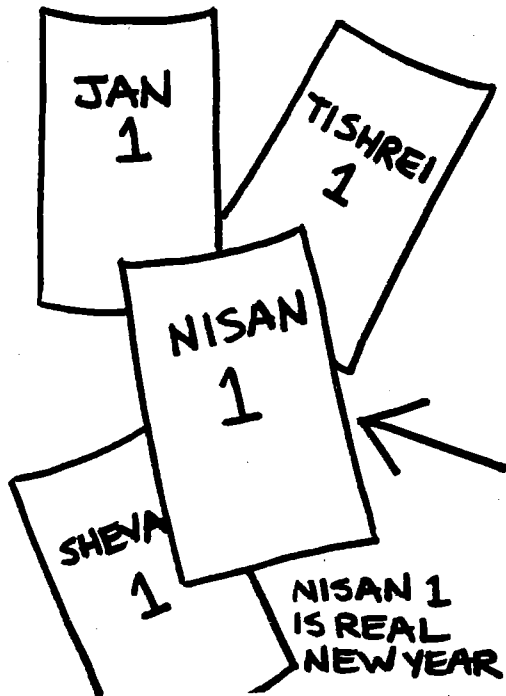


בראשית

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BERESHITH "IN THE BEGINNING"

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BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY -- BUT WHEN?

by Steve C. Goodman

I had been feeling uncharacteristically fatigued. Probably not getting enough sleep, I thought. When it persisted, I figured I'd play it safe and see a doctor. The doctor ordered some tests. No big deal. Hardly alarming.

Several days later, and two days before our family was to leave to spend Pesach in Florida, I received a call during dinner. It was the doctor. He suggested I call off my trip. A biopsy was needed -- immediately!

Somehow, Sharon, my wife, and I, managed not to become preoccupied with fear of the unknown. The next day she and some friends koshered our home for Pesach, while I had the surgery. The following night we celebrated at our Passover Seder.

(cont. p. 2)

PASSOVER, THE REAL JEWISH NEW YEAR

by Rabbi Moshe Frank

We have always known Rosh Hashana as the Jewish New Year. But, is Rosh Hashana, the birthday of the world, actually, the *Jewish* New Year? There is no question that certain observances on Rosh Hashana are strictly Jewish in nature, such as Shofar blowing and *Tashlich*; however, the universality of the Rosh Hashana days, as expressed in our liturgy, seems to indicate that Rosh Hashana is not the *Jewish* New Year. It is true that only Jews recognize these days as High Holidays, and come to the synagogue to pray to G-d for forgiveness. However, in reality, the days of Rosh Hashana are days on which the *entire* world stands in judgement before G-d Almighty -- not only the Jewish nation.

If so, then what is the real Jewish New Year? The Torah tells us (Exodus 12:2) "*This month [Nisan] is for you the first month.*" Yes, Nisan, the month in which Passover is observed, is the first month of the Jewish calendar. And Tishrei, the month in which Rosh Hashana is observed, is referred to by the Torah as the seventh month, not the first, as we would have thought.

(cont. p.4)

SECOND ANNIVERSARY KEDUSHA WALTZ

by Moshe Sorscher

We're celebrating the second anniversary
Of our minyan and the outreach program,
This is so unique in the history,
Of Young Israel of Flatbush, it's a real grand slam!

It started just over two years ago,
With a service held on Friday eve,
It expanded without very much ado
Into a fabulous program, would you believe!

At this time, let me tell you about
Our program and what we are trying to do,
I'll start with the minyan, our favorite, no doubt
And then I'll get into the other stuff too.

(cont. p. 3)

BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY (cont. from p. 1)

It took four days and nights to get the biopsy results.

On the day of our seventh wedding anniversary, in my thirty-sixth year, I was informed I had Hodgkin's disease, a cancer of the lymph system.

Eight years earlier, I was leading a life which could only be described as charmed.

I had finally met my "beshert," the woman whom G-d had intended for me. Jewish lore states that finding one's "beshert" is a miracle equivalent to the parting of the Red Sea. No argument here.

The unifying theme of our marriage was and is our commitment to Judaism. Neither of us were raised in a religious home, but we had both come to believe that we were part of a people with a mission, a mission defined through the 613 Commandments of the Torah. The first of these "mitzvot" is: "Be fruitful and multiply."

Whether it was this knowledge or something more intuitive, after our first year of marriage it seemed only natural to begin raising a family.

Money was not a concern. The eighties were bestowing its bounty upon us. I owned ten stores when Sharon and I met, twenty when our first child Rachael was born, twenty-five a year-and-half later when we were blessed with our second, Akivah, and a year after that, the number was up to forty (stores, not children).



My dream of 100+ stores and centi-millionairehood seemed all but inevitable. But as the boom days of the eighties came to a close, so, due to adverse conditions, did several of my stores. Competition had grown overwhelming, and the strategy that had served our family business for twenty-five years was no longer viable. My business dreams, net worth, and to great extent my own self worth came crashing down around me.

Thank G-d I was anchored in something beyond my career. Four years earlier I had become a serious Jew, observing Shabbat, kashrut and family purity. I was learning Torah on a regular basis, and was even President of a wonderful synagogue.

But ultimately the most fulfilling aspect came as a result of having learned the first mitzvah.

On September 23, 1990, after a two year, ultimately futile, struggle to hold together my business, our third child, Aryeh David, was born.

And there I was, one year later, sitting with Sharon in the clinic having just heard the word cancer. The doctor put his hand on my leg, a gesture of compassion, looked at both of us and asked "Do you have children?" "Yes," we said, "three of them, and one on the way." The doctor seemed relieved. "Why?" "Because chemotherapy can destroy sperm production. It will likely cause you to be infertile."

