



A JEW FROM ALASKA: MY ROAD BACK



by Adam Ruskin

I am a 26 year old attorney, who was born and raised in Alaska, lived in Israel for four and a half years, and now live on Manhattan's Upper West Side. No, this isn't a singles ad! I just want to share a few autobiographical anecdotes about how I made the change from secular to traditional Judaism. Here's my story. I hope you find it interesting.

My parents moved to Alaska as young newlyweds in 1962. They were from the Midwest and I guess they were looking for adventure. Judaism was not a high priority for them or anyone else on the last frontier. There was a Temple in Anchorage but it didn't have a rabbi, and in any event, we hardly ever went. I do remember the Jewish Chaplain from Elmendorf Air Force Base though, and, as a child, associated Judaism with driving to Chapel #3 on the base for High Holiday services. I was Bar Mitzvahed in 1976 by Captain Israel Haber.

In September of that year my family moved to Israel. My three years in Jerusalem were eventful and influential upon me, but were not at all religious. I hardly ever thought of Judaism as relevant to my life. And, considering how Orthodox Jews so often avoided military service, I saw them as not worthy of respect.

When I was 16, we moved back to Alaska and my parents were divorced. My thoughts about religion did not change at that time, but I did begin to feel a bitterness towards liberal values. I felt that something was fundamentally wrong with the system in which I was raised, but didn't know exactly what. Today I blame secularism and moral relativism for the dissolution of both mine and half the families in America. But this was not so clear to me back then.

My real religious growth began at the University of Colorado School of Law in Boulder. After graduating from the University of Michigan, where I had not been Jewishly active, but felt secure knowing that those activities were there for me if I ever wanted them, I went back to Israel for a year. My experiences there, both working as an educational coordinator with religious Ethiopian Jews, and as a visiting student at

Hebrew University, gave me plenty to think about that first year in Boulder.

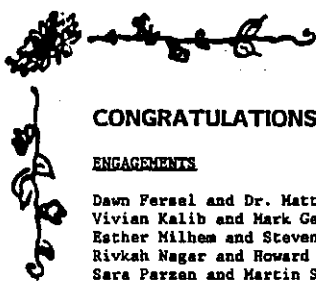
I had enthusiastically attended several Zionist leadership training seminars at Hebrew University and arrived in Boulder motivated to devote all my free time to pro-Israel activities. But Boulder, with its small number of affiliated Jews, its outdoors-oriented student body, and its flourishing New Age community, was no Ann Arbor, Michigan. My sense of alienation grew prodigiously.

I felt a void in my life. There were no role models, no like-minded peers, nothing. I had gone to Colorado because I thought my roots were in the West, but soon came to realize that my roots were much deeper. That first semester in law school I saw a brochure for a winter seminar at Ohr Somayach Yeshiva in Monsey, New York. The Yeshiva had a 1-800 number so I figured they had to have something relevant to say, and went.

Those 8 days in Monsey were revelatory! I met other young educated Jews who simply wanted more meaning out of life than secularism could offer. I was also deeply influenced by the families in the community. I liked their vibrancy. I thought their children were well socialized and bright. I liked the structure. I liked the way these people subordinated their lives to higher values. Nine months later, after plenty of reading and half a summer at their Yeshiva in Jerusalem, I decided to become Orthodox myself.

That was two and a half years ago. It's been a steady and gradual process since then. I didn't take on all the mitzvot at once, and still haven't taken them all on. I regret not having had the opportunity to study for an extended period in a yeshiva, but I am very pleased with my decision. To put it mildly, I feel that traditional Judaism has imbued my life with tremendous additional meaning and purpose. This has been a rewarding, satisfying (and deeply personal) experience, and I wholeheartedly recommend it for everyone!

Adam Ruskin is an attorney in New York with Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison.



CONGRATULATIONS AND MAZEL TOV

ENGAGEMENTS

Dawn Fersel and Dr. Matthew Eichner
 Vivian Kalib and Mark Gelberman
 Esther Milhem and Steven Korn
 Rivkah Nager and Howard London
 Sara Parzan and Martin Schandelson
 Jennifer Stiles and Joseph Morris

MARRIAGES

Susan Griggs and Joshua Paul

BIRTHS

Marjorie Munsterberg and Charles Gregor, on the birth of a girl, Rachel Miriam
 Karen and Alain Ickovics, on the birth of a boy, Eitan Shabtai
 Lisa and Dr. Seth Kaufman, on the birth of a girl, Talia
 Lisa and Jerry Marcus, on the birth of a boy, Betzael Yitzchok
 Karolyn Krall and Aaron Parker, on the birth of a girl, Sarah Elizabeth
 Vivian and David Relkin, on the birth of a boy, Yaakov Yosef
 Michele and Larry Sacharow, on the birth of a girl, Nina
 Pam and Binyamin Sherr, on the birth of a boy, Shmuel Alexander
 Sue-Ellen Eckstein and Howard Stotsky, on the birth of a girl, Miriam Tziporah
 Sherri and Scott Turkel, on the birth of a girl, Samara
 Naomi Ben-Attar and Larry Yablong, on the birth of a girl, Michal Elisheva



