

THE 30 YEAR BEGINNER

Tony Gittelson

I grew up, as they say, in the Reform tradition. I had a Bar Mitzvah, I even studied for it, but in truth, I had no idea what I was doing: read here, say this, sit down. You're a Bar Mitzvah. Afterwards, we had a nice lunch where I met a bunch of distant relatives who I had never seen before, or since. (I come from a small family--with many distant cousins.)

Cut ahead 25 years: One morning, a friend of my sister's brings her to the Beginners Service at Lincoln Square Synagogue. My sister was even more of a "beginner" than I: she had no Jewish education and no real affiliation...but there was this young rabbi. He was funny, she said, charismatic and very engaging. He welcomed everyone. She was immediately enraptured. The following week she dragged my mother--then, a few weeks later, she brought me. Grudgingly.

I didn't particularly relish the idea of sitting in a windowless classroom listening to a rabbi, on a perfectly good Saturday morning when I could be sleeping. Still, I went...and this rabbi, he was *good*. He liked to mix it up, "Someone ask me a question!" He joked, he needed, he spread his infectious joy and he wouldn't allow you to hide in back, as I so desperately tried to do. He was, as my mother would say, a real *tumbler*. When it was over, I tried to sneak out--but this rabbi wouldn't hear of it. I was to join him--and ten other lucky "Chosen Ones"--for lunch at his endlessly accommodating Shabbat table, that his beautiful wife managed to "effortlessly" and miraculously create every week. How could I say no? Full of trepidation, I followed the rabbi home...

We ate, we debated, we laughed, we sang--and presiding over the tumult, was this merry rabbi--slightly red in the face, banging on the table, with what can only be called an elvish gleam in his eye. When lunch was over, I walked home, a bit dazed and confused. What the heck just happened? I was so disoriented, I was sure it was *Sunday*, that the whole weekend had passed. I recall walking up Broadway wondering why no newsstand had the Sunday New York Times. Around 86th Street, I realized it was still Saturday and I had just experienced my first real Shabbat. I needed a nap.

Then a strange thing happened. I went back the following week. And the week after that...and I kept going back. Having no idea why. But that rabbi, he sure was entertaining and no question was off-limits. Although I didn't have the temerity to ask my seriously stupid question: Is the bound Bible-thing a word-for-word translation of the scroll-thing? (This was well before the internet--and, yes, it is, *dummy!*) Little by little, I was learning why we say the prayers we do, and practice the sometimes alien and unfamiliar (for a Beginner) rituals we do. The rabbi seemed to enjoy even more the fact



that I was a little resistant. He loved a challenge.

Cut ahead a few more years: I was involved in a long-distance relationship with a great woman on the opposite coast--on again, off again. At the time, we were off. Neither of us could commit to a city or to each other. I am, again, sitting in the Beginners Service and the rabbi "Who Shall Go Nameless" (Spoiler Alert ahead) is doing his usual thing: needling the then-Baby Boomers, "Why aren't you getting *married?!?*" he thundered. "You're all waiting for thunderbolts and lightning! Signs from Heaven! Is this the Right One?" He paused for effect. "You build love over time. It grows and flourishes. It's the great leap of faith..."

Sitting in the back row I listened. This darn rabbi was making sense. Again.

The next day, I called my on-again-off-again girlfriend and suggested perhaps I should move to Los Angeles. It wasn't a moment too soon, as she was starting to see someone. A few weeks later, I was on a plane bound for LA.

Cut ahead a few more years (I move slowly): I called the rabbi to ask if he would mind coming to Los Angeles to marry us? He was only too happy to, but he sternly warned us, "When I marry people, they stay married."

Again he was right. Twenty-one years later, we're still married. He was also right: in long relationships love grows, evolves, burnishes and flourishes. It's a leap of faith. Amy and I now have two almost-grown daughters, 16 and 19, who are funny, sassy and brilliant. We are blessed beyond measure.

