

ברשת

Vol. II No. 4

BERESHITH: "In the Beginning"

5749 Sivan/June 1989

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING

by Sarah Stambler

Last summer I went to visit my brother in Boston for the fourth of July weekend. I spent Shabbos with another family and joined my brother on Sunday to go on a hike with two of his children. This was the first time I'd split my visit this way. Since I'd become shomeret Shabbos it seemed like the best plan, but I'm sure it made my brother uncomfortable. My brother, a psychiatrist, invited a woman colleague and her daughter along on the hike.

It was a two hour drive to reach the mountain we were to climb. To entertain themselves, the kids sang songs in the car, while my brother talked shop with his fellow psychiatrist. I looked out the window at the scenery.

It was a long hike up the mountain. The three adults wore backpacks containing sandwiches, juice and snacks to get us through the day. The trail seemed easy at first. It was in the forest, shaded, and for a good part of the way, was on a minor incline. The kids were happy and the walk fascinated them. All the while, my brother and his friend continued to swap notes about hospitals and patients.

(cont. p. 2)

RECEIVING THE TORAH

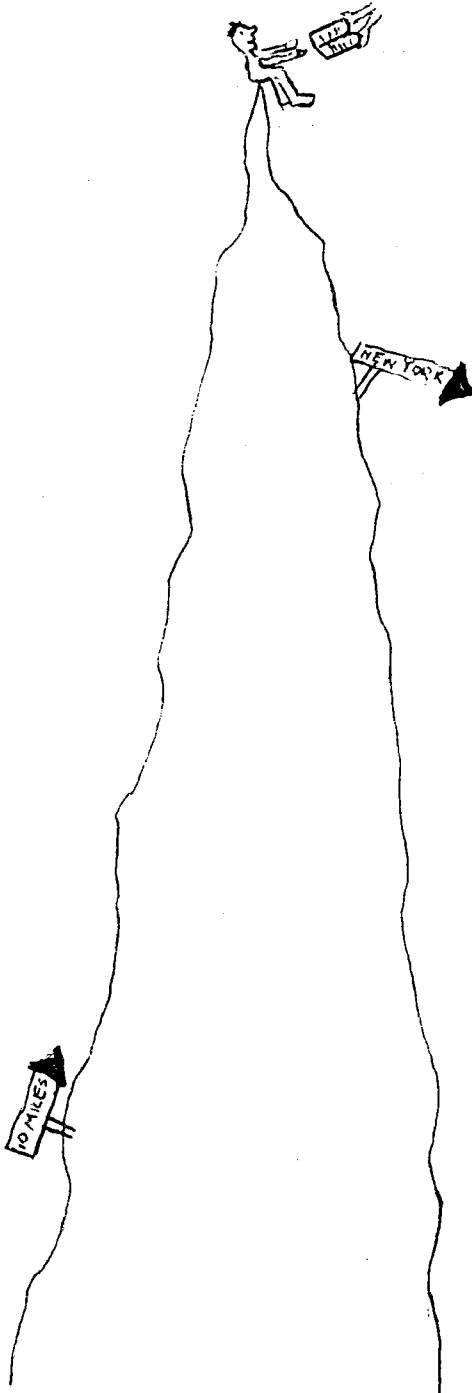
by Jonathan Feldman

The festival of Shavuot is of special significance for the person who has a newfound interest in learning about Judaism. It is the holiday which celebrates the moment when all Jews had their first exposure to the Torah as it was revealed by G-d. (There are, it should be noted, traditions which mention that the forefathers had already deduced the laws and concepts of the Torah on their own.)

The Torah in its original revelation, its 'first release,' was geared for an adult audience. Therefore if the prayerbook, the Torah and its commentaries and the books of the Oral Law seem intimidating and forbidding to someone who was not weaned on them, just remember that when G-d first presented them to the Jewish people it was to a group of adult beginners who were far more estranged from Judaism than we are. So obviously the curriculum is geared for us as well.

