LIVING WITH CONFLICT

By Ellin Ronee Pollachek

It must be a decade now since I wrote my first piece for the ginners newsletter. It was a humorous piece, primarily because I'm good at humor--it was something about the Hasids resembling penguins. It was also presumptuous. Something else I'm good at. I presumed the Orthodox community would not be offended by my deprecating remarks about their attire and their smells. They weren't. I have come to realize that Jews, Orthodox Jews in particular, seem so willing to laugh at them/ourselves. Too willing. G-d forbid there should be a conflict.

There was only one person however, a Ba'al Teshuvah from the Main Minyan, who shared his disappointment with me about my article. While the piece read easily, he asked where was the conflict that I experienced in becoming observant. In a very real way, I didn't understand the question. From my vantage point, becoming observant didn't involve any conflict. Like much of my life, I had made my decision and lived it out. In a sense, becoming observant is like losing weight--it's easy to do; maintaining it is the problem.

It was Rabbi Mark Nenner's "Living in Conflict With Season's Greetings" which brought to mind the discussion I had with the other Ba'al Teshuvah. Holidays which are not our own, like food which is not our own, may rubricate any conflicts that have been lying

dormant, but they are never at the root of the conflict. They are simply exacerbated by an already existing conflict. Conflicts arise out of wanting two or more things which are incompatible. Like kugel and weight loss. Like suicide and Orthodoxy.

I wasn't aware of the fact that it was the Myrna I knew from the Beginners Service who had been assisted in suicide, until I read a ent issue of Jewish Week. Like most other new Yorkers, I saw the Daily News' photo of the bearded man who admitted to assisting his wife in a suicide. I read the headline but not the story. It even occurred to me how much the man being escorted by police resembled George. In retrospect, it was not because I couldn't imagine that the man from LSS was incapable of such an act; I have long since stopped trying to imagine what people are

capable of and what they're not. I may not have made the connection, because I simply didn't want to. It would have been too painful. Which it was, when I finally made the connection.

How it was that I connected this life-death crisis to the two people I now know as George and Myrna was in reading the headline which read something like "Convert Indicted in Assisted Suicide." It was the word "convert" which even before ever reading the story, took away any doubt about who the couple was. Like most other regular attendees of LSS, I knew Myrna's husband was a convert. When people whispered it, it was whispered with reverence. People thought George a tzaddik. Not only did he convert to Judaism, but he did so in order to validate a marriage to an invalid. Or so the tone implied. There was no loshon hara spoken--just the facts.

A different fact was conveyed in the Jewish Week headline, however. It implied that the person indicted was not really one of us. We Jews, who pray as a community, who use the plural pronoun rather than the singular pronoun, were let off the hook. "Convert" is singular, different. I can't imagine the paper running a headline that said "Jew Indicted in Assisted Suicide" or "Goy Indicted......" So, was the story about a convert, or was it about New York's first dictment for an assisted suicide?

How is it that words can communicate so much, and yet tell me so little? I wanted to know how painful was it for a man, who loved his wife more than his own freedom (because now he stands to lose it for 15 years), to come to make the decision he made. I wanted to

know how George feels, now that Myrna's gone. Did she beg him to help her, or did she simply ask once? Or not at all. Was it something agreed upon a long time ago. Why weren't we told how long they had been married before she fell ill. But what I want to know the most was, whether or not he held her hand as she died. I'll bet he did. Which brings me back to that very first essay I wrote for *Bereshith* and my discussion with my friend from the Main Minyan: conflict. I understand the halachic position, but I understand George and Myrna's as well.

Perhaps that is why so many people shy away from learning Torah. The more one knows, the more conflicts arise. It is inevitable. What I would like to know, not from *Jewish Week*, but from a rabbi who has studied these things, is would George's sin have been any the less if he were not observant or, better yet, if he were not Jewish? And what of Myrna? If she remained ignorant of the law, would she be less guilty of sin? Sort of like if someone serves you pork and they tell you it's kosher beef; I know that in that case the person who eats the pork is not guilty of having eaten traif--on a spiritual level anyway.

