



# The Menorah

## Notes from the Rabbi: Ethan Seidel More Ritual Matters

Given the helpful responses I received to my last *Menorah* article (about whether to keep the ark open throughout the Ne'ilah service on Yom Kippur), I'm going to also use this month's article to solicit input from the congregation about several other ritual initiatives.

### Kaddish Minyanim

Tifereth Israel does not have any weekday services except for Sunday morning and occasionally before a board meeting. This paucity of daily services is a problem. It means that members saying *Kaddish* daily during the eleven-month mourning period following the death of a close family member must find another shul to attend. Similarly, members who are trying to say *Kaddish* exactly on the Yahrzeit (instead of

merely on the Shabbat beforehand) must also, often, fulfill their obligation at another synagogue.



But a partial solution is at hand, at least for the Yahrzeit part of the problem. If there is an evening (or a morning, for that matter) that you would like to get together a minyan to say *Kaddish* at TI, we can help you! We can let you know who else is saying *Kaddish* on that date, either because they are in mourning or also is observing yahrzeit.

*(Continued on page 2)*

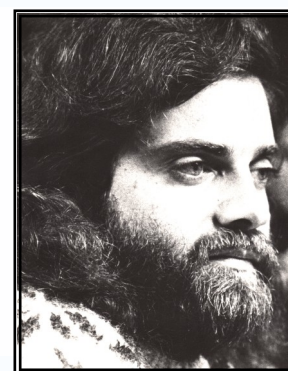
## President's Column: Joel Cohen No Labels

Last month, I considered several problems concerning extremism, best summed up by the 19th century cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt: "The essence of tyranny is the denial of complexity." My examples were all outside this hemisphere. This month, I would like to consider the repercussions here at home, and in my own Capitol Hill neighborhood.

Last September, I wrote about the difficulty of communication between political parties and between people on opposite sides of many hot-button issues. One of the solutions I cited is what Princeton philosophy professor Anthony Appiah calls "sidling up to the issue"--establishing a relationship based on commonalities before going after the issues that separate. Until late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century this was how

both chambers of Congress operated.

Friendships on the Hill developed independently of party affiliation. Dinner parties, social gatherings, poker



games, and golf outings were attended by politicians of both parties. A large proportion of bills did not set Republicans against Democrats, but more likely one geographic area against another, or one financial interest (farming, fishing, mining,

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## Notes from the Rabbi (continued)

If you are interested in this idea -- whether as a *Kaddish zuger* (one who is saying *Kaddish*), or as someone who could help us organize this effort -- let me know.

### Practical Skills Classes

The Ritual committee would like to serve the congregation better, and to that end, we wonder if you might like us to offer some practical skills classes. Would you like to learn how to sing Friday night *Kiddush*, or *Birkat HaMazon*, put on *Tefillin*, lead Friday night services, or lead the Torah service? Or is there another synagogue skill we could help you with? Let me know!

I always love hearing your suggestions.

Rabbi Seidel

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## Yiddish Poetry Reading

Tifereth Israel is co-sponsoring a program entitled **Yiddish as a Living Language** on Sunday, February 12, at 7:30 p.m.

Two local Yiddish poets, Zackary Sholem Berger and Aaron Taub, will discuss what it means to write in Yiddish today and will read from their poems in Yiddish and English.

The evening will also include a conversation about who and where are today's Yiddish speakers and readers. The discussion will be led by Miriam Isaacs, a University of Maryland Yiddish professor.

Admission is \$10 for members (of either TI or YGW) and \$12 non-members.

## Share a Shabbat Dinner

Share a Shabbat dinner on Friday evening, February 24 and/or March 23. Open your home to other TI members or be a guest at another TI family's Shabbat table. This is a great chance to meet members you may not already know while sharing good food, conversation, and fun.

Host or guest, one week or both...host one week, guest the next...the possibilities are endless! To sign up, either fill out the on-line form or download the PDF form and send it to Sheri in the TI office (fax to 202.829.0635 or email to [tiadmin@tifereth-israel.org](mailto:tiadmin@tifereth-israel.org)).