Now in all fairness, the generation of the exodus had forty years of study to master Torah, without having to worry about how to make a living,

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(cont. from p. 1) (RECEIVING THE TORAH)

without the distractions of urban living, and with a teacher like Moses to help them along. But the sages always emphasize that according to the effort and the sacrifice is the reward. So even with our busy schedules, the person who dedicates time and effort to Torah study is all the more commendable, and what he/she learns will be all the more valued. What we should learn from the experiences of our forefathers is that knowledge of the Torah can be acquired by anyone who wants it.

There is a debate in the Mishnah (Babylonian Talmud, Berachot: 12b) which some may be familiar with from the Passover Haggadah. It discusses whether the mitzvah of mentioning the going out of Egypt refers to the obligation to mention the Exodus both at nighttime as well as the day, which is the opinion of Ben Zoma, or whether it refers to the times of the Messiah, which is the opinion of the Sages. The Talmud, the commentary on the Mishnah, explains why the Rabbis apply that additional commandment to Messianic times. They believe that the final ingathering of Jews from all over the world will be so spectacular that the exodus from Egypt will pale in comparison and be forgotten. Ben Zoma defends his position by saying that it is true that the final redemption will overshadow the earlier one, however that does not mean that the latter will be forgotten. And indeed the going out of Egypt has eternal significance because this sequence of events which we commemorate from Passover to Shavuot was the formative moment of the Jewish people.

This is the point I would like to emphasize. The study of Torah, which is represented by the holiday of Shavuot, is an activity which binds us to the Jewish people. It binds us to the three thousand years of Jewish learning which were accomplished in much more trying circumstances than those we experience today, and most importantly, it binds us to the G-d of Abraham. The study of Torah makes us realize that we have a scholarly tradition of which we can be proud, which challenges us, and from which we can learn. As adults we can appreciate that our tradition is as sophisticated as any academic study in any aspect of human learning. But most important, it is through the study of the Torah that we learn to appreciate its Divine qualities, and can be brought to greater religious sensitivity and understanding.

So this year try to use the experience of Shavuot to join together with the Jewish people, by studying Torah. The holidays are more than a commemoration, they are a re-enactment of the original event. Time is not a continuous line, it is cyclical. This year, as we pass by the moment of the giving of the Torah, each one of us can experience our own personal acceptance of Torah which, G-d willing, will provide us with the motivation for a greater commitment to Torah study throughout the coming year, and which will in turn strengthen our link to the rest of the Jewish people.

Jonathan Feldman is the leader of the Beginners Service at Mount Sinai Jewish Center, New York, NY.

(cont. from p. 1) MOUNTAIN CLIMBING

After sometime, the trail changed. It grew steeper and rockier. The kids started complaining and quarreled with each other. My brother interrupted his talks with his colleague to get his children to cooperate, to share their candy, or keep together on the trail. I walked a lot of the way in silence, preoccupied in thought.

We had decided that we would eat lunch at the top. But when you're hiking like that, your appetite develops more rapidly.

"Can we eat lunch yet, Dad?" my nephew kept asking.

The trail got much steeper, and I had to watch every step I took. At times I felt like mountain goat as I grabbed onto rocks and hopped over little "gorges" in the mountainside. We were going higher and higher. The view was beautiful, but as I maneuvered and calculated my every step, I had little time to look at it. The hiking became tedious, having to look down at my feet and find places for my hands to grab on. But the technique worked. We were getting higher and higher, closer to the mountain top.



The kids couldn't hold out any longer. My brother led us to a flat rock where we could all sit down, look out at the valley, and have our lunch. The kids loved looking down at the cars on the road below. "They look like ants from here, Dad," my nephew said, as he munched on his sandwich.

There was a peace we shared at the top of the mountain, a quiet that we could not find on the trail, as we rested and looked all around us.

As I sat there eating, I thought about the crazy journey we were on together. Climbing the mountain was a grind. Why did we bother? For the view? Who knows!

