MORE THAN A BIRTHRIGHT -- THAT INVISIBLE FORCE

By Amy Barath

flom looked over my shoulder as I filled out the New York State بور application for employment. "Jewish women and Jewish men do not become State Troopers," Mom advised. "Oh, please Mom," I began to present my case. "I am so sick of hearing Jews don't do this, Jews don't do that... you're wasting your time dating non-Jews. All of a sudden we are so religious? We couldn't even get Jeff (my brother) Bar Mitzvahed because we didn't have any money -- it didn't matter to the rabbis that we were Jewish -- they said 'No funds, No Bar Mitzvah --Period!' So I'll say I'm not Jewish, how will they know?" We gazed at one another with that knowing smile. Who was I kidding? We knew I could never deny being Jewish, and not because we knew that doing so would be a sin--we didn't--but because we felt deep down inside, somewhere within that inexplicable force that tugs and tugs relentlessly, that it was wrong. As fate would have it, I did become a State Trooper, and I didn't lie on the application form, and Mom was right, I've experienced my share of anti-Semitism on the job.

Two years ago, at 2:00 am on a crisp and crunchy Fall morning, I was patrolling the New York State Thruway with a female partner. A vehicle sped right past our marked patrol car, as if it were invisible. All vehicles that do this are immediately pulled over, as disrespect is not tolerated. My partner spoke with the male driver, I spoke with the driver's wife. They were a Hasidic couple traveling the usual route-- Monroe to Brooklyn and back. "Two vimen?...at night...vat is going on here?" the wife asked me. "I am afraid for you," she added. My partner and I returned

to our vehicle. "Don't write them a ticket," I said. "Why not?," my partner asked, "they sped right past us." " I know, but...they're one of mine," rolled off my tongue. As my partner wrote out the ticket, that relentless force began tugging, "I wonder if they could tell that I'm Jewish," I kept thinking. They were the Hasidim with whom I had ever come into contact, felt as if they were a part of me.

My partner did issue the Hasidic driver a ticket-which he deserved. Of course, however, he pleaded not guilty, hoping for a plea bargain. As fate arranged it, my partner was unable to make the trial, which left me with the power of either asking the judge for a plea, or forcing my Hasidic friend to go to trial. My Hasidic friend and I spoke outside the courtroom. He kept staring at my hand movements and motioned for me to come closer. He whispered, "You Jewish?" "Of

course," I said, "Couldn't you tell?" "Oy vey iz meer, are you crazy? A Jewish Trooper? Your mother allows this?," he said. "Please, make me a promise, always pull over Hasidim, you'll never have to worry because we will never hurt you."

Last year one of my colleagues was run off the road by a Hasidic bus driver. After tailgating my colleague's personal vehicle for half a mile, the bus driver forced him off the road and into a ditch. My colleague was not injured, but to make matters worse a group of Hasidic passengers on the bus further harassed him to the point where he was forced to identify himself and make several arrests. Normally I would immediately take the side of my colleague, never doubting that he was in the right. But I had hoped that this was not the case, I had hoped that somehow it was the Hasidim who were wronged. I was ashamed when they were arrested, I felt it was a reflection on me, and on my Jewishness, and I was mad at myself for feeling that way.

Last May, I was sipping morning coffee with Mom, the radio was on--WABC 770-and I was complaining about the usual subject, M-E-N. "What can you expect? These are not Jewish men--you can't expect them to treat you the way a Jewish man would--they are just not raised

way." "Mom, please don't start with the Jewish," I begged. The radio ke out in song "Being Jewish is Just the Beginning...Call 1-888-SHABBAT to confirm your reservation for a Turn Friday Night Into Shabbat near you!" I choked on my coffee, spewing it all over the kitchen table. I couldn't stop laughing. Mom said "Call right now--You are going, and so is your brother." "All right, all right, I'll go," I surrendered. "And your brother too, He's going to the Shabbat Dinner AND he's getting Bar Mitzvahed!"