TZETITCHEN L'SHALOM to live and/or study in Israel

Marna Schwartz and Dr. Fred Carroll
 Carol and Joseph Gross
 Stacey Sokol
 Hillary Weiss

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 * **Beginners Shabbat Luncheons -\$10** *
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 * **May 5, June 4** *
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 * **Beginners Schmooze 8:15 PM** *
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 * **May 7** *
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 * **Beginners Shabbaton - \$25** *
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 * **April 6-7** *
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CONDOLENCES

Arielle Ben Simon Feit, on the loss of her father, Andre Ben Simon
 Eilean Bogas, on the loss of her father, Walter
 To the family of Dan Katz
 Ida Langsam, on the loss of her father, Sydney
 Myrna Lebov, on the loss of her mother, Anne Weinberg-Lebov
 Jeffrey Zuckerman, on the loss of his father, Sidney

CONGRATULATIONS

Tom Rose, upon the publication of his best seller: "Freeing the Whales: How the Media Created the World's Greatest Non Event"
 Tom Tirino, upon his piano recital at the Gillary Gallery
 David Ullendorf, upon the television premier of his film "Routed"

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Friday, March 23rd
 Kindle Shabbat Candles..... 5:53 p.m.
 Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat..... 6:05 p.m.

Saturday, March 24th (VAHAGHEIL/PEKUDE)
 Parshat Mochodesh
 Haskomah Miynan..... 7:40 a.m.
 Daf Yomi..... 8:00 a.m.
 Shabbat Morning Services..... 8:45 a.m.
 Talmud And Bible Classes..... 5:05 p.m.
 Mincha..... 5:50 p.m.
 Daily Mincha and Maariv..... 6:05 p.m.

Tuesday, March 27th Rosh Chodesh Nissan
 Daily Morning Services..... 7:00 & 7:40 a.m.

Friday, March 30th
 Kindle Shabbat Candles..... 6:00 p.m.
 Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat..... 6:10 p.m.

Saturday, March 31th (VAHAGRA)
 Shabbat Morning Services..... 8:45 a.m.
 Talmud and Bible Classes..... 5:15 p.m.
 Mincha..... 6:00 p.m.
 Daily Mincha and Maariv..... 6:15 p.m.

Friday, April 6th
 Kindle Shabbat Candles..... 6:08 p.m.
 Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat..... 6:20 p.m.

Saturday, April 7th
 Daf Yomi..... 8:00 a.m.
 Shabbat morning services..... 8:45 a.m.
 Mincha followed by Shabbat Hagadol Discourse..... 5:15 p.m.
 Daily Mincha and Maariv..... 7:20 p.m.
 see Time One Hour Later for daylight savings time

Sunday, April 8th
 Search for Chometz..... 8:00 p.m.

Monday, April 9th
 Morning services..... 8:45 & 7:45 a.m.
 The first born are invited to complete a Talmudic tractate after each service so that they may be able to eat on what would normally be a fast day for them.

The latest time to eat Chametz..... 10:23 a.m.
 The latest time to burn Chametz..... 11:40 a.m.

Kindle Yom Tov Candles..... 7:11 p.m.
 Mincha and Kabbalat Yom Tov..... 7:20 p.m.
 Followed by the First Community Seder..... 8:00 p.m.

Tuesday, April 10th
 Yom Tov Morning Services..... 8:45 a.m.
 Daf Yomi..... 6:15 p.m.
 Mincha..... 7:15 p.m.
 Kindle Yom Tov candles not before..... 8:12 p.m.
 Followed by the Second Community Seder..... 8:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 11
 Yom Tov Morning Services..... 8:45 a.m.
 Daf Yomi..... 6:15 p.m.
 Mincha..... 7:15 p.m.

Thursday April 12
 Chol Hamoad
 Morning Services..... 7:00 & 7:40 a.m.
 Mincha Maariv..... 7:25 p.m.

Friday, April 13
 Chol Hamoad
 Morning services..... 7 & 7:40 a.m.
 Kindle Shabbat Candles..... 7:15 p.m.
 Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat..... 7:25 p.m.

Saturday, April 14th
 Shabbat Chol Hamoad Passach
 Shabbat Morning services..... 8:00 & 8:45 a.m.
 Daf Yomi..... 6:15 p.m.
 Mincha..... 7:15 p.m.
 followed by Seudah Shlishheet

Sunday, April 15th
 Chol Hamoad Passach
 Morning Services..... 7:00 & 8:30 a.m.
 Kindle Yom Tov Candles..... 7:17 p.m.
 Mincha and Kabbalat Yom Tov..... 7:30 p.m.

Monday, April 16th
 Yom Tov Morning services..... 8:00 & 8:45 a.m.
 Daf Yomi..... 6:25 p.m.
 Mincha..... 7:25 p.m.
 Kindle Yom Tov Candles not before..... 8:18 p.m.