The rabbi, of course, is Ephraim Z. Buchwald. His beautiful wife is Aidel. They now have more grandchildren than I (or they?) can keep track of. The moral of this story is: If you walk into the Beginners Service, be prepared to stay. And if you're fortunate enough to have Rabbi Buchwald marry you, be prepared for it to last. And while I will always be a Beginner, even after 30 years, I am fortunate to have found a wonderful, vibrant Jewish community, in the wilds of LA, at Ikar. Come visit for Shabbat sometime.

Tony Gittelson was a member of the Lincoln Square Synagogue Beginners Service. He is a screenwriter, producer and assistant director who worked on such films as Searching for Bobby Fischer, Awakenings, Zelig, and Rabbi Buchwald's favorite, The Muppets Take Manhattan. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife and two daughters.

CONGRATULATIONS AND MAZAL TOV

ENGAGEMENTS

Sophie Lee Daitch and Rob Brumer
Mazal Tov to parents, Bobbie Sue Daitch and David Landau
Rivka Schwartz and Nati Gurwitz
Mazal Tov to parents, Suzanne and David Gurwitz
Jessica Fleisch and Brian Lissak
Mazal Tov to parents, Susan Sacks and Rina and Aviel Fleisch
Rebecca Steinfeld and Chananya Shapiro
Mazal Tov to parents, Fay and Neal Shapiro

MARRIAGES

Meira Goldberg and Uri Himelstein
Mazal Tov to parents, Menachem (Morty) Goldberg and the late, Shelley Cohen, z'l
Neta Lavie and Meir Carrol
Mazal Tov to parents, Marna and Dr. Fred Carrol

BIRTHS

Adina and Simon Brief on the birth of a son,
Joseph Parker (Yehudah)
Mazal Tov to grandmother, Carly Alterbaum Brief
Tracy and Mark Ellis on the birth of a daughter,
Esther Schaindel
Mazal Tov to grandparents, Judith and Dr. Joseph Eliashvili
Julia and Daniel Fleisch on the birth of a daughter,
Shalhevet Elisheva
Mazal Tov to grandparents, Marsha Goldstein and
Rina and Aviel Fleisch
Paloma and Eli Gefen on the birth of a son,
Manis Simcha -- "Manny"
Mazal Tov to grandmother, Ohra Hahn

Ariella and Rabbi Raffi Leicht on the birth of a daughter,
Galyah "Gali" Rachel
Mazal Tov to grandparents, Renee and Allan Leicht
Meira and Yaakov Ribner on the birth of a son,
Nadav Aryeh
Mazal Tov to grandparents,
Sema and Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Reich
Daniella and Mark Wigler on the birth of a daughter,
Miriam (Olivia) Naomi
Mazal Tov to grandparents, Freya and Richard Wigler
Saakhi (Taliah) Chabra and Nir Yosef
on the birth of a daughter, Liv

BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Abigail Esther Mosesson
Mazal Tov to parents, Regina Zimmerman and the late, Neil
Mosesson, z'l

SPEEDY RECOVERY

Geraldine Katz, *Gershona Yehudit bat Rochel*
Ruth Nelkin, *Rochel bat Sara*
Barbara Reader, *Baila bat Clarissa*
Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Reich,
Mordechai Menashe ben Henya Ruchama
Louis Vynereb, *Elazar HaCohen ben Malka*

CONDOLENCES

Steven Greene, on the loss of his mother, Edna Greene
Eli Salig, on the loss of his brother, Joram Salig