Years before I ever walked into the Beginner's Service a frum friend of mine (the only one I knew) invited me to spend Shabbos at

her house in Riverdale. Within a few hours after lighting candles, I began finding the rules of Shabbos so confining that I thought I would go insane. Saturday morning's walk to shul offered a reprieve, but then there was lunch.

We went to a rabbi friend of hers for lunch. The children, the noise, the young wife with the tich! (kerchief), all seemed out of an old Russian movie. I couldn't stand it, and had to leave. I had to go home to Manhattan. The rabbi at whose house we were having lunch, asked that I not leave. He said! wasn't supposed to take a bus on Saturday. I told him that his rules were not my rules and he told me! was wrong, that, in fact, we had the same rules--! was just unaware of them. The rabbi was Avi Weiss, and I have since come to understand what he meant when he said we had the same rules. But what I also understand is that taking the

But what I also understand is that taking the bus home that day presented me with no conflict. I could not ride a bus on Shabbos now with the same ease I did then.

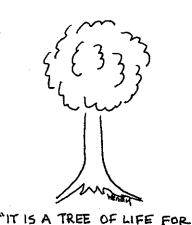
Perhaps by ordaining that we not eat from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, G-d was trying to save us from the kinds of conflict I now experience.

I stayed up much of the night after realizing it was the George I knew who had assisted a suicide and Myrna who died of it. I was, and still am, deeply saddened for both of them. The loss must be insurmountable for George, and for Myrna to have made such a request, her pain must have been far beyond a physical realm. I don't know if I could ever love anyone as much a George must have loved Myrna. I might have wanted her to stay with me out of sheer selfishness.

Although I have no doubt that the religious community must, by law, condemn the decision of the two, I am also sure that on a more private level, discussions and debates will continue to take place regarding the death. But then I imagine that the debates will be similar to the arguments which rabbis had with Hillel; one was free to argue, but Hillel always had the final word.

Instead of engaging in the debate, I would rather focus on George's generous smile and beautiful blue eyes which lit up whenever Myrna was in sight, and how lucky she was to have had him - even though he was a convert.

This article does not represent the viewpoint of Jewish Law or of the Bereshith newsletter. The opinions contained herein, are strictly those of the author.



THOSE WHO GRASP IT"



CONGRATULATIONS AND MAZAL TOV

ENGAGEMENTS

Judith Goldkrand and Barry Cheskin Elizabeth Fried and Seth Glass Susan Rende and Ely Greenhut Rabia Page and Oliver Mitchell Lois Friedman and Martin Roman Abby Pomerantz and David Rothschild Dr. Gloria Rapaport and Andrew Siegel Jill Alpert and Evan Steigerman Allison Spear and David Ullendorff



MARRIAGES

Annette Dulgov and Dr. David Araten Leslie Shalom and Nissim Berrebi Alene Bloom and Steven Brodsky Ofira Abayouf and Daniel Diker Sheryl Miller and Allen Kaye Sharon Meltz and Joseph Janovic Miryam Wohlgemuth and David Noll Debby Brenner and Rabbi Simcha Weinberg

BIRTHS
Shelley and Serge Ben Nathan, on the birth of a boy, Jason David

Helene and Ari Bousbib, on the birth of a boy, Otniel Wendy and Brandon Dunn, on the birth of a girl,

Sarah Sophie
Emily Turchin and Michael Flamenbaum, on the birth
of a girl, Esti Jewel
Sharon and Sinclair Haberman, on the birth of a girl,

auren Elaina

Mazal Tov to grandparents, Ricki and Jacob Haberman Esther and Elliot Larner, on the birth of a boy,

Yaakov Yosef David Jodi and Stephen Lerner, on the birth of a boy,

Samuel Abraham Malka and Michael Levinson, on the birth of a boy,

Rory and Rabbi David Mallin, on the birth of a boy, Meir Shalom

Adeena and Rabbi Marc Penner, on the birth of a boy, Mattisyahu Meir

Donna and Aron Perel, on the birth of a girl,

Chana Gila

Batya and Mayer Perline, on the birth of a girl, Chana Rivka

Elisheva and Yaakov Potesky, on the birth of a boy, Binyamin

Ariella Śofia, on the birth of a boy, Joel Ben-Ari Sheryl and Mark Schwartz, on the birth of a girl, Ŕebecca Anne