Shalom Yitzchak was born this past November 1st. Sharon and I had chosen to attempt to have this fourth child, despite our adverse financial circumstances, because we believed in G-d.

Unexpectedly -- and miraculously -- my current financial position is as strong as ever. Furthermore, thanks to G-d and my doctors, the cancer seems to have been licked. My life is back on track, just as it was. Except, of course, that I may not be able to have more children. Now, every time I hug Aryeh's precious body, I thank G-d who commanded us to be "fruitful and multiply," even when business is off. And when I see our gorgeous new boy, Shalom, I think of what it meant for us to do G-d's will over our own.

I will always be grateful that I learned in time to trust in G-d, and resist the temptation to overestimate my ability to plan the future.

Be fruitful and multiply. When? Now!

Dedicated to my close friends who have unfailingly been with me; the neatest wife and family ever granted anyone; and Rabbi Bertram of Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem who challenged me to put these thoughts in writing. I love you all.

Steve Goodman is a businessman living in St. Louis, Missouri. He and his wife Sharon are graduates of the Lincoln Square Synagogue Beginners Service.

We meet each and every Saturday
To the Lord up above, we sing and we pray
With wonderful people, who care for each other
Who always take pleasure in helping one another.

We start every Shabbat at ten,
Well, sometimes we're a bit late, now and then
For *Brachot*, *Yishtabach* and *Barchu* we rise
And then comes the *Sbma*, when we cover our eyes.

Softly we daven the *Shmoneh Esray*
Feet together and we don't even speak
Three steps backwards and forward, we bow and we sway
And then learn about, the Torah portion of the week.

Just before *Mussaf*, it's been our custom
To say a prayer for Israel and one for the sick
The *Amida*, *Kedushah*, *Aleinu*, *Adon Olam*
Then off to the kiddush, "hurry up and be quick!"

Our other activities, we will not ignore,
The courses and workshops, high quality galore,
Bible classes and Talmud and history,
Hebrew reading, the Psalms and Ethnicity.

Holiday workshops are very well attended.
We learn what's allowed and what's not recommended
We study the laws and observe by example
And to show what I mean, I'll give a little sample.

We had sessions on Tisha B'av and Shavuot,
Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, don't forget Sukkot!
We held the Lulav and Etrog and learned about the Succah
And had a great time celebrating Chanukah.

On Purim we all enjoyed lots of fun
Dressed up in costumes, some were so well done,
Made noise with the graggers, at Haman, we jeered,
And Mordechai our hero, and Queen Esther were cheered.

For Pesach we learned, that you cannot eat pasta,
Must drink the four cups, with *Maror* and *Matza*
We asked *Mah Nishtana* and read the *Haggadah*
And sang the *Dayenu* and also *Chad Gadyah*.

My message to you, if you've just only begun
You may find it hard, but it's a whole lotta fun!
Don't give up, hang in there and keep up the spirit
And soon you will find, that the sky is the limit.

And so many of you, who've been with us a while
Thanks for your patience, your grace and your smile
You don't get upset, you're really sweet and very nice
When I repeat all those things, that you've heard once or twice.

For Rabbi Auman and Barry our president,
Thanks for your kind words of encouragement,
The support and inspiration of your administration
Has given our congregation a great reputation.

I also want to thank our committee
They're friendly and helpful and gracious and witty
With Yechiel and Dennis, David, Gerry and Joel
Tziporah, Sarita, Elayne, Joyce, Judy and Yael.

Finally to you, our extended *mishpacha*,
We wish you all, both *mazal* and *bracha*,
May you continue to grow, in Torah and *Midot*,
And do lots of *chesed*, good deeds and *mitzvot*.

You're all so terrific and wonderful too,
May good health and wealth be yours and come true
Now let's sing together, cause this day's for you,
Happy second anniversary to you!

Moshe Sorscher is a pension consultant. He is the outreach coordinator at the Young Israel of Flatbush where he leads its Beginners Service.



THE REAL JEWISH NEW YEAR (cont. from p. 1)

What is it that makes Passover so special, that the month in which it falls is the first month of the Jewish Year?

The genesis of our independence took place on Passover. With the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, G-d told us that he wanted us as His nation -- His people. That fateful night, as we prepared to leave Egypt, we started on our way to becoming G-d's chosen people, making Passover a uniquely Jewish holiday.

The Exodus forged us into a people ready for "nationhood" -- a nation ready to accept G-d's Torah a mere seven weeks later. Once we received the Torah, the bond between us and G-d was solidified, never to be severed.

Since the Torah was given at Sinai we've become known as the People of the Book. Not because we read novels, newspapers and the Wall Street Journal, but because we are the *Am Ha Torah*, the nation which accepted the Torah to read it again and again, to constantly examine it, to grow old and grey over it and swerve not from it, for there is nothing more excellent than it (Ethics of the Fathers 5:25). The Exodus prepared us for our *raison d'etre*, to study the eternal truths of the Torah, and to live our lives according to the instructions in this manual of manuals.

On Rosh Hashana, the entire world recognizes G-d as the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Passover focuses on the special relationship between G-d and His nation, Israel. Let us try this Yom Tov to renew that relationship with our Creator. *Chag Sameach!*

Rabbi Moshe Frank is the rabbi of Congregation Ezrath Israel in Ellenville, NY and leads its Beginners program.

A POEM

by Lynn Tobin

G-d,
Are you calling me?
I can't see --
I've a blind spot in my
mind.

G-d --
Are you calling me?
I can't hear
Above the ring of my fear.

All I've got is a
human heart
All I've got is
imperfection
All I've got is the will
to start
Walking closer in
your direction

G-d --
Are you calling me?
Is it true?
Or just me calling you.

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בראשית

Bereshit: "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