(cont. p. 4)

A SUMMER IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE

The summer months are often the "sweetest" months for Torah learning. By enrolling in an intensive summer program, a beginner can often make phenomenal progress in learning, greatly eclipsing what could be learnt in limited evening study. The following summer program listing was compiled by the "Taskforce on Effective Programming" of the Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals.

ASCENT INSTITUTE

P.O. Box 296
Safed, Israel
06-971-407
or Horowitz
1426 President Street
Brooklyn, NY 11225

Daily - walking tours of Safed, lectures, and discussions
Weekly - day hikes and 2 1/2 hiking seminars
Shabbat - seminars and meals
Beginners through advanced. Youth hostels available.

AISH HATORAH-THE JERUSALEM FELLOWSHIPS

Rabbi Yitzchak Cooperamith
1220 Broadway, #610
New York, NY 10001
(212) 643-8800
or Rabbi Shalom Schwartz
296A Wilson Avenue
Downsview, Ontario M3H 1S8
(416) 636-7866

FOR MEN:
FOR WOMEN:
6 weeks field/study in Israel. Ages 18 and over.
Seminars, workshops on Judaism and Israel.

BEIS CHANA INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN

Rabbi Manis Friedman
15 Montclair Court
S. Paul, MN 55116
(612) 698-3858

Relaxed and comfortable atmosphere for women to discover the essence of Judaism with world renowned lecturer, Rabbi Manis Friedman. Classes include Chassidic Philosophy, Bible, Prophets, Jewish Law, and more.
June 29 - August 28

DRISHA INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

Rabbi David Silber, Director
122 West 78th Street
New York, NY 10023
(212) 595-0307

FOR WOMEN:
Summer Institute - June 26-August 3
Monday-Thursday, 9:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M.
For women of college age or older. Intensive textual study. Full day program in New York City. Courses in Bible, Talmud, Codes and Philosophy.

Summer High School Program - June 26-July 28
Monday-Thursday, 9:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M., Friday 9:00 A.M.-2:00 P.M.
For high school women, intensive textual study.

ISRALIGHT

Rabbi David Aaron, Director
3 Ararat Street, Old City, Jerusalem, Israel 97601
(02) 285-785
or 175 East Olive Suite 206
Burbank, CA 91502
(818) 848-4336

FOR MEN AND WOMEN:
Six weeks in the Old City of Jerusalem, Tours and Jewish Studies. Starts July 2, August 28.

IVY LEAGUE TORAH STUDY PROGRAM

Ruth Shatkin
824 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, NY 11213
(718) 735-0248 or 1-800-33-NCFJE

FOR MEN:
FOR WOMEN:
Offering college students the opportunity to study Torah in the Catskill Mountains. The fellowship is for all levels of learning in Bible, Jewish Law, Jewish Philosophy, Electives, Tutorials, etc. The fellowship includes room and board plus \$1,200 to students who complete the program.
June 19-July 30.

JEWISH LEARNING EXCHANGE

Rabbi Pinchas Kananet
39 Broadway #3004
New York, NY 10006
(212) 785-1550 (NY and Canada)
(800) 431-2272 (Outside NY State)

FOR MEN:
Ages 18-26. June 14-August 18
Yeshiva learning and touring based at Ohr Somayach Yeshiva

JEWISH LEARNING NETWORK OF MICHIGAN

Rabbi Avraham Jacobovitz, Director
15221 West Ten Mile Road, Oak Park, MI 48237
(313) 967-0888

FOR MEN:
Ages 19-28, July 12-August 1 at Moodus, Connecticut
Learning, recreation, touring.
FOR WOMEN:
Ages 19-28, June 20-July 3 at Moodus, Connecticut

JEWISH RENAISSANCE CENTER

Mrs. Leah Kohn, Rabbi Yitzchok Kirzner, Directors
210 West 91st Street
New York, NY 10024
(212) 580-9668

FOR WOMEN:
Day and night programs.
June 26-August 28
Summer Retreat - June 29-July 8. Based in the Monsey Campus. Full range of courses.