Robin and Paul Shainberg, on the birth of a boy, Jonah Louis Lisa and James Shenwick, on the birth of a boy,

Joshua Herschel Jan and Roger Wallach, on the birth of a boy, Matthew Jeremy

CONDOLENCES

Asher Rapp, on the loss of his father, Roger Rapp Judith Esther Manischewitz, on the loss of her

brother, William Manischewitz

Dana Hudes, on the lost of his father, Abraham Hudes

BAR/BAT MITZVAH
Daniel Chaim, son of Dr. Susan and Robert Chambre
Phillip Sherril, son of Michelle and Fred Sherrill
Ruth Sarah Comet, daughter of Michelle Karmazin Comet and Dr. Joel Comet Eliezer Lipa Cohen, son of Ellen and Chaim Cohen

TZEITCHEM L'SHALOM (To live and/or study in israel) Jane Halfond Jeff Kanrich

REFUAH SH'LEIMAH (SPEEDY RECOVERY) Rose Soko!

Frani Ruch

CONGRATULATIONS
Gittel (Warrenbrand) Bausk and Adina Goldfarb on being honored at the 25th Annviersary dinner of Neve Yerushalayim College

Dr. Susan and Robert Chambre on being given Parents Leadership award at the Manhattan Day School dinner John Milder for his sculpture show at the Denise

Bibro Fine Arts Gallery
Sheindel and Yaakov Steinberg on being honored at the Dinner of the Yeshiva Gedolah of Passaic

THANK YOU
To Colette Levinstein for coordinating the phone squad for the luncheons, shabbatatonim and other events.

To all the Beginners who assisted with such devotion to assure the success of the 20th Anniversary celebration of the Beginners Service

To Adam Schlesinger for his beautiful reading of the Purim Megillah

SAVE THE DATE

Beginners Shabbaton Fri, Sat, March 29-30

Beginners Shabbat Luncheons - \$15 May 4, June 1

Beginners Schmooz - Mondays 8:15 pm - Free May 6. June 3

TURN FRIDAY NIGHT INTO SHABBOS Fri, May 3

All Night Shavout Learn-in Thurs, May 23, 11:30 p.m. - 6:45 a.m.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Tuesday, April 2nd Search for Chametz 6:53 p.m.
Wednesday, April 3rd Morning Services . 6:45 a.m. & 7:45 a.m. The first born are invited to complete a Taimudic Tractate after services so that they may be able to eat on what would normally be a fast day for them. The latest time to eat Chametz . 9:28 a.m. The latest time to destroy Chametz . 10:44 a.m. Pleaser remember to make an ERUV TAVSHILIN Kindle Yom Tov Candles . 6:05 p.m. Mincha and Kabbalat Yom Tov . 6:10 p.m.
Thursday, April 4th First Day Pesach Yom Tov Morning Services 8:45 a.m. Daf Yomi 5:25 p.m. Mincha 6:10 p.m. Kindle Yom Tov Candles not before 7:05 p.m.
Friday, April 5th Second Day Pesach 8:45 a.m. Yom Tov Morning services 8:25 p.m. Daf Yomi 5:25 p.m. Kindle Shabbat Candles 6:07 p.m. Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat 6:10 p.m.
Shabbat, April 6th 8:45 a.m. Morning Services 5:20 p.m. Daf Yom 6:05 p.m.
Please remember to move your clocks forward one hour
Sunday April 7th Chol HaMoed 7:00 & 8:30 a.m.DST Morning Services 7:05 p.m. DST Mincha and Maariv 7:15 p.m. DST
Monday April 8th Chol Hamoed Morning Services
Tuesday, April 9th 7:00 & 7:30 a.m. Chol Hamoed Morning Services 7:00 & 7:30 a.m. Kindle Yom Tov Candles 7:11 p.m. Mincha and Kabbalat Yom Tov 7:15 p.m.
Wednesday, April 19th 8:00 & 8:45 p.m. Yom Tov Morning Services 6:30 p.m. Dat Yom 6:30 p.m. Mincha 7:15 p.m. Kindle Yom Tov candles not before 8:11 p.m.
Thursday, April 11th Yom Tov Morning Services 8:00 & 8:45 a.m. Dat Yom! 6:25 p.m. 6:25 p.m. Mincha followed by Seudah Shlisheet Nellat Hachag 7:10 p.m.