Tuesday, April 17th
 Yom Tov Morning services including Yizkor..... 8:00 & 8:45 a.m.
 Daf Yomi..... 6:15 p.m.
 Mincha followed by Seudah Shlishheet Neilat Hachag..... 7:15 p.m.

Friday, April 20th
 Kindle Shabbat Candles..... 7:22 p.m.
 Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat..... 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 21st (SHEMINI)
 Shabbat morning services..... 8:45 a.m.
 Daf Yomi given by Rabbi Berman at 5:50 p.m.
 followed by his Talmud class at 6:35 p.m.
 Talmud and Bible Classes..... 6:20 p.m.
 Mincha..... 7:20 p.m.
 Daily Mincha and Maariv..... 7:35 p.m.

Sunday, April 22nd Yom HaShoa

Wednesday, April 25th and Thursday, April 26
 Rosh Chodesh Iyar
 Morning services..... 7:00 & 7:40 a.m.

Friday, April 27th
 Kindle Shabbat Candles..... 7:30 p.m.
 Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat..... 7:40 p.m.

Saturday April 28th (TAHARA/NETZORA)
 Haskomah miynan..... 7:40 a.m.
 Shabbat Morning Services..... 8:45 a.m.
 Rabbi Berman's Daf Yomi class at 6:00 p.m.
 followed by his Talmud class at 6:45 p.m.
 Talmud and Bible Classes..... 6:30 p.m.
 Mincha..... 7:30 p.m.
 Daily Mincha and Maariv..... 7:45 p.m.

Yom HaZikaron Yom HaAtzmaut
 Sunday night April 29th and Monday April 30th
 Morning services..... 7:10 and 7:50 a.m.

Friday May 4th
 Kindle Shabbat Candles..... 7:37 p.m.
 Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat..... 7:50 p.m.

Saturday May 5th (ANARE/KEDOSHIM)
 Haskomah miynan..... 7:40 a.m.
 Shabbat morning services..... 8:45 a.m.
 Daf Yomi given by Rabbi Berman at 6:05 p.m.
 followed by his Talmud class at 6:50 p.m.

Talmud and Bible Classes..... 6:35 p.m.
 Mincha..... 7:35 p.m.
 Daily Mincha and Maariv..... 7:50 p.m.

Friday, May 11th
 Kindle Shabbat Candles..... 7:44 p.m.
 Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat..... 6:30 and 7:55 p.m.

Saturday May 12 (EMOR)
 Shabbat morning services..... 8:45 a.m.
 Daf Yomi given by Rabbi Berman at 6:15 p.m.
 followed by his Talmud class at 7 p.m.

Talmud and Bible Classes..... 6:45 p.m.
 Mincha..... 7:45 p.m.
 Daily Mincha and Maariv..... 7:55 p.m.

Sunday, May 13 Lag B'Omer
 Morning services..... 7:15 and 8:30 a.m.

Friday, May 18th
 Kindle Shabbat Candles..... 7:51 p.m.
 Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat..... 6:30 and 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 19th (BEHAR/BECHUKOTAI)
 Haskomah Miynan..... 7:40 a.m.
 Shabbat morning services..... 8:45 a.m.
 Daf Yomi given by Rabbi Berman at 6:20 p.m.
 followed by his Talmud class at 7:05 p.m.
 Talmud & Bible Classes..... 6:50 p.m.
 Mincha..... 7:50 p.m.
 Daily Mincha and Maariv..... 8:05 p.m.

Tuesday evening May 22nd and Wednesday, May 23rd Yom Yerushalayim
 Morning services..... 7:10 and 7:50 a.m.

Friday, May 25th
 Kindle Shabbat Candles..... 7:57 p.m.
 Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat..... 6:35 and 8:10 p.m.

Saturday, May 26th (BAMIDBAR)
 Shabbat morning services..... 8:45 a.m.
 Daf Yomi given by Rabbi Berman at 6:25 p.m.
 followed by his Talmud class at 7:10 p.m.
 Talmud & Bible classes..... 6:55 p.m.
 Mincha..... 7:55 p.m.
 Daily Mincha and Maariv..... 8:10 p.m.

Monday, May 28th Memorial Day
 Morning services..... 7:10 and 8:30 a.m.

Tuesday, May 29th
 Erev Shavuoth
 Kindle Yom Tov candles..... 8:00 p.m.
 Mincha and Kabbalat Yom tov..... 8:10 p.m.
 Midnight Bible Classes..... 11:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 30th
 Haskomah Miynan..... 4:45 a.m.
 Hain Miynan..... 8:45 a.m.
 Daf Yomi..... 7:05 p.m.
 Kindle Yom Tov candles not before..... 9:01 p.m.
 Mincha and Kabbalat Yom Tov..... 8:05 p.m.

Thursday, May 31st
 Yom Tov morning services including yizkor. 8:00 & 8:45 a.m.
 Daf Yomi..... 6:55 p.m.
 Mincha followed by Seudah Shlishheet
 Neilat Hachag..... 7:55 p.m.

Friday, June 1st
 Kindle Shabbat candles..... 8:03 p.m.
 Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat..... 6:40 & 8:15 p.m.