FOR MEN AND WOMEN:
Tuesday and Thursday evenings
June 26-August 24

KOL YAAKOV YESHIVA
Rabbi David Charlop, Coordinator
29 West Maple Avenue
Monsey, NY 10952
(914) 425-3871, (914) 425-2863

FOR MEN:
Full day Yeshiva learning for beginners through advanced levels. Individual programs arranged.

LINCOLN SQUARE SUMMER TORAH INSTITUTES

Rabbi Kenneth Brander, Director
Lincoln Square Synagogue
200 Amsterdam Avenue
New York, NY 10023
(212) 874-6105

FOR MEN AND WOMEN:
6 weeks, evening courses.
Beginner, intermediate-advanced levels.
Chavrusah Program.
Starts May 22.

LVNOT U'LEHIBANOT:

The Tzfat Program
515 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10022
(212) 752-2390

FOR MEN AND WOMEN:
20-30 years old. Three month program of study and work in Tzfat. Sessions beginning in March, June and September.

MACHON ALTA WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Safed, Israel
Mrs. Rosenfeld
(718) 438-7074

Course of studies includes Chassidus, Jewish Law, Jewish Philosophy, Bible, Prophets, History for women on all levels.

MACHON MEIR INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH STUDIES

2 Harmeril Blvd.
Kiryat Moche, Jerusalem
02-525-997, 531-906

FOR MEN: Machon Meir
FOR WOMEN: Machon Ora
Complete yeshiva program with structured Hebrew Upan, includes dormitory, tours and college credits

NEVE YERUSHALAYIM COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

Patricia Papook, Executive Director
25 Broadway, #403
New York, NY 10004
(212) 422-1110

2 week Torah study mission to Neve Yerushalayim in Israel for professional women (leaves July 30)
8 week summer program, June 18-August 20.

OHR HATORAH INSTITUTE OF JUDAIC STUDIES

Dov Hillel Klein
2014 Orrington

FOR MEN:
In the relaxed setting of suburban Illinois students will have the opportunity to examine the contemporary relevance of Torah study and Jewish observance. Beginning through advanced levels in Talmud, Bible, Hebrew, Jewish Mysticism, as well as Jewish business and medical ethics.
July 16 - August 6.

OHR SOMAYACH INSTITUTIONS

Jonathan Rielti, Coordinator
PO Box 334
Monsey, NY 10952-0334
(914) 425-1370

FOR MEN:
Introductory 1 week programs. July 2-9, July 30-August 6.
Full day Yeshiva learning for beginner through advanced levels.

OHR TORAH INSTITUTIONS

Ruchama King, Coordinator
155 East 65th Street #303
New York, NY 10022
(212) 935-8972

FOR WOMEN:

Michalet Bruria
June 22-July 21. Rechavia, Jerusalem.
Beginner through advanced levels. Classroom shiurim and chavruta learning.

FOR MEN:

Yeshivat Ha Mivtar (Brovender's)
June 25-August 10. Efrat, Gush Etzion.
Beginner through Advanced levels - yeshiva program.

PARDES INSTITUTE OF JEWISH STUDIES

American Parides Foundation
PO Box 58, Roseland, NJ 07068
(703) 527-9246

FOR MEN AND WOMEN:
Based in Jerusalem. Traditional learning for men and women of all ages.

RABBINICAL COLLEGE OF AMERICA

Rabbi Avrohom Lipkier
226 Sussex Avenue
P.O. Box 1998, Morristown, NJ 07962
(201) 267-3774

Enthusiastic Jewish studies on beautiful 15 acre country setting. Beginners through advanced levels. Classes in Talmud, Philosophy, Bible, and Code of Jewish Law.

TORAH INSTITUTE OF AMERICA

Moodus, Connecticut (203) 873-1431, (718) 258-2431
or Rabbi Gershon Grayman
3901 Labyrinth Road
Baltimore, MD 21215
(310) 764-7110

Full day learning in recreation retreat surrounding. Beginner through intermediate levels.

