably prove or disprove the existence of G-d. No amount of logic will lead to faith. I finally understood Søren Kierkegaard's dictum: "If we choose faith, we must suspend our reason in order to believe in something higher than reason."

So far, I had concluded that there was a G-d. The next question was

what god to believe in? I went back to where I began my journey but, this time, I sought a connection, rather than understanding. For a year, I attended mass every Sunday. For a year I prayed. But, in the end, I realized that I was merely an actor trying to play a role that did not fit

my character. So, I turned elsewhere for answers.

One of my favorite words in English is "serendipity," perhaps because I have learned that the most remarkable things in life, happen unexpectedly. This is how I stumbled upon Judaism. It was a Friday afternoon in Georgetown, when I passed by a synagogue. Part of my family has Converso roots. So, driven by curiosity, I decided to go inside. It was a foreign scene. The chanting, the Hebrew, the choreography of the Amidah (silent devotion). Yet, despite not fully understanding what was going on, I felt an instant connection to it. The best way to describe it, is that feeling that you have when you fall in love—you just know it. It is ineffable, it transcends reason. It was faith.

"The Ultimate Degree: JEW!" Since then, I've made my way from Reform Judaism to Orthodoxy -- a journey that recently concluded with my conversion. The path was not easy but, in hindsight, every obstacle served to take me where I am now. I learned, later, that there is a Jewish theological term for this, hashgacha pratit, personal, divine supervision. To remind me of this journey, I took on the Hebrew name "David Eliyahu." David as a link to my past—a name that has been in my family for generations. Eliyahu because it reminds me of the question that started my journey.

> I began by telling you that this is both the end and the beginning of my story. It all, hopefully, makes sense now. Conversion in Judaism is tantamount to "rebirth." The Midrash tells us that Rosh Hashana is the day that G-d created Adam. It is a day of beginnings, and this is the beginning of my story as a Jew.

> Vittorio (now Eliyahu) de' Medici has degrees in law (JD, LLM, PhD), public policy (MPP), politics (MPhil), and political philosophy (MSc). He has studied at Berkeley, George Washington, the London School of Economics, Duke, and Cambridge University. He currently resides in New York and is transitioning from academia to the practice of law.

### **CONGRATULATIONS AND MAZAL TOV**

Hendy Mandel and Marc Berger Valentina (Aviva) Tkachenko and Sam Pfeiffer

MARRIAGES

Olivia Devillers and Andy Shapell Mazal Tov to mother, Carla Devillers Tamar Dubin and Meir Brodsky

Mazal Tov to parents, Alene Brodsky Bloom and Dr. Steven and Leah Brodsky Dr. Mivi (Mevaseret) Jacobs and Dr. Gal Maor Navon

Mazal Tov to parents, Batya and Eddie Jacobs Mazal Tov to grandparents, Vicky and Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Hadassah Leah Milder and Dovid Hartmann Mazal Tov to parents, Elisheva (Jennifer) and

Aviah Rosen and Joshua Lew Mazal Tov to mother, Marilyn Rosen Yocheved Miriam Sapirman and Zevi Bennett

Mazal Toy to parents. Dr. Janice Bennett and the late Dr. Richard Bennett, z"I

**BIRTHS** 

Emily Belfer and Dr. Raphy Rosen on the birth of a son,

Mazal Tov to grandparents, Dr. Michelle Friedman Belfer and Benjamin Belfer

Shani and Coby Buiumsohn on the birth of a daughter,

Mazal Tov to grandparents, Gail and Gady Buiumsohn Mazal Tov to great-grandmother, Helga Weisburger Dr. Shiri Avraham and Dr. Nick (Noach) DeBellis on the birth of a

Batya and Yehoshua Naor on the birth of a son, Shimon Yehudah

Mazal Tov to grandparents, Polly and Gabriel Bousbib

Deanna and Dr. Betzalel Reich on the birth of a daughter, Michaela

Mazal Tov to grandparents, Sema and the late Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Reich. z"/

Dr. Victoria Eliana Perez and Amir Ron on the birth of a son, Jacob Israel

Davina Kevelson and Elan Sasson on the birth of a daughter. Maya Rebecca

Mazal Tov to grandparents, Tineke and Steven Kevelson Lizzy and Sam Zakay on the birth of a son,

Jamie (Chaim Matityahu)

Mazal Tov to grandmother, Ann Crane

BAR/BAT MITZVAHS

Mazal Toy to parents. Sandra and Howard Hoffen Ziv Melendrez

Mazal Tov to parents, José and Rebecca Melendrez Zack (Itzak Yair) Rosen

Mazal Tov to parents, Kayla Cooper and Leonard Rosen

SPEEDY RECOVERY

Dr. Leonard Davidman, Aryeh Leib haLevi ben Machliah Geraldine Katz, Gershona Yehudit bat Rochel

