ONE MAN'S EXODUS

by Rick Bookstaber

The move from a barren homeland; life in a strange land; the exodus back from what had become the community for generations. It is the story of Passover. It is also the story of my journey from Judaism and my return.

My childhood was in a Reform Jewish home, complete with a "Hanukkah Bush" and absent any Jewish ritual. After my Bar Mitzvah I never returned to synagogue. Based on the scant training I received, Judaism seemed to be more a humanistic philosophy than a religion. Just as Jacob went from Canaan in the face of famine, so the stage was set for me to journey outside the Jewish community for religious fulfillment.

In my teenage years my parents divorced, my father died, and I moved with my mother to Las Vegas. My life was bereft of structure, so when two Mormon missionaries came to my door, I was easy pickings for a Church that believed in G-d as a literal father and that had a hierarchy that could serve as a surrogate family. My decision as a sixteen year old, set the path for my next thirty years. I attended a Mormon college, spent two years as a Mormon

missionary in Korea, married a Mormon girl and raised six Mormon children.

Over the course of time, I became moreasingly uneasy with the Mormon Church. I found its doctrines lacking in depth, and was uncomfortable with the unerring adherence to the statements of its leader. I also felt uncomfortable Jewish background, because my whether for cultural or genetic reasons, made it difficult for me to connect with many in this Christian Church.

Though I grew disenchanted, I found myself trapped. In raising children with the precepts of the Mormon Church I had a commitment to

follow that religion, since for me to reconsider would shake the foundations of their religious structure. attending a Mormon university and being active in this religion -- a particularly insular sect -- my friends over the years were also Mormon. This foreign land had become my community, and that of my children.

After over twenty years of marriage my wife and I divorced. This allowed me the reflection that I had, to that point, denied myself, and set the stage for my exodus from the Mormon Church and my return to Judaism. I met

ice, who was to become my wife. Through her I became reacquainted with my Jewishness. I told her that I wanted to meet with a Rabbi to discuss my predicament, and she embarked on an extensive search through her friends and professional contacts to find the right person.

Her search ended with my visit to Rabbi Buchwald at his Lincoln Square Synagogue office.

It would be easy to say "and the rest is history," but in my exodus there is also a time in the wilderness. The children of Israel spent forty years being transformed into a religious people before G-d brought them back to Changing a lifestyle toward observance is indeed difficult, although I hope in my case it takes less time than that! But learning Hebrew, studying, and, more critically, changing my perception of G-d and religion, does take work and time.

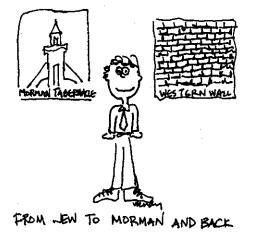
Rabbi Buchwald's taped Course on Basic Judaism drew an exciting outline of the components of living a Jewish life. Other tapes he provided helped me critically re-evaluate my Christian understanding of the Bible. His explanation of the Kosher laws during a Torah portion in the Beginners Service, gave me the understanding to commit to the first steps of Kashrut observance. Sharing my first Sabbath dinner with Rabbi Buchwald and his family was particularly moving for me. The Sabbath

dinners with the Buchwalds and at the synagogue, and the broader Sabbath experience during Shabbat Across America, have given me a feel for the Sabbath experience.

am now taking Rabbi Buchwald's Introduction to Bible, a course in Biblical Hebrew, and studying the Talmud once a week. Although I am at a rudimentary level of study, still, many times, I am awed by the depth of thought and understanding the teachers in these classes provide. It is like going to the country where a language is spoken, after years of studying the

language from an outmoded primer.

Without the benefit of a Jewish education, or a home that provided the basics of Jewish observance and ritual, it remains to be seen how far my journey goes. But, as Rabbi Buchwald told me in our first meeting, the critical point is not where you are on the ladder, but whether you are going up or down. Now I am at a point where I can learn what it means to be observant, know what it is I am not doing, and move step by step closer to the ideal.



Rick Bookstaber is a Managing Director and Global Risk Manager at Salomon Smith Barney. professor, he spent a year at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem as a Senior Fulbright Fellow.

CONGRATULATIONS AND MAZAL TOV

ENGAGEMENTS

Jacqueline Hoffman and Jeff Miller Susan Tucker and Gabbi Peretz

MARRIAGES

Judy Federbush and Rodney Greenwald Jacqueline Gold and Joel Finegold Denise Silver and Julian Leinhardt Dr. liene Reeman and Gary Miller Menucha Torkam and Mark Rothenstein

BIRTHS

Julie and Ron Aronowitz, on the birth of a girl, Tova Chaya Bruchie and Mitchell Barnett, on the birth of a girl, Shifra Eva and Arthur Bodek, on the birth of a boy,

Michael Herbert Alene and Steve Brodsky, on the birth of a boy, Maayan Chayn

Yehudis and Aryeh Brauner, on the birth of a girl, Avigayil Devorah

Rivka and Shia Cohen, on the birth of a girl, Batya. Mazal Tov to grandfather, Dr. Stuart Blaustein Valerie and Daniel Feder, on the birth of a girl,