FOR WOMEN:

June 20-July 3

FOR MEN:

July 12-August 1, July 26-August 1, August 14-28

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE FOR TORAH STUDY

17 Ben Yefuneh Street
Baka, Jerusalem 93623
02-717745, 288127
or Alarah Ross, Summer Coordinator
(718) 692-0615

Classes in Chumash, Talmud, Nach, Jewish philosophy. Knowledge of Hebrew advisable, since texts are studied in the original. Classes, chevruva, study tours.
July 31-August 16.

YESHIVA HADAR HATORAH

824 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, NY 11213-9985
(718) 735-0250

Summer Yeshiva in the Catskill Mountains. Talmud, Code of Jewish Law, Chassidic philosophy, Hebrew language, prayer skills. Beginning and intermediate levels.
July 28-August 11, August 11-25

YESHIVA TOMCHEI TMIMIM FOR BEGINNERS

Rabbi S. Z. Gafni or Rabbi Tuvia Bolton
Kfar Chabad, Israel
Israel: 03-960-6826 or 960-6856
USA: 718-463-3822

Intensive study of a variety of Jewish subjects in Kfar Chabad, Israel.

YESHIVAT TORAT CHAIM

Shaulson 8/2
Har Not, Jerusalem
Israel 95400
02-635-426 or 531-914
or USA Office
1651 President Street
Brooklyn, NY 11213
(718) 774-2638

FOR MEN:

Classes in Talmud, Code of Jewish Law, Bible, Prophets, Rambam, Upan and Chassidic Philosophy.
Beginner through advanced levels.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY OF LOS ANGELES

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein, Director
Jewish Studies Institute
9750 West Pico Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90035-4792
(213) 653-4478, x264

FOR MEN:

Three weeks: August 14 - Sept. 1
Daily 9 A.M.-1 P.M. Yeshiva program includes optional afternoon classes and a full beginner's program.

FOR MEN & WOMEN:

June 20-September 1. Includes Day & evening classes and chavruta programs, as well as adult education evening outreach classes.

(cont. from p. 2) MOUNTAIN CLIMBING

Then I suddenly realized how climbing the mountain was similar to my return to Judaism and observance. On this mountain, if I did not watch my every step, I would fall and hurt myself. It took a great deal of energy and determination to keep going, plus an abundance of patience, and, of course, a tolerance for discomfort.

I thought of how so many of the details of Jewish observance seemed trivial, even irksome. However, if I didn't pay attention to the details I would be unable to keep Shabbos properly or maintain my kosher kitchen. In the beginning of my journey to observance, I called these details *shticklach* (little pieces, odds and ends), like leaving my keys with the doorman on Shabbos so I didn't have to carry them, or separating my meat and milk dishes. But these *shticklach* made the difference, just like each step I took to ascend the mountain, one step leading to another. And just as I had become so engrossed with my footing that I had no time for the

view, my struggles with the details of mitzvah observance didn't always allow me to see the higher level which I had attained.

As I looked over the valley, I saw the last three years of my life pass before me -- all the transitions and difficulties I went through to become more observant. I was on a "spiritual hike." And on the top of my "spiritual" mountain I found an appreciation of Shabbos, a real place to go to every week, where I could sit back and look at the valley of my life in peace and tranquillity.

Only now did I really realize that without every little step, I couldn't have reached the top.

Sarah Stambler is the President of TechProse, an electronic marketing and publishing company, and a graduate of the Beginners Service of Lincoln Square Synagogue.

Cartoons and Calligraphy by Lorne Opler
(212) 932-2687



Bereshith: "In the Beginning" is edited under the direction of Beryl Levenson of the National Jewish Outreach Program, Inc. Special Beginners Services are conducted at synagogues throughout the United States to introduce those with limited backgrounds to the beauty of the traditional Hebrew service. For more information regarding the Beginners Service closest to your home, to establish a local Beginners Service, or to learn more about programs of the NJOP, please write or call: 485 Fifth Avenue, Suite 212, New York, NY 10017, (212) 986-7450.