So we went. We went to one Shabbat dinner, then another, then another and then another until we had attended almost every Shabbat dinner on the Upper West Side, Upper East Side, and West Village. We enrolled in Rabbi Buchwald's Crash Course in Basic Judaism, which led to our attending the Beginners Service at the Lincoln Square Synagogue. We now take classes regularly at Aish HaTorah, where Mom, my brother and I are known as the "first family." A few weeks ago I was debating Rabbi Goldhar at Aish on the subject of Free Will Coincidence. He insisted that "nothing is a vs. Destiny vs. coincidence." I doubted him. He suggested I enroll in some classes with Rebbitzen Leah Kohn at the Jewish Renaissance Center.

The following day, I went to work. Towards the end of my shift ! decided to check an area of the roadway that was not a part of my patrol area -- I just felt that somebody may have been in need of assistance. I was correct, a vehicle had broken down, and as I approached the driver, he and his wife seemed agitated. "I've been living here for over fifteen years, "the driver said, "How is it that I can get lost in my own neighborhood? Trooper, I'm so glad to see you," he said, "Please, can you call AAA for us?" "Certainly, Sir," I said, "I'll need your name." "Rabbi Kohn," he replied, "and this is my wife Leah." I thought about Rabbi Goldhar's viewpoint. 'No,' I assured myself, 'just a coincidence.'

> Monday September 23--Yom Kippur. I did a really bad thing. My family and I had completed all the traditional requirements--lit candles, fasted, remembered our lost loved ones. But I didn't go to Temple. I went to work instead. I was scheduled for shotgun practice at Fahnestock Park in Carmel, NY. Mom said I shouldn't go. Even my non-Jewish colleagues said I should take the day off. I advised them, "I don't believe in that stuff." Well, now I'm nursing an injured arm, and I've been unable to return to work since, because the butt of the shotgun kicked back and punched me in the arm four times. Consequently, my left bicep, elbow, and nerves are non-functional--Coincidence?

I'm stubborn. I refuse to believe that a special invisible force is controlling my life. Yet

on the other hand, I'm drawn to this force. I spend most of my free time taking Torah classes. I've attended the Discovery Seminar five times, and each time I've argued with the lecturers, pointing out the flaws in their presentation. At the end of each seminar however, ! reserve my place for the next one--and I come early--I don't want to miss one word, and I want to get a good seat--right up front. I've even overpaid mistakenly, which leaves me credit for upcoming classes. I've never overpaid previously for anything. Coincidence?

I've fallen for Rabbi Buchwald's Beginners Service on Saturday mornings. I love the songs, I like the people, I don't even mind the nudging----take Hebrew Level I, get a one-on-one partner, keep Shabbat-even when Rabbi Buchwald isn't saying it, that invisible force within is pushing.

When I was a child I was certain that my mother was G-d. She had five rules we had to obey without question:

- 1. Be good
- 2. Learn from your mistakes.
- Don't say mean things about people.
- 4. (This was a Big One) ALWAYS TELL MOMMY THE TRUTH.
- 5. Someday your Prince will come--and he'll be Jewish

I hadn't any idea, and neither did Mom, she was quoting Torah. There's that invisible force again. It's been with us all along, and it does make us different, and we are special -- because we're Jews-and Thank G-d.



CONGRATULATIONS AND MAZAL TOV

ENGAGEMENTS

Lisa Blaustein and Scott Cohen Adina Serot and David Mendelovic Rona Kudroff and Andrew Steinerman

MARRIAGES Barbara Reich and Jeffrey Siegel Jill Alpert and Evan Seigerman Jodi Comet and Aaron Warum Abby Pomerantz and David Rothschild



Gayle and Stewart Ashkenazy, on the birth of a boy, Joshua Benjamin

Bruchi and Mitchell Barnett, on the birth of a boy, Moshe Aryeh Leib Jane and Walter Beier, on the birth of twins,

Daniel Joseph and Hannah Ruth Stacy and Elliot Maza, on the birth of a girl,

Channa Zippora (Melissa) Emily Blum and Leon Metzger, on the birth of a boy, Ethan Simon