TI member volunteers will then make the match and send you your dinner information. We will match hosts and guests with similar dietary and Kashrut needs.

Please sign up by Feb. 13.

## Jewish Week Renewals

Renewing your *Washington Jewish Week* subscription?

Renew through TI, and a portion of the subscription price goes to Kol Nashim.

Contact Sheri in the office.

## President's Column (continued)

oil, etc.) against another. When it came to the moment of decision in committee, opposing members had very likely been on the same side on some other recent issue, or perhaps at dinner together the previous evening. They saw one another as opponents on an issue, not as enemies. In that milieu, compromising to get a majority vote could be done.

Over the last several decades, partly because of the computer-assisted drawing of congressional boundaries, partly because of sociological changes (for example almost all senators used to be men whose wives didn't work and had the time to entertain), leadership became more and more extreme. Elected officials were not only more extreme, but got themselves in positions where they were unable to compromise.

Now I don't have anything against people from the far right or far left as long as they understand how to legislate. Full disclosure: I was national chair of Americans for Democratic Action for several years. The ADA endorsement was long considered the furthest left "electable" backing. A couple of Vice Presidents (Humphrey and Mondale) and several losing presidential candidates (Stevenson, McGovern, Mondale, Dukakis) came from ADA. Former ADA'er Ronald Reagan had burned up his membership card long before becoming President.

### "Extremists" Could Compromise

Even legislators considered extremists knew how to compromise and to govern. Congressman Barney Frank and the late Senator Ted Kennedy were always able to work with Republicans on bills that would be passed. Right-wing Senator Orrin Hatch was able to work with Democrats and write successful legislation. These abilities and desires have largely disappeared.

It is one thing to complain, but who is going to do something about this? At TI, when we think about a person with lots of ideas, we think naturally of Bill Galston. And indeed Bill, with a few friends, including ex-Bush speechwriter David Frum, started a new organization, No Labels, (<http://nolabels.org>) about a year ago. This might be the best hope we have for getting anything done in Congress. Their idea is to help elect people to Congress who will, without leaving their ideals behind, be agreeable to compromise.

### The Right Man for the Job

In many ways Bill was exactly the right person to start such a group. He was chief speechwriter to the 1984 Mondale presidential campaign. Shortly thereafter, he was one of the founders of the Democratic Leadership Council, and was its spiritual and intellectual guide until it dissolved about a year ago.

The DLC's aim was to move the Democratic Party closer to the center (Bill described the DLC to me as the "anti-ADA"), to elect a centrist Democrat as president. They have had a pretty good track record: Bill Clinton, Al Gore and Barack Obama all identified themselves with the DLC.

So why is an ADA'er like me, bringing Bill's No Labels to your attention? Because our government has come to a standstill. Ordinary non-ideological business has stopped. Nominations of judges, commission members, even commission chairs have all been blocked. Simple bills that used to pass on a voice vote are now being held up until every member's deepest desires have been fulfilled. Bills that require any kind of negotiation or discussion are not even brought out of committee.

Many politicians understand that the vast majority of voters want their

representatives and Senators to legislate, even pass bills that are less than 100% perfect. Nearly 400,000 people have signed up with No Labels: Democrats, Republicans and Independents. They are pledging to help elect people to Congress who are not straightjacketed into immutable positions.

As a result of a concerted effort by No Labels members, about 200 members of Congress crossed the aisle to sit with the Other at the President's State of the Union address in January. This is just symbolic, of course, but perhaps something might come of it.

As a former chair of ADA, I naturally have many very specific ideas about what laws should get passed and how they should be written. But I am more frustrated that nothing is getting through, that we have complete deadlock and a brain-dead Congress. There is little thinking in Congress these days, only knee-jerk reaction. The only alternative is negotiation leading to compromise.

