RETURNING TO SINA!

by Stephen Eskin, MD

was born to it. Raised in an observant Jewish home, my father a rabbi, I attended Jewish day schools through high school, followed by an additional 1½ year of "Higher Yeshiva," prior to University. Following my Bar Mitzva, I was a regular Baal Koreh (Torah reader) at our local Young Israel, and made money on the side giving Bar Mitzva lessons. Having attended two years of Yeshiva High school in Israel prior to Yeshiva Gevoha (Higher Yeshiva, also in Israel), by age fifteen I was completely fluent in Hebrew. In short I was the prototypical Bnai Akiva religious kid, with all the advantages of an intensive Jewish education that was always available to me. And yet, for nearly twenty years, up until recently (the last year or two) I gave no more thought to the concept of Torah, mitzvot, Shabbat, or kashrut, except during the occasional

anecdote to amuse my friend in a social situation. Anger ran deep. Guilt did not. How could this happen?

Well, due to limited space here, I shall not regale you with my reasons personal rationalizations. Suffice it to say, that I felt the need to distance If from the practitioners of my religion. It was, perhaps, a time in my life when I was vulnerable to certain absurdities around me. The inordinate disproportion between concern over glatt kosher peas and corn and underemphasis of the evils of Lashon Hara (true gossip), Motzi Shem Ra (slander) and Rechilut (nasty gossip), to name a few.

Mostly, I was turned off by a pervasive sense of elitism and superiority. Condescension took the form of blatant disrespect, transmitted to nonreligious Jews and gentiles, for so-called "secular" accomplishments. I reacted by taking a long walk on the secular side of the street. For the next twenty years I immersed myself in epicurean delight, myriad career concerns and, oh yeah, the opposite sex. I was not rebelling against Judaism, I reasoned, just against Jews who, I felt, distorted the meaning of Torah and the nature of Hashem. Yep, rationalization can sure go a long way.

Well, a curious thing happened to me as a secular being. I started to look for evidence of Hashem within the secular realm. Following some more turmoil (identity circareer indecision) in my late twenties, in which I had to hace my real self, it turned out I was more artist than scientist. Through the arts (specifically music) I felt I was really starting to see Hashem's work. This pleased me, because, in fact, I was never able to shed my Jewish pride

and identity, despite shedding mitzvot like some unwanted layer of skin. Armed with this self discovery, all shiny and glossy, I started to notice Jews again. It began as an exercise in observation, but the more I looked, the more frightened I became by what I saw. In the twenty years I'd been away, the degree of Jewish fragmentation and rancor had grown beyond disagreement and argument, into the realm of non-communication and Jew-on-Jew violence. Judaism had become not an issue of identity and philosophy, but an issue of politics. A simple truth suddenly became apparent to me. Looking back on the cataclysmic events of our history, I'd discovered the fatal flaw of the Jewish people. Even 50 years after the worst catastrophe to befall our people, we still are unable to grasp the fundamental essential

ingredient of "Preventative Unity," until after the major catastrophe strikes, when it is too late. Time and time again we've leveled the guns of hatred (Sinat Hinom) against each other in a deadly game of one-upmanship between brothers, lasting nearly 6,000 years. It's not Hashem's doing. We, all Jews, religious and non-religious, are responsible. I now knew what I had to do. I could no longer sit on my observer's perch.

Being pro-active in this issue meant starting with myself first. It occurred to me that if it was so easy to reject Torah, I must have missed something fundamental. So here I am with the beginners,

relearning, reintegrating, and reuniting my Jewish and secular sides. I do not merely disregard the secular, for there is much knowledge I gained there. Magically, and to my joyful amazement, I have been able through my new Jewish education to give my secular achievements their own religious context. This by itself seems enough reason to return to Sinai, but it is not enough. The other is to give back to my religion. My people need me as much as I need them, on whatever level I may contribute. Perhaps even through some of my secular attained skills, I might benefit Klal Yisrael (the greater Jewish community). For, if my reawakening has only to do with my own spiritual fulfillment, I will be no better off than I was twenty years ago, when I left. I must first give back for its own sake, before getting back what I need for my own sake.



"IT IS A TREE OF LIFE TO THOSE WHO HOLD IT"

Dr. Stephen Eskin is a Board Certified Internist and a professional rock& roll musician.