Nancy and Alan Miller, on the birth of a girl, Leah Rachel

Maura and Adam Ruskin, on the birth of a boy, Naday Moshe

Toby and Bruce Simon, on the birth of a boy, Yonatan Boaz

Bonnie and Ed Weintraub, on the birth of a girl, Leah Shoshana

Linda Montag and Dr. Avraham Woodman, on the birth of a boy, Naphtali (12/95)

BAR/BAT MITZVAH
Joshua Fishof, son of Monica Singer and David Fishof

Yoel Herman, son of Lisa and Rabbi Shimon Herman

<u>CONDOLENCES</u> Daryl Gray, on the loss of his father, Woodrow

To the family of Eleanor Garz-Grossblat Eric Johnson, on the loss of his father, Andrew Nan Levy, on the loss of her mother, Mim Berman Marna Schwarz Carroll and Joseph Schwarz, on the loss of their mother, Rose Schwarz

Rochelle Schumer and Marvin Schumer, on the loss of their mother, Dorothy Schumer

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

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

<u>Israel)</u> Lisa Blaustein Chaim Marquis

REFUAH SH'LEIMAH (Speedy Recovery)

Levi Boslow

NEWS

LSS

NEWS

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<u>CONGRATULATIONS</u> Michael Somoroff for being honored by Tzivos Hashem (Chabbad)

THANK YOU Dr. Leonard Davidman for leading the Beg Service throughout the summer, with no love and enthusiasm

SAVE THE DATE

Friday Evening Beginners Services and Dinner (\$15)