### The Ethic of Responsibility

As Bill says: "To negotiate is not to leave one's principles behind; it is to behave the way serious politicians must. It is to adopt what Max Weber called the 'ethic of responsibility'—a concern for the consequences of one's actions—as opposed to the 'ethic of intention,' which focuses on maintaining the purity of one's principles and the spotlessness of one's soul."

If No Labels is successful, perhaps the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress will be able to pass bills to lower the unemployment rate, begin to solve the immigration problem, and make the US energy-independent. Perhaps it will move the country forward in ways that we may not all think are perfect, but that is the meaning of compromise.

## New Members

### Jared Garelick

None of this Mars/Venus stuff for this month's featured new members. For these families, men are from Israel, women are from Denver.

#### Dori and Shemaya Klar

Dori and Shemaya live in the Brookland neighborhood of Washington. Dori, who grew up in Denver, is a teacher. She taught in the upper elementary grades at Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School and then at the Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capital. Accordingly, she is known and adored by many of TI's younger members, including one of this correspondent's in-house sources. She now works as a consultant and teacher trainer with Wireless Generation.

Shemaya grew up in Jerusalem and works as a realtor with Prudential PenFed Realty. They met here in Washington and were married in January 2005. Their daughter, **Nava**, who will turn four this spring, attends the Inspired Teaching public charter school. They love their dog, Shoko, biking, being outdoors, the PG Pool, travel, and time spent with friends.

#### Dan and Ariel Brandt Lautman

Dan and Ariel had quite a year in 2011. They bought a house in Silver Spring, had their first baby, **Ezra**, in December, and joined TI! Dan, who grew up in Herzliya, moved with his family to this area when he was a teenager. He now provides computer support services to local non-profit groups.

Ariel, originally from Denver (but you knew that), is a products manager at a software engineering company. They met when she had an internship at the JCC and he set up her computer. Ariel is an accomplished amateur photographer and, on the side, is nearing completion of a master's degree in information management at the University of Maryland.

Dan's sideline is DJ'ing an occasional wedding. And if you have any Silver Spring neighborhood issues, give him a call; he's a member of the Silver Spring Citizen's Advisory Board.

Welcome to these new members!



Cynthia Peterman participates in December 26, 2011 vigil on behalf of Alan Gross, held captive in Cuba.

### Funeral Practices Committee Always On-Call

Chaverim of the Funeral Practices Committee are on call to provide counsel and services to synagogue members and their dependents. Prior to contacting the funeral home, please contact one of the following chaverim, Rabbi Seidel, or the TI office (202-882-1605).

<b>Shelly Heller</b>	h: 301-942-1836 w: 202-242-6698
<b>Jeff Davidson</b>	h: 301-593-1335
<b>David (Judy) Cohen</b>	h: 301-652-2872
<b>Marcia Goldberg</b>	h: 301-589-0352

## Social Action at TI: Stephen Nelson What I Learned at the Shabbaton

As one who has watched with interest the Republican primary debates, it occurred to me that perhaps the candidates should have attended the Martin Luther King Shabbaton sponsored by the Social Action Committee on January 13.

Instead of offering rhetoric about our so-called "Food Stamp President" and attacking any efforts to create opportunities for the underprivileged as "Saul Alinsky-promoted socialism," they might have learned that poverty is an extremely complicated issue that can't be solved merely by policies to encourage the private sector to create jobs.

Offering the *drash* at services was Ed Lazere, the Executive Director of the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute, the leading advocate for low-income residents in D.C.

Lazere, who has worked for issues such as affordable housing, tax policy and welfare implementation for more than 20 years at both his current job and with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, also was the moderator of an afternoon panel that included a diverse yet very accomplished group of participants. Panelists included:

**Lynn Brantley**, President and CEO of the Capital Area Food Bank, the largest nonprofit hunger and nutrition education resource in the Washington metropolitan area.

**Rabbi Elizabeth Richman**, Program Director and Rabbi in Residence at Jews United for Justice. JUFJ has been at the forefront with programs to alleviate poverty in the DC area.