Readers: This is your newsletter, and we'd like to hear from you. Article contributions are always welcome.



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DATED MATTER

A GUIDE TO THE VEXED

by Mark Ellman

I miss pepperoni, sure. And Friday night discos were a hoot. But most of all, I miss the gossip. Not the lightweight dish-dirt banter--I mean the primal, soulful, warm-in-the-tummy, profound variety.

Well, those days are gone forever. And while I mourn their passing, even torture myself recalling all the missed opportunities to shred a reputation while I still had the chance, we humans have a remarkable capacity to adapt. And so, being only that, I have developed a system to survive this moral straitjacket we call Torah. I call my system--Well, actually I'm withholding the name until the copyright papers come through. But here, as a sampling, are guidelines guaranteed to secure your orchestra seat in the World To Come with minimal upset to your evil impulse:

NEVER TRASH ANYONE DIRECTLY

Question: What do you think of Rabbi Cornfarb?

Answer: ...His secretary's a doll! Wonderful woman. Types, takes shorthand--Can't say enough about her.

CHOOSE YOUR FREUDIAN SLIPS WISELY.

Question: What do you really think of Rabbi Cornfarb?

Answer: I really couldn't say...That reminds me--on the way home I have to stop and pick up a horse's rear--I mean a quart of milk.

COMPLIMENT AS OFTEN AS NECESSARY

"Let me tell you something about Rabbi Hershel Cornfarb--He's the best dressed gonif you'd ever hope to meet."

IN MOMENTS OF WEAKNESS, TURN TO A FRIEND FOR HELP

"How was his sermon?"
"Unbelievable."
"Yeah? How so?"
"Really unbelievable."
"How do you mean?"

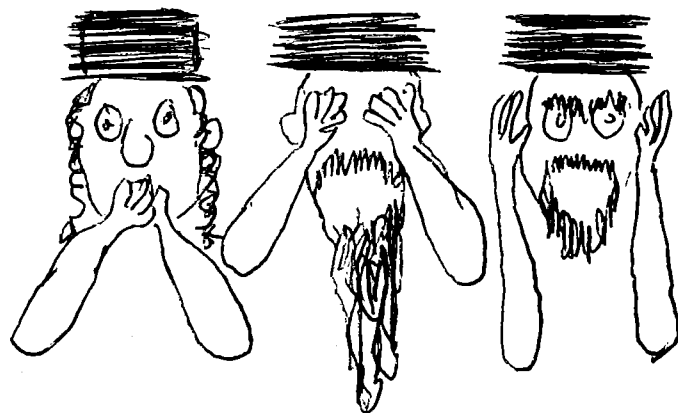
"I mean really unbelievable. I mean, I couldn't believe it!"

Good Friend: "That bad, huh?"
"Unbelievable!"

DON'T DISCUSS PERSONAL SHORTCOMINGS--UNLESS THEY'RE PERSONAL

"We broke up, but it was only due to my physical and emotional inadequacy. I am unable to relate physically or emotionally to pinhead twerps."

Question: What's that got to do with Hirsh Cornfarb?



SUBLIMATE THE URGE TO CONDEMN WITH ACTS OF KINDNESS

"I'm looking for a gift for my mother, something in hardback..Maybe self help..I don't know..something like--How To Improve Your Entire Twisted Makeup, You Selfish, Vacuous Cow?"

"Tell me, your mother wouldn't by chance be Rabbi Cornfarb?"

Rabbi Hershel Cornfarb is a purely fictional character. He is based entirely on the real life Rabbi Ignatz Fogeltraub of Rockport, IL.

Mark Ellman is a frequent contributor to the National Enquirer. His autobiographical best-seller Some of My Family's Personal Problems was recently awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Slander and will be televised this fall on the Hallmark Hall of Defame.