Ruth Nelkin, Rochel bat Sarah

Angelo Verga, Malachi Yosef ben Miriam Louis Vynerib, Elazar HaCohen ben Malka

CONDOLENCES

James Garfinkel on the loss of his beloved father, Barry Garfinkel, z"I Dr. Richard Goldstein on the loss of his beloved father Albert Goldstein, z"I

Carol and Ron Gonsher on the tragic loss of their beloved son, Binyamin Yisroel, z"I

Shmuel (Steve) Goodman on the loss of his beloved father. Jimmy Goodman, z"I

LLOYD EPSTEIN, Z"L

Lloyd Epstein was the ultimate "Baal Teshuva." Of such a person, the Talmud says, "Even the most righteous cannot stand in his place." Lloyd, z"l, started in the LSS Beginners Service and wound up as the President of Lincoln Square Synagogue. More importantly, he devoted many hours of his days and years to Torah study. Condolences to his wife, Judith Weil and their children. He will be greatly missed by all.

#### DR. ILENE REEMAN, Z"L

Dr. Ilene Reeman z"l, who passed away suddenly, was a talented psychiatrist, who combined extraordinary psychiatric skills and great compassion, to benefit all those in need. She will be remembered as a committed Jew who was always eager to learn and grow more in her faith and practice. Condolences to her children, Noam and Tova. May her memory be a blessing to all.

Dr. Chava Kaplan on the loss of her beloved mother, Esther (Layla) Shamash, z"I

Family of Dr. Ilene Reeman Miller on her untimely passing (see box) Tom (Yaakov) Steinberg on the loss of his beloved mother, Geraldine Steinberg, z"I

Judith Weil on the loss of her beloved husband, Lloyd Epstein, z"I (see box)

(CONTINUED ON REVERSE)

# SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

	SOI ILDULL (	JI SLIVICES	
Mon Sept. 6, 2021 - 29th of Elul EREV ROSH HASHANA Selichot/Morning Services	Mincha	Beginners Services 9:30 AM Beginners Mishnayot 4:20 PM	Mincha
6:40 & 8:10 AM Light Candles. 7:03 PM Mincha/Maariv 7:10 PM	Mon Sept. 20, 2021 - 14th of Tishrei EREV SUKKOT Morning Services 7:00 & 7:50 AM	Talmud Class	Fri Nov. 5, 2021 - 1st of Kislev ROSH CHODESH Candlelighting 5:30 PM
Tues Sept. 7, 2021 - 1st of Tishrei ROSH HASHANA Main Sanctuary & Ballroom 8:00 AM	Candlelighting 6:39 PM Mincha/Maariv 6:45 PM Begin meal in Sukkah after 7:29 PM	Wed Oct. 6, 2021 - 30th of Tishrei ROSH CHODESH	Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat*  Sat Nov. 6, 2021 - 2nd of Kislev  Toldot
Beginners Service         9:00 AM           Tashlich         6:05 PM           Mincha         7:00 PM           Yorr Try Condelighting         often 8:04 PM	Tues Sept. 21, 2021 - 15th of Tishrei SUKKOT  Morning Services 7:45 & 9:00 AM	Morning Services	Morning Services
Yom Tov Candlelightingafter 8:01 PM Maariv8:02 PM Wed Sept. 8, 2021 - 2nd of Tishrei	Mincha	Morning Services7:30 AM	Beginners Mishnayot.         3:30 PM           Talmud Class.         4:15 PM           Mincha         5:15 PM           Malaria (Shabhat anda)         6:20 PM
ROSH HASHANA  Main Sanctuary & Ballroom 8:00 AM Beginners Service 9:00 AM	Wed Sept. 22, 2021 - 16th of Tishrei SUKKOT Morning Services 7:45 & 9:00 AM	Fri Oct. 8, 2021 - 2nd of Cheshvan Candlelighting 6:09 PM Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat *	Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 6:30 PM Daily Mincha & Maariv 4:35 PM Standard time: move clocks back
Mincha	Mincha	Sat Oct. 9, 2021 - 3rd of Cheshvan Noach Morning Services	Fri Nov. 12, 2021 - 8th of Kislev Candlelighting
TZOM GEDALIAH Fast Begins 5:18 AM Selichot/Morning Services	Thur Sept. 23, 2021 - 17th of Tishrei CHOL HAMOED SUKKOT Morning Services 6:45 & 7:30 AM		Sat Nov. 13, 2021 - 9th of Kislev Vayetzei Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:20 AM
6:20 & 7:15 AM Mincha & Maariv 6:50 PM Fast ends 7:47 PM	Mincha & Maariv	Talmud Class.       4:55       PM         Mincha.       5:55       PM         Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends.       7:08       PM	Beginners Services 9:30 AM Beginners Mishnayot 2:25 PM Talmud Class 3:10 PM
Fri Sept. 10, 2021 - 4th of Tishrei Selichot/Morning Services 6:30 & 7:15 AM	Morning Services 6:45 & 7:30 AM Candlelighting 6:32 PM Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 6:35 PM	Daily Mincha & Maariv 6:10 PM  Fri Oct. 15, 2021 - 9th of Cheshvan  Candlelighting 5:58 PM	Mincha
Candlelighting		Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat *  Sat Oct. 16, 2021 - 10th of Cheshvan  Lech Lecha	Fri Nov. 19, 2021- 15th of Kislev Candlelighting
SHABBAT SHUVA Va'yeilech Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM	Talmud Class.       5:30 PM         Mincha.       6:20 PM         Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends       7:31 PM	Morning Services	Sat Nov. 20, 2021 - 16th of Kislev Vayishlach
Beginners Services	Sun Sept. 26, 2021 - 20th of Tishrei CHOL HAMOED SUKKOT Morning Services 6:45 & 8:30 AM	Beginners Mishnayot. 4:00 PM Talmud Class. 4:45 PM Mincha. 5:45 PM	Morning Services
Shabbat Shuva Drasha 6:50 PM Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 7:55 PM Wed Sept. 15, 2021 - 9th of Tishrei	Mincha & Maariv 6:35 PM Mon Sept. 27, 2021 - 21st of Tishrei	Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 6:57 PM Daily Mincha & Maariv 6:00 PM	Beginners Mishnayot.         2:20 PM           Talmud Class.         3:05 PM           Minchas         4:05 PM           Malariu/Shabbat anda         5:17 PM
EREV YOM KIPPUR Selichot/Morning Services	Morning Services6:40, 7:00 & 8:00 AM Candlelighting 6:27 PM Mincha & Marriy	Fri Oct. 22, 2021 -16th of Cheshvan Candlelighting	Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 5:17 PM Daily Mincha & Maariv 4:25 PM Thur Nov. 25, 2021 - 22nd of Kislev THANKSGIVING DAY
Mincha 1:45, 3:00 & 4:30 PM Candlelighting 6:48 PM Fast begins 6:48 PM	Mincha & Maariv 6:30 PM  Tues Sept. 28, 2021 - 22nd of Tishrei  SHEMINI ATZERET	Vayera Morning Services	Morning Services
Kol Nidre 6:50 PM Thur Sept. 16, 2021 - 10th of Tishrei YOM KIPPUR	Morning Services 7:45 & 9:00 AM Mincha		Candlelighting 4:13 PM Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat *
Main Sanctuary & Ballroom 8:30 AM Beginners Service 9:00 AM Mincha Main Sanctuary 4:50 PM	Ma'ariv/Hakafot	Mincha	Sat Nov. 27, 2021 - 24th of Kislev SHABBAT MEVORCHIM Vayeshev
Neilah	Morning Services       .7:00 & 8:30 AM         Mincha       .6:30 PM         Maariv       .7:25 PM	Fri Oct. 29, 2021 - 23rd of Cheshvan	Morning Services
Fri Sept. 17, 2021 - 11th of Tishrei Candlelighting 6:44 PM Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 6:50 PM	Thur Sept. 30, 2021 - 24th of Tishrei           Morning Services	Sat Oct. 30, 2021 - 24th of Cheshvan	Beginners Mishnayot.         2:15 PM           Talmud Class.         3:00 PM           Mincha.         4:00 PM           Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends         5:13 PM
Sat Sept. 18, 2021 - 12th of Tishrei  Ha'Azinu  Morning Services	Fri Oct. 1, 2021 - 25th of Tishrei Candlelighting 6:21 PM Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat *	Chayei Sara	Daily Mincha & Maariv 5:02 PM  *As we went to print, there was uncertainty regarding the time for the Friday night
Beginners Services	Sat Oct. 2, 2021 - 26th of Tishrei SHABBAT MEVORCHIM Bereshith	Beginners Services	services. Please check the weekly times on LSS.org for up-to-date information, especially during the months of October and November.
Talmud Class5:30 PM		INNERS HIGH	

### (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

CONGRATULATIONS

Adam Herbst and Dr. Shanna Kowalsky-Herbst on receiving the Young Leadership Award at this year's Lincoln Square Synagogue Annual Dinner

#### TODAH RABBAH

Elaine Witty-Komito for sponsoring the All-night Shavuot Learning with Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald, in commemoration of the 3rd yahrtzeit of her husband, Larry Komito, Yehudah Leib ben Yaakov z"l and Stisha, shetichyeh

Huge thanks to Bill Greenbaum for brilliantly leading the Beginners Service during July and August, and to Hadassa Gerber Greenbaum for her invaluable assistance

### BEGINNERS HIGH HOLIDAY SERVICES

at the Lincoln Square Synagogue 180 Amsterdam Avenue (68th St.) Beit Midrash (2nd. Floor)

# ROSH HASHANA

Mon. night, Sept. 6 Tues. & Wed., Sept. 7 & 8

# YOM KIPPUR

Wed. night, Sept. 15 Thur., Sept. 16 Please visit lss.org/beginners

# SAVE THE DATES

Special Events
Sukkot Shopping:

Sukkot Shopping

Sun., Sept. 19, 7:00 PM

Intro To Bible Class on Zoom Begins

Tues., Oct. 5, 6:30 - 8:00 PM 8 Sessions