**Joseph Firschein**, Deputy Associate Director of the Federal

Reserve Board. Firschein spends much of his time at the Fed advocating programs that are aimed at aiding development in underserved communities.

**Dr. Dana Beyer**, Executive Director, Gender Rights of Maryland and two-time candidate for the Maryland House of Delegates. While Beyer is known for her work in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender area, she has also been an advocate for low-income families in Montgomery County and the state of Maryland.

**Audrey Smith**, currently a volunteer at Shepherd's Table Resource Center, who has a long history of working in the areas of affordable housing and human rights.

All of the panelists, except Brantley, are TI members. Brantley has been an active Christian-based activist for human rights and low-income issues for many years. The Capital Area Food Bank was an outgrowth of her work with the Community Ministries of Prince Georges County.

### Poverty From Every Angle

What was particularly compelling is that the speakers approached the issue of poverty from virtually every angle, including housing policy, sex and race discrimination, tax policy, utility pay hikes, and labor/employment issues.

They also discussed how individuals can help, whether it be supporting the existing TI social action programs, creating new initiatives, political action, or, as Richman put it, just merely engaging in discussions with others about problems and solutions.



### Poverty in America

But what I came away with most were some real facts about poverty in American and in the greater Washington, DC area. Here are some of the things that I learned that I never know before:

One in five District residents lives in poverty.

D.C. unemployment skyrocketed from 9.6 percent at the end of 2010 to 11.1 percent as of September 2011.

Even in so-called affluent Montgomery County, more than six percent of the population lives in poverty.

Until recently, there were only two tax brackets in the District of Columbia, and a third one for residents earning over \$250,000 was just enacted. This was achieved largely through the efforts of Jews United for Justice to engage wealthy Ward 3 residents to convince Council Member Mary Cheh that they should be taxed more.

The U.S. now ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the ability of poor people to become affluent. In other words, the U.S. ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the American Dream.

50 percent of the U.S. population does not have enough savings to withstand more than one month of joblessness or other significant economic setbacks.

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## Summary of TI Board of Directors Meeting December 12, 2011

**Attending:** Susan Catler, Joel Cohen, Deena Dugan, Joshua Furman, Sara Goldberg, Esther Herman, Renee Brachfeld, Jeff Davidson, Varda Fink, David Levy, Paula Martin, Margie Odle, Debbie Pomerance, Naomi Revzin, Daniel Turner, Vivian Seidner, Ruth Shapiro, Jevera Temsky

**Excused:** Stephanie Roodman Murdock, Susan Vitale, Lynne Snyder, Mark Verschell, Chris Zeilinger

**Guest:** Carl Bergman

**Staff:** Rabbi Ethan Seidel, Eitan Gutin, David Zinner

**Board Changes:** Seth Glabman resigned from his at large seat. Varda Fink resigned as Administrative Vice President. The president named Varda as a replacement for Seth, and Joe Davidson for the position of Administrative Vice President. This was approved without objection.

**House Committee:** The balcony will get three new speakers and the Cherner will get extensive new sound improvements. The money has already been allocated.

**Lifelong Learning:** The **Retreat** was a great success. 74 adults

### Social Action (cont.)

So what can we do? First, we can offer support to organizations like the Capital Area Food Bank and Jews United for Justice. Second, we can endeavor to increase our involvement in the existing Social Action programs at TI, and maybe even initiate some new ones. And finally, as Rabbi Richman advocated, we can include more discussion of these issues in both our secular lives and in synagogue-related activities.

attended. It was agreed that Emma Rose was a great Sarah Palin. The theme of the retreat was creating a caring community. Four groups of people who might need help were seen as foci of attention. Groups will continue to work on this effort.

There will be a **Hanukkah family party** next week. 154 parents and children are due to come. Seven teenagers attended the recent **USY convention**. Eitan Gutin and Josh Furman are deciding whether or not to apply to host the upcoming **Heschel weekend** for older kids. All people who have program information should get in touch with Josh Furman ASAP as the Adult Education/Programs catalog will be going to press soon.