TODAH RABBAH

Tova and Assaf Alster, Miriam and Dr. Marvin Belsky, Lynda Clare and Stuart Vidockler, Emily and Seth Gerszberg and Dr. Anat Lebow and Dr. Michael Burnett for making possible the participation of Rabbi Mordechai Reich and family in the Lincoln Square Synagogue High Holiday Beginners Service;
Thanks also to the management of the Beacon Hotel
Elaine Witty-Komito and Dr. Sandra and Michael Hecht and their children, Susan Hecht and David Cohen, for sponsoring kiddush on the High Holidays
Ellen and Mordy Lipkis, for sponsoring the Break-Fast after the Yom Kippur Services
Haley Chapman, J.D. Estrill, Bryant Macaraeg, Helene Miller, Kirsten Stainer, and the Reich Family, for helping with the Beginners High Holidays set up
The Gibber Family for the High Holidays flowers at the Lincoln Square Synagogue Beginners Service and Chaviva Warner and Megan Messina for setting up the beautiful flowers

CONGRATULATIONS

Marc Berger, Yedidya Flaquer and Richard Seaman for participating in the LSS Bar Mitzvah Project

Adam Herbst for being honored as the Chatan Bereishith at LSS on Simchat Torah

TZETCHEM L'SHALOM

Nancy Jacobs and Leonard Cohen on making Aliyah

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sun Dec. 22, 2019 - 24th of Kislev
EREV CHANUKAH
 Mincha & Maariv 4:20 PM
 Light one candle after 5:04 PM

Mon Dec. 23, 2019 - 25th of Kislev
FIRST DAY OF CHANUKAH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Light 2 candles after 5:04 PM

Tues Dec. 24, 2019 - 26th of Kislev
SECOND DAY OF CHANUKAH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Light 3 candles after 5:05 PM

Wed Dec. 25, 2019 - 27th of Kislev
THIRD DAY OF CHANUKAH
LEGAL HOLIDAY
 Morning Services 7:10 & 8:30 AM
 Light 4 candles after 5:06 PM

Thu Dec. 26, 2019 - 28th of Kislev
FORTH DAY OF CHANUKAH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Light 5 candles after 5:06 PM

Fri Dec. 27, 2019 - 29th of Kislev FIFTH DAY OF CHANUKAH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Light 6 candles before/Candle Lighting 4:18 PM
 Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 4:20 PM

Sat Dec. 28, 2019 - 30th of Kislev SIXTH DAY OF CHANUKAH
ROSH CHODESH
Miketz
 Morning Services 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Beginners Service 9:15 PM
 Beginners Mishnayot 2:55 PM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 3:20 PM
 Mincha 4:05 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 5:19 PM
 Light 7 candles after 5:19 PM

Sun Dec. 29, 2019 - 1st of Tevet
SEVENTH DAY OF CHANUKAH
ROSH CHODESH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 8:30AM
 Mincha/Ma'ariv 4:25 PM
 Light 8 candles after 5:08 PM

Mon Dec. 30, 2019 - 2nd of Tevet
EIGHTH DAY OF CHANUKAH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Mincha/Ma'ariv 4:25 PM

Tues Dec. 31, 2019 - 3rd of Tevet
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Mincha/Ma'ariv 4:25 PM

Wed Jan. 1, 2020 - 4th of Tevet
LEGAL HOLIDAY
 Morning Services 7:10 & 8:30 AM
 Mincha 4:30 PM

Fri Jan. 3, 2020 - 6th of Tevet
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 4:23 PM
 Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 4:25 PM

Sat Jan. 4, 2020 - 7th of Tevet Vayigash
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Beginners Service 9:15 PM
 Beginners Mishnayot 2:55 PM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 3:25 PM
 Mincha 4:10 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 5:25 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 4:30 PM

Tues Jan. 7, 2020 - 10th of Tevet
A'SARAH B'TEVET
 Fast begins at 6:08 AM
 Morning Services 6:50 & 7:30 AM
 Mincha/Ma'ariv 4:20 PM
 Fast Ends 5:16 PM

Wed Jan. 8, 2020 - 11th of Tevet
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Mincha/Ma'ariv 4:35 PM

Fri Jan. 10, 2020 - 13th of Tevet
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 4:30 PM
 Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 4:35 PM