CONGRATULATIONS AND MAZAL TOV

ENGAGEMENTS

Karine Sala and Michael Bloch Dany Steinhauser and Terry Gips Vera Wolf Sullivan and Wolf Popper

MARRIAGES

Terry Berzansky and Aram Nadell Susan Tucker and Gabbi Peretz

BIRTHS

Masami and Marko Isserer, on the birth of a boy, Eliyahu Drs. Lydia and Mark Lidagoster, on the birth of a girl, Aviva Shaindel

Lisa Schiffren and Jay Mann, on the birth of a girl, Sarah Pauline Mazal Tov to grandmother, Rita Schiffren

Gavriella Rava Sara
Sara and Martin Schandelson, on the birth of a girl,
Gavriella Rava Sara
Sara and Martin Schandelson, on the birth of a boy,

Benjamin Meir

Jili and Dov Schwartzben, on the birth of a boy, Samuel

BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Rebecca Morse daughter of Michelle and David Morse Ariella Eve Schwartz daughter of Dr. Rena and Dorian Schwartz

CONDOLENCES

Monica Barach, on the loss of her mother, Mollie Pfeiffer Lisa Bernstein, on the loss of her father, Bernard Bernstein Dominick Mocciola, on the loss of his mother, Mary Lee Mocciola

CONGRATULATIONS

Dr. Michelle Friedman Belfer, honored by the Mental Health Professionals Division of the UJA-Federation of New York Peryl (Phyllis) Blackman, honored by the Jewish Education Program of Westchester

Lynn and Sid Gold, whose son, Elan Gold starred in "You're the One", a recent sitcom on the WB Network Sarah (Suzanne) and David Gurwitz, honored by Ohr Somayach

Sarah (Suzanne) and David Gurwitz, nonored by Ohr Somayac Yeshiva, Monsey, NY.

SAVE THE DATE

Beginners Shabbat Luncheons - \$15 June 6, Sept. 5 All Night Shavuot Learn-in Sat May 30, 11:30-p.m.-6:45 am Rosh Hashana Sun-Tues Sept. 20-22

WRY SLICES OF THE DIASPORA

several comedic short plays about Jewish life in America by Alan Magill, a graduate of the LSS Beginners Service, will have a staged reading on Monday, June 8, at 7:00 p.m. as part of the 14th Street Y's "First Look" series 344 E. 14th Street, Manhattan, only \$5 admission, for more information call