**Ritual Committee:** Jevera Temsky reported on the Ritual Committee meeting. There is a continuing need for training service leaders as well as other types of ritual training. Josh Furman mentioned the idea of a flip chart to be placed on the bima announcing the page. The Ritual Committee will discuss this idea.

**Rabbi's Report:** The Rabbi's report dated December 11, 2011 was distributed. Rabbi Seidel thanked the Rabbinic Consultative Committee for their help.

**Financial Update:** David Zinner passed out Chris Zeilinger's report. One action item is **the refinancing of the bank note** at a lower rate. A motion was passed to authorize this. David Zinner spoke of our need for a **new copier**. The Rabbi talked about the possible need for a **loan fund**.

**Membership:** Shira Jones and Andrew Reamer are new members.

**Communications:** Debbie Pomerance announced

improvements for the web-site, especially the calendar function. She requested that members review TI over Yelp.

**Library Committee:** The committee will meet next week. Michelle Sumka is chair.

**Executive Director's Report:** The house next to TI is for sale. It is on Jonquil at the alley, and is owned by Art Lewis. He may ask \$770,000. A committee at the Retreat suggested it could be used as a guest house. Eitan Gutin suggested talking to two other synagogues which have recently been in a similar position. There will be one additional session for directory photographs. TI is seeking businesses to advertise in the directory.

David Zinner would like to change his hours as reflected in a proposal he presented. This will bring the total administrative cost down. If this proposal is adopted, other staff will have benefits offered next year. His Evaluation Survey will be out soon.

**Good & Welfare:** The MLK weekend will feature a program focusing on poverty.

Mark Novak will have his ordination celebrated.

Hurrah for Eitan Gutin for his great retreat work.

Sam Jewler is fasting in Occupy DC for District voting rights. The Rabbi will visit him.

**Executive Session:** The Board then met in Executive Session to discuss personnel matters.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 10:21 p.m.

## Library News

Michele Sumka

In my last article I said that I would write about where in the library to find the books you have looked up on <http://www.librarything.com/catalog/TiferethIsrael>.

Picture the library from the door at the base of the stairs. There are books on all four of the walls, plus some on shelves on the landing.

Fiction is divided into three sections. General Fiction is on the right wall as you enter, Young Adult Fiction is on the back wall and Israeli Fiction is outside the library on the wall before you enter.

Biography/Memoir/Autobiography is also in three sections: Women's Bio is on the right wall, close to the back wall, Men's Bio is on the back wall and Young Adult Bio is also on the back wall.

The other books on the tall shelves on the back wall are for Juveniles and Young Adults. They are divided into Bible, Fiction and Non-Fiction. To the left of these are low shelves

with Children's books. To the left of these are books on Holidays and to the left of those, also on low shelves, are books on Art and Music.

Continuing on low shelves on the left side of the room are books on Women and Judaism. The books on the tall shelves on the left are all on some aspect of Judaism: Tanach and Commentaries, Talmud and Commentaries, Theology, Philosophy, Ethics, Mitzvot, Mysticism, Basic Judaism, plus a few on other religions. Some of these books are for reference only and do not circulate.

On the front wall closest to the left wall is a section on the Holocaust for Young Adults. It includes Fiction and Non-Fiction. In the middle are the sections on Adult Holocaust books and Jewish History, from Ancient through Modern, with separate sections on Sephardim, US history, etc.

Back to the right wall as you enter are small sections of Short Stories

(and collections of Short Novels) and Books on Life Cycle.

Outside on the landing is a large bookcase that is attached to the wall of the Emsellem room. Facing it, the first section on the right contains New Acquisitions. The rest of the books on those shelves are on Israeli topics: Fiction, as already mentioned, plus History, Politics, Geography and Archeology.

In the alcove under the stairs is a black bookshelf (I remember when this was the **only** shelf for the library!). It contains books on Humor, Sports, Cooking, Poetry and Yiddish. The lighting on the landing is not the best, and we are working on finding ways to improve it.