Dec 20, Jan 17, Feb 21, March 21 & April 18

Beginners Shabbat Luncheons Jan 4, Feb 1, Mar 3, Cost \$15

> **Beginners Shabbaton** Dec 6-7, Apri 18-19

Beginners Schmooze Mon 8:15 PM FREE Dec 2, Jan 6, Feb 3, Mar 3, Apr 7

> **Beginners Chanukah Party** Wed Dec 11

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Saturday, November 23rd (Vayetze)
Daf Yomi
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Talmud and Bible Classes
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Friday, November 29th Kindle Shabbat Candles
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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES	
Shabbat Ends 5:14 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 4:20 p.m. Maariv Only 6:20 p.m.	Friday, January 31st Kindle Shabbat Candles . 4:55 p.m. Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, December 25th Morning Services	Saturday, February 1st (Yitro) 8:00 a.m. Daf Yomi 8:45 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m. Talmud and Chumash Classes 4:05 p.m.
Friday, December 27th Kindle Shabbat Candles 4:18 p.m. Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat 4:20 p.m.	Taimud and Chumash Classes 4:05 p.m. Mincha 4:50 p.m. Shabbat Ends 5:55 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 5:05 p.m. Maariv Only 6:20 p.m.
Saturday, December 28th (Vayechi) Daf Yom: 8:00 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m.	Friday February 7th Rosh Chodesh Adar Rishon
Saturday, December 28th (Vayechi) 8:00 a.m. Daf Yomi 8:45 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m. Chumash Classes 3:30 p.m. Mincha 4:15 p.m. Shabbat Ends 5:18 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 4:25 p.m. Maariv Only 6:20 p.m.	Morning Services 7:40 a.m. & 7:40 a - Kindle Shabbat Candles 5:03 Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat 5:05
	Saturday, February 8th (Mishpatim) - Rosh Chodesh Adar Rishon
Wednesday, January 1, 1997 Morning Services 7:10 a.m. & 8:30 a.m. Friday, January 3rd	Dai 7 0mm 8:00 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m. Talmud and Chumash Classes 4:15 p.m.
Friday, January 3rd Kindle Shabbat candles 4:23 p.m. Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat 4:25 p.m.	Daf Yomi 8:00 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m. Talmud and Chumash Classes 4:15 p.m. Mincha 5:00 p.m. Shabbat Ends 6:03 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 5:15 p.m. Maariv Only 6:20 p.m.
Saturday, January 4th (Shemot)	Rriday February 14th
Saturday, January 4th (Shemot) 8:00 a.m. Daf Yomi 8:00 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m. Taimud and Chumash Classes 3:35 p.m. Mincha 4:20 p.m. Shabbat Ends 5:23 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 4:35 p.m. Maariv Only 6:20 p.m.	Friday, February 14th Kindle Shabbat Candles
Shabbat Ends 5:23 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 4:35 p.m. Maariy Only 6:20 p.m.	Saturday, February 15th (Terumah) 8:00 a.m. Daf Yomi 8:45 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 p.m. Talmud and Chumash Classes 4:25 p.m. Mincha 5:10 p.m. Shabbat Ends 6:12 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 5:20 p.m. Maariv Only 6:20 p.m.
	Talmud and Chumash Classes 4:25 p.m. Mincha 5:10 p.m.
Thursday, January 9th Rosh Chodesh Shevat Morning Services	Shabbat Ends 6:12 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 5:20 p.m.
Friday, January 10th Kindle Shabbat Candles . 4:30 p.m. Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat . 4:35 p.m.	
Saturday, January 13th (Vavera)	Monday, February 17th, President's Day Morning Services
Saturday, January 11th (Vayera) 8:00 a.m. Daf Yomi 8:45 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m. Talmud and Chumash Classes 3:40 p.m. Mincha 4:25 p.m. Shabbat Ends 5:30 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 4:40 p.m. Maariv Only 6:20 p.m.	Friday, February 21st Kindle Shabbat Candles 5:20 p.m. Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat 5:25 p.m.
Mincha 4:25 p. m. Shabbat Ends 5:30 p. m.	
Daily Mincha and Maariv 4:40 p.m. Maariv Only 6:20 p.m.	Saturday, February 22nd (Tetzaveh) 8:00 a.m. Daf Yomi 8:45 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m. Talmud and Chumash Classes 4:30 p.m. Mincha 5:15 p.m. Shabbat Ends 6:20 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 5:30 p.m. Maariv Only 6:20 p.m.
Friday, January 17th Kindle Shabbat Candles . 4:38 p.m. Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat . 4:40 p.m.	Mincha 5:15 p.m. Shabbat Ends 6:20 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 5:30 p.m.
Saturday January 18th (Ra)	Maariv Only 6:20 p.m.
Dar Yom: 8:00 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m. Talmud and Chumash Classes 3:50 p.m.	Friday, February 28th Kindle Shabbat Candles 5:28 p.m. Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat 5:30 p.m.
Mincha 4:35 p.m. Shabbat Ends 5:38 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 4:45 p.m. Maariv Only 6:20 p.m.	
Maariv Only 4:45 p.m.	Saturday, March 1st (Ki Tissa) 8:00 a.m. Daf Yomi 8:45 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m. Talmud and Chumash Classes 4:40 p.m. Mincha 5:25 p.m. Shabbat Belt 5:25 p.m.
Thursday, January 23rd, Tu B'Shevat Morning Services 7:05 a.m. & 7:50 a.m.	Annual and Charless
Friday, January 24th Kindle Shabbat Candles 4:46 p.m. Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat 4:50 p.m.	Shabbat Ends 6:28 p.m.
Saturday, January 25th (Beshalach)	Priday, March 7th, Kindle Shabbat Candles . 5:36 p. Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat . 5:40 p.m.
Dai Yomi 8:00 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m.	
Talmud and Chūmash Classes	Daf Yomi 8:00 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a m
Saturday, January 25th (Beshalach) 8:00 a.m. Daf Yomi 8:40 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m. Tainuud and Chumash Classes 3:55 p.m. Mincha 4:40 p.m. Shabbat Ends 5:46 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 4:55 p.m. Maariv Only 6:20 p.m.	Saturday, March 8th (Vayakhel-Parashat Shekalim) 8:00 a.m. Daf Yomi 8:45 a.m. Shabbat Morning Services 8:45 a.m. Talmud and Chumash Classes 4:50 p.m. Mincha 5:35 p.m. Shabbat Hede 6:26 p.m.
Maariv Only 6:20 p.m.	Shabbat Ends 6:36 p.m. Daily Mincha and Maariv 5:45 p.m,