Rebecca Claire Sandra and Alan Kipust, on the birth of a boy,

Sandra and Alan Kipust, on the birth of a boy, Isaac Benjamin Miriam and Akiva Lane, on the birth of a boy, Aharon Yoel Esther and Elliot Larner, on the birth of a boy, Yochanan Nissim Andrea and Sam Laniado, on the birth of a girl, Mollie Tess Nancy Jo Friedman and James Margolin, on the birth of a boy, Michael Harris (4/17/97)

Nancy Jo Friedman and James Margolin, on the birth of a boy, Michael Harris (4/17/97)
Felicia and Aaron Rubin, on the birth of a girl, Dahlia Carmit, Mazal Tov to grandparents Ohra and Dr. Manfred Hahn Jeany and Scott Schrier, on the birth of a girl, Zoe Bayla Gail and Doug Schiller, on the birth of a boy, Eitan Avraham
Elizabeth and Rabbi Jay Yaakov Schwartz, on the birth of

a girl, Ayala Sara Bracha Darcy and Mark Singer, on the birth of a boy, Akiva Elimelech

BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Naphtali Buchwald

Mazal Tov to parents Aidel and Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald Debra Walkenfeld

Mazal Tov to mother Dr. Jo Lang Walkenfeld israel Yaakov Weisman

Mazal Tov to parents Marsha and Jonathan Weisman and grandmother Simcha Liba Berger

CONDOLENCES

Sonia Beker, on the loss of her mother, Fanny Beker Harold Goldberg, on the loss of his mother, Rose Goldberg Andy Linder, on the loss of his mother, Joan Linder Ellin Pollachek on the loss of her father, Lester Pollachek The Family of Susan Rothenberg

Selwyn Singer, on the loss of her father, Harry Singer Leonard Shaykin on the loss of his mother, Rose Shaykin Devorah Thau, on the loss of her father, Dr. Barry Altman

TZEITCHEM L'SHALOM (To live and/or study in Israel)

Sharone Bashkin

REFUAH SH'LEIMAH (SPEEDY RECOVERY)

Rabbi Simcha Weinberg

THANK YOU

Bill Greenbaum, Daryl Gray, Lynn Doynow, Elizabeth Kirk, Stewart Ashkenazy, Rochelle Schumer, and the Purim Shpielers for their help with the Beginners Purim Bash Dr. Steven Eskin for his wonderful singing performance on Purim

CONGRATULATIONS

Aidel and Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald and Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, honored at the 10th anniversary dinner of the National Jewish Outreach Program Chava (Elissa) Eisner, honored as Alumna of the Year by the

Jewish Renaissance Center

Jewish Renaissance Center

Alexander Ney for his successful show of paintings and sculpture "New York Inspirations"

Gerald August for his acclaimed videotape production, "Smart, Successful and Orthodox."

Susan Rothenberg August 10, 1947- December 31, 1997

We are deeply bereaved by the sudden and untimely passing of Susan Rothenberg, a dear friend and brilliant computer expert. An outspoken and outstanding member of the Beginners Service, she became, over the years, a knowledgable, committed and passionate Jew, She was available to help everyone, anytime, anywhere and neither asked for, nor wanted anything in return. We will profoundly miss this totally giving human being

SAVE THE DATE

Beginners Shabbaton Fri, Sat April 3, 4

Model Seder

Monday April 6 - 7pm \$5 before April 1, \$10 at the door

Beginners Shabbat Luncheons - \$15 May 2, June 6

Beginners Schmooze-Mondays 8:15 pm - Free May 4

> All Night Shavuot Learn-in Sat May 30, 11:30-p.m.-6:45 am

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Fri April 19, 1998 - 14th of Nisan FAST OF FIRST BORN Moming services 7:10 & 7:50 AM Latest time to eat Chametz 10:23 AM Latest time to burn Chametz 11:40 AM Candle Lighting 7:12 PM Mincha 7:15 PM Begin Seder after 30:10 PM	Sat April 25, 1998 - Daf Yomi Morning services Talmud & Bible classe Mincha Shabbat Ends Daily Mincha & Maariv
Sat April 11, 1998 - 15th of Nisan 8:45 AM Moming services 6:20 PM Daf Yomi 6:20 PM Mincha 7:05 PM Kindle Yom Tov candles after 8:12 PM Maariv 8:12 PM	Sun April 26, 1998 - Morning services Mon April 27, 1998 - Morning services
Sun April 12, 1998 - 16th of Nisan PESACH 8:45 AM Morning services 6:20 PM Daf Yomi 7:05 PM Mincha 7:05 PM Maarly 8:12 PM Yom Tov ends 6:12 PM	Wed April 29, 1998 Morning services Thu April 30, 1998 Morning services Fri May 1, 1998 -
Daily Mincha & Maariv 7:20 PM	Moming services Talmud & Bible class .
Wed April 15, 1998 - 19th of Nisan CHOL HAMOED PESACH Morning services 7:00 & 7:30 AM Thu April 16, 1998 - 20th of Nisan CHOL HAMOED PESACH Morning services 7:00 & 7:30 AM Candle Lighting 7:18 PM	Mincha
7:25 PM 7:25	Mincha
Kindle Shabbat candles before 7:19 PM	Mincha
Sat April 18, 1998 - 22nd of Nisan PESACH 8:00 & 8:45 AM Morning services 6:30 PM Daf Yorn 7:15 PM Minche 7:15 PM	Shabbat Ends
Morning services	Daily Mincha & Maariv Thu May 14, 1998

Sat April 25, 1998 - 29th of Nisan (Shmini)			
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