(718) 645-4947 or (212) 780-0800, x278.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES		
Friday, June 5, 1998 - 11th of Sivan 6:49 PN Earliest Candle Lighting 8:06 PN Candle Lighting 8:06 PN Mincha 6:45 & 8:10 PN	Sunday, July 12, 1998 • 18th of Tamuz Fast of Shlwah Assar B Tamuz [nldche] Fast Begins	Shabbat, August 22, 1998 - 30th of Av (Re'eh) Rosh Chodesh Morning services 7:40, 6:45 & 9:45 AM Bible class Bible class 6:25 PM G:40 PM G:40 PM
Shabbat, June 6, 1998 - 12th of Sivan (Nasso) 8:00 AM Daf Yomi 8:00 AM Morning services 7:45, 8:45 & 9:45 AM Talmud & Bible classes 7:00 PM	rast ends 8:59 PM	Mincha
Mincha B:00 PM Shabbat Ends 9:06 PM Daily Mincha & Maeriv 8:10 PM	Candle Lighting 8:07 PM Mincha 6:45 & 8:10 PM	Morning services
Friday, June 12, 1998 - 18th of Sivan Earliest Candle Lighting 6:53 PM Candle Lighting 8:10 PM Minche 6:45 & 8:15 PM	Winding services	Mincha
Shabbat, June 13, 1998 - 19th of Sivan (Beha'alolcha) 8:00 AM Daf Yomi 8:00 AM Morning services 7:45, 8:45 & 9:45 AM Talmud & Bible classes 7:05 PM Mincha 8:05 PM	Shabbat Ends 9:07 PM Daily Mincha & Maariv 8:10 PM Friday, July 24, 1998 - 1st of Av Rosh Chodesh Morning services 7:00 & 7:40 AM Earliest Candie Lighting 6:50 PM	Daf Yomi 6:25 PM Mincha PM Shabbat Ends PM Daily Mincha & Maariv PM
Shabbat Ends	Candle Lighting	Friday, September 4, 1998 - 13th of Elul 7:06 PM Candle Lighting 7:10 PM Mincha 7:10 PM
Friday, June 19, 1998 - 25th of Sivan Earliest Candle Lighting	Shahat Ende	Shabbat, September 5, 1998 - 14th of Elul (Ki Teitzei) 8:00 AM Daf Yomi 8:00 AM Morning services 7:45, 8:45 & 9:45 AM Talmud & Bible classes 6:00 PM Mincha 7:00 PM
Daf Yomí 8:00 AM Morning services 7:45, 8:45 & 9:45 Mg-45 Talmud & Bible classes 8:05 PM Mincha 8:05 PM Mincha 8:05 PM	Friday, July 31, 1998 - 8th of Av	Shebbat Ends
Shebbat Ends 9:12 PM Daliy Minche & Meariv 8:20 PM Wednesday, June 24, 1998 - 30th of Sivan Rosh Chodesh Morning services 7:00 & 7:40 AM	Shabbat, August 1, 1998 - 9th of Av (D'varim)	Friday, September 11, 1998 - 20th of Elul Candle Lighting
Thursday, June 25, 1998 - 1st of Tamuz Rosh Chodesh Morning services	Fast Begins 6:25 PM	Shabbat, September 12, 1998 - 21st of Elul (Kl Tavo) 8:00 AM Daf Yorn 8:00 AM Morning services 7:45, 8:45 & 9:45 AM Talmud & Bible classes 5:50 PM Mincha 9:50 PM
Friday, June 26, 1998 - 2nd of Tamuz 6:56 PM Earliest Candle Lighting 8:13 PM Candle Lighting 8:13 PM Mincha 6:45 & 8:20 PM Shabbat, June 27, 1998 - 3rd of Tamuz (Korach)	Morning services	Shabbat Ends 7:54 PM Daily Mincha & Maeriv 6:55 PM Early Slichot 10:00 PM Slichot Lecture 11:30 PM
Daf Yomi 8:00 AM Morning services 7:45, 8:45 & 9:45 AM Talmud & Bible classes 7:10 PM Mincha 8:10 PM Shabbat Ends 9:13 PM Daily Mincha & Maariv 8:20 PM	######################################	Sunday, September 13, 1998 - 22nd of Elu! Morning services
Daily Mincha & Maariv 8:20 PM Friday, July 3, 1998 - 9th of Tamuz 6:56 PM Earliest Candle Lighting 8:13 PM Candle Lighting 8:13 PM Mincha 6:45 & 8:20 PM	Mincho Cafe 8 7:50 DM	Monday, September 14, 1998 - 23rd of Elul Silchot & Morning services 6:40 & 7:30 AM Tuesday, September 15, 1998 - 24th of Elul Silchot & Morning services 6:40 & 7:30 AM
Mincha 6:45 & 8:20 PM Shabbat, July 4, 1998 -10th of Tamuz (Chukat) Independence Day Morning Services 7:45, 8:45 & 9:45 AM Bible class 7:10 PM		Wednesday, September 16, 1998 - 25th of Elul Slichot & Morning services
Daf Yomi 7:25 PM Mincha 8:10 PM Shabbat Ends 9:13 PM Daily Mincha & Maeriv 8:15 PM	Friday August 14 1998 - 22nd of Av	Thursday, September 17, 1998 - 26th of Elul 6:40 & 7:30 AM Slichot & Morning services 6:40 & 7:30 AM Friday, September 18, 1998 - 27th of Elul 6:40 & 7:30 AM Slichot & Morning services 6:40 & 7:30 AM Candle Lighting 6:42 PM Mincha 6:45 PM
Friday, July 10, 1998 - 16th of Tamuz 6:54 PM Earliest Candle Lighting 8:11 PM Candle Lighting 8:11 PM Mincha 6:45 & 8:15 PM	Mincha 6:45 & 7:45 PM Shabbat, August 15, 1998 - 23rd of Av (Eikev) Morning services 7:45, 8:45 & 9:45 AM Bible class 6:35 PM Def Yomi 6:50 PM	Shahhat Sentember 10, 1999 - 28th of First (Nitzgrim)
Shabbat, July 11, 1998 - 17th of Tamuz (Belak) Morning services	Dat Yom 6:50 PM Mincha 7:35 PM Shabbat Ends 8:38 PM Daily Mincha & Maariv 7:35 PM	B:00 AM
Mincha 8:05 PM Shabbat Ends 9:11 PM Daily Mincha & Maariv 8:15 PM	Friday, August 21, 1998 - 29th of Av 7:28 PM Candle Lightling 7:35 PM Mincha 7:35 PM	y 200 M