Sat Jan. 11, 2020 - 14th of Tevet
Vayechee
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Beginners Service 9:15 PM
 Beginners Mishnayot 3:00 PM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 3:30 PM
 Mincha 4:15 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 5:32 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 4:40 PM

Fri Jan. 17, 2020 - 20th of Tevet
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 4:38 PM
 Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 4:40 PM

Sat Jan. 18, 2020 - 21st of Tevet
Shemot
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Beginners Service 9:15 PM
 Beginners Mishnayot 3:10 PM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 3:40 PM
 Mincha 4:25 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 5:39 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 4:50 PM

Mon Jan. 20, 2020 - 23rd of Tevet
MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY
 Morning Services 7:00 & 8:30 AM

Fri Jan. 24, 2020 - 27th of Tevet
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 4:46 PM
 Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 4:50 PM

Sat Jan. 25, 2020 - 28th of Tevet
Vaerah
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Beginners Service 9:15 PM
 Beginners Mishnayot 3:20 PM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 3:50 PM
 Mincha 4:35 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 5:48 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 4:55 PM

Mon Jan. 27, 2020 - 1st of Shevat
ROSH CHODESH
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:40 AM
 Mincha/Ma'ariv 4:55 PM

Fri Jan. 31, 2020 - 5th of Shevat
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 4:54 PM
 Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 5:00 PM

Sat Feb. 1, 2020 - 6th of Shevat
Bo
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Beginners Service 9:15 PM
 Beginners Mishnayot 3:25 PM
 Talmud & Bible Class 3:55 PM
 Mincha 4:40 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 5:56 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 5:05 PM

Fri Feb. 7, 2020 - 12th of Shevat
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 5:03 PM
 Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 5:05 PM

Sat Feb. 8, 2020 - 13th of Shevat
Beshalach
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Beginners Service 9:15 PM
 Beginners Mishnayot 3:35 PM
 Talmud & Bible Class 4:05 PM
 Mincha 4:50 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 6:05 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 5:15 PM

Mon Feb. 10, 2020 - 15th of Shevat
TU B'SHEVAT
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:50 AM

Fri Feb. 14, 2020 - 19th of Shevat
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 5:12 PM
 Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 5:15 PM

Sat Feb. 15, 2020 - 20th of Shevat
Yitro
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Beginners Service 9:15 PM
 Beginners Mishnayot 3:45 PM
 Talmud & Bible Class 4:15 PM
 Mincha 5:00 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 6:13 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 5:20 PM

Mon Feb. 17, 2020 - 22nd of Tevet
PRESIDENT'S DAY
 Morning Services 7:00 & 8:30 AM

Fri Feb. 21, 2020 - 26th of Shevat
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 5:20 PM
 Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 5:25 PM

Sat Feb. 22, 2020 - 27th of Shevat
Mishpatim
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Beginners Service 9:15 PM
 Beginners Mishnayot 3:50 PM
 Talmud & Bible Class 4:20 PM
 Mincha 5:05 PM

Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 6:22 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 5:30 PM

Tues Feb. 25, 2020 - 30th of Shevat
ROSH CHODESH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Mincha 5:30 PM

Wed Feb. 26, 2020 - 1st of Adar
ROSH CHODESH
 Morning Services 7:00 & 7:40 AM
 Mincha 5:30 PM

Fri Feb. 28, 2020 - 3rd of Adar
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 5:28 PM
 Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 5:30 PM
SHABBAT ACROSS AMERICA 6:45 PM

Sat Feb. 29, 2020 - 4th of Adar
Teruma
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Beginners Service 9:15 PM
 Beginners Mishnayot 3:30 PM
 Talmud & Bible Class 4:30 PM
 Mincha 5:15 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 6:30 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 5:40 PM

Fri Mar. 6, 2020 - 10th of Adar
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 5:36 PM
 Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 5:40 PM