Shabbat, April 13th (SHEMINI) Shabbat Mevorchim 8:45 a.m. Shabbat Morning Service 8:45 a.m. Daf Yomi 5:40 p.m. Bible Class 6:10 p.m. Talmud Class 6:25 p.m. Mincha 7:10 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 7:25 p.m. Tuesday, April 16th Yom Hashoah
Morning services
Friday, April 19th Rosh Chodesh Iyar Morning Services . 7:00 & 7:40 a.m. Kindle Shabbat Candies . 7:22 p.m. Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat . 7:25 p.m.
Shabbat, April 20th (TAZRIA-MEZORAH) Rosh Chodesh Iyar Morning Services 8.43 a.m. Daf Yomi 5:50 p.m. 5:50 p.m. Bible Class 6:20 p.m. Talmud Class 6:35 p.m. Mincha 7:20 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 23rd Yom Hazikaron
Wednesday, April 24th Yom Haatzmaut Morning Services
Friday, April 26th Kindle Shabbat Candles
Shabbat April 27th (ACHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM) Shabbat Morning Services 8.45 p.m.
Friday, May 3rd Kindle Shabbat Candles
Shabbat, May 4th (EMOR) 8:45 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m. Daf Yomi 6:05 p.m. Chumash Class 6:35 p.m. Talmud Class 6:50 p.m. Mincha 7:33 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 7:45 p.m.
Tuesday, May 7th Lag B'Omer Morning Services
Friday, May 10th Kindle Shabbat Candles
Shabbat, May 11th (BEHAR-BECHUKOTAY) Shabbat Morning Services

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Daf Yomi 6:1 Chumash Class 6:4 Talmud Class 6:55 p.m Mincha 7:40 p.m Daily Mincha and Maariv 7:55 p.m	
Friday, May 17th Yom Yerushalayim Morning Services . 7:00 & 7:50 a.m Kindle Shabbat Candles . 7:50 p.m Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat . 6:45 & 7:45 p.m	
Shabbat, May 18th (B'MIDBAR)Shabbat Mevorchim Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m Daf Yomi 6:15 p.m Chumash Class 6:45 p.m Talmud Class 7:00 p.m Mincha 7:45 p.m Dally Mincha and Maariv 8:00 p.m Dally Mincha and Maariv 8:00 p.m Chumash Class Chumash Class	
Sunday, May 19th Rosh Chodesh Sivan Morning Services	
Thursday, May 23rd Erev Shavuot Please remember to make an ERUV TAVSHILIN Rindle Yom Tov Candles	
Friday, May 24th First Day Shavuot 4:40 a.m Hashkama Minyan 8:45 a.m Main Minyan 8:45 a.m Daf Yomi & Chumash Classes 7:10 p.m Mincha 7:55 p.m Kindle Shabbat & Yom Tov candles 7:56 p.m	- -
Shabbat, May 25th Second Day Shavout Shabbat Yom Tov Morning Services including Yizkor Daf Yomi & Bible classes Mincha followed by Seudah Shlisheet Neilat Hachag Daily Mincha and Maariv S:05 p.m	
Monday, May 27th Memorial Day Morning Services	
Friday, May 31st Kindle Shabbat Candles	
Shabbat, June 1st (NASO) 8:45 a.m Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m Daf Yomi 6:30 p.m Chumash Class 7:00 p.m Talmud Class 7:15 Mincha 8:10 Daily Mincha and Maariv 8:16	i. i. i.
Friday, June 7th Kindle Shabbat Candles . 8:07 p.m Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat . 6:45 & 8:10 p.m	٠. ا.