Sat Mar. 7, 2020 - 11th of Adar
Tetzaveh - Parashat Zachor
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Beginners Service 9:15 PM
 Beginners Mishnayot 3:40 PM
 Talmud & Bible Class 4:40 PM
 Mincha 5:25 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 6:38 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 6:45 PM

Mon Mar. 9, 2020 - 13th of Adar
TA'ANIT ESTHER
 Fast Begins 6:04 AM
 Morning Services 6:50 & 7:30 AM
 Mincha 6:30 PM
 Ma'ariv 7:20 PM
 Fast Ends 7:29 PM
 Megilla Reading 7:29 & 9:15 PM

Tues Mar. 10, 2020 - 14th of Adar
PURIM
 Morning Services 6:30 & 7:30 AM
 Women's Megilla Reading 9:30 AM
 Additional Megilla Reading 1:00 PM
 Early Mincha 1:45 PM
 Mincha/Ma'ariv 6:45 PM

Wed Mar. 11, 2020 - 15th of Adar
SHUSHAN PURIM
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Mincha/Ma'ariv 6:50 PM

Fri Mar 13, 2020 - 17th of Adar
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 6:44 PM
 Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 6:50 PM

Sat Mar. 14, 2020 - 18th of Adar
Ki Tisa - Parashat Parah
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Beginners Service 9:15 PM
 Beginners Mishnayot 4:45 PM
 Lazar & Bible Classes 5:30 PM
 Mincha 6:30 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 7:45 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 6:55 PM

Fri Mar. 20, 2020 - 24th of Adar
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 6:51 PM
 Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 6:55 PM

Sat Mar. 21, 2020 - 25th of Adar
Vayakhel-Pekudei - Parashat Hachodesh
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Beginners Service 9:15 PM
 Beginners Mishnayot 4:55 PM
 Lazar & Bible Classes 5:40 PM
 Mincha 6:40 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 7:53 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 7:00 PM

Thur Mar. 26, 2020 - 1st of Nissan
ROSH CHODESH
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:40 AM
 Mincha/Ma'ariv 7:05 PM

Fri Mar. 27, 2020 - 2nd of Nissan
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM

Candle Lighting 6:59 PM
 Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 7:05 PM

Sat Mar. 28, 2020 - 3rd of Nissan
Vayikra
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Beginners Service 9:15 PM
 Beginners Mishnayot 5:00 PM
 Talmud & Bible Class 5:45 PM
 Mincha 6:45 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 8:00 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 7:10 PM

Fri Apr. 3, 2020 - 9th of Nissan
 Morning Services 7:10 & 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 7:06 PM
 Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat 7:10 PM

Sat Apr. 4, 2020 - 10th of Nissan
Tzav - Shabbat Hagadol
 Morning Services 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Beginners Service 9:15 PM
 Beginners Mishnayot 6:40 PM
 Shabbat Hagadol Drasha 7:05 PM
 Ma'ariv/Shabbat ends 8:08 PM
 Daily Mincha & Ma'ariv 7:15 PM

SAVE THE DATES

Beginners Chanukah Shabbaton
\$50, lunch only \$25
 Fri - Sat, Dec 20 - Dec 21

Beginners Chanukah Party
\$25 in advance, \$30 at the door
 Thurs, Dec 26, 7:00 PM

Beginners Shabbat Luncheons - \$25
 Saturdays, 12:30 PM, Jan 4, Feb 1, March 7

SHABBAT ACROSS AMERICA
 Fri, Feb 28

Beginners Shmooze
 Free
 Mon, March 2, 8:15 PM

Purim Party
\$25 in advance, \$30 at the door
 Mon, March 9, 8:35 PM

Model Seder
\$15 in advance, \$20 at the door
 Wed, April 1, 7:00 PM

Beginners Passover Shabbaton
\$50, lunch only \$25
 Fri - Sat, April 3 - 4