How to take out books: On Shabbat, find the card with your name in the Member box and attach it to the card from the book(s) and leave in the small basket. On other days write your name and the date on the card and leave in the basket.

## Upcoming Friday Night Minyan Assignments

### February 3

Ben Finkelstein & Laurie Hollander  
Naomi Friedman  
Joshua Furman  
Judy Galat  
William & Miriam Galston  
Stephen Garber & Lynne Snyder  
Jared Garelick & Ellen Kramarow  
Seth Glabman & Martha Hare  
Rick Glasser & Sheryl Gross-Glaser  
Howard Gleckman & Ann Kline

### February 24

Mimi Godfrey  
John & Marcia Goggin  
Marcia Goldberg

Joseph & Dody Goldberg  
Traci Kammer Goldberg & Eliot Goldberg  
Joshua & Sara Goldberg  
Myrna Goldman  
Paul Goldman & Debbie Pomerance  
Tom & Lisa Goldring  
George & Marjorie Greenberg

### March 2

Larry & Melanie Greenfield  
Abraham & Dena Greenstein  
Seth Grimes & Franca Brilliant  
Richard Gryziak & Sandi Verbois  
Stefan Gunther & Lisa Goldberg  
Jonathan Halpern

Daniel & Elizabeth Hndwerker  
Elliot Harrison & Wendy Coleman  
David Hart & Lois Frankel  
Stephen & Shelley Heller

### March 9

Matt & Linda Heller  
Bruce Heppen & Bonnie Suchman  
Eugene & Esther Herman  
Mitchell & Patti Herman  
Carolivia Herron  
James & Annie Hershberg  
Judith Herzog  
Seth Himelhoch & Sheila Jelen  
William & Nira Hodos  
Robert & Helen Hovis

## Nayes un Mekhayes for Tiers

### Barbara Raimondo

#### Five

Tiers have been coming and going to and from all corners of the earth these days. **Barbara** and **Howard White** celebrated Hanukkah in Jerusalem with daughter **Ilana**, son-in-law **Michael**, and the three grandchildren.

Highlights included reading to grandson **Sruly**, going with him to the Jerusalem Zoo, watching one granddaughter play basketball in a *Dati Leumi* (Religious Zionist) league for girls, and visiting a museum with the other granddaughter. A one-day trip to visit family in Ra'anana included delicious *latkes*, *sufganiyot*, and fresh grapefruit picked in the yard just before lunch.

In keeping with the visiting family theme, **Loretta Vitale Saks** and **Bob Saks** spent the week between Christmas and New Year's in Trinidad and Tobago with their two sons, their wives, and their two granddaughters, ages six and three.

It was especially great to be able to be together since son **Daniel** and his wife, **Nikkia**, now live in Mexico City, so they are not all together very often. It was wonderful to light Hanukkah and Shabbat candles in their rented home with an outdoor dining room looking out over the beautiful hills of Tobago.

#### Fifteen

In the competition about which Tier can spend the most time with extended family, **John** and **Lynne List**, along with their three daughters/sons-in-laws and five grandchildren rented a house on North Captiva, Florida for a wonderful week. Included in the wonderfulness was hanging out, cooking, eating, taking long beach and nature walks,

kayaking, and all the rest.

Soon to be extended family visitors are **Alan** and **Cynthia Weitz**, whose daughter **Bethanie Weitz**, recently gave birth to a boy. Husband **Josh Costa**, baby, and Bethanie are doing well.

Coincidentally, a baby daughter was born to **Martin Kessel**'s son, **Allon**, and his wife, **Sharon**, in Tel Aviv. She is named **Orr** - meaning "light."

Speaking of light, Amazon's Kindle has published **Bruce J. Berger**'s fourth story collection, *Community and Other Stories*. This is the concluding set of linked stories that began in July with the publication of *Nate & Adel and Other Stories*.

In other publishing news, the January issue of *The Numismatist* (the official journal of the American Numismatic Association) features **Simcha Kuritzky**'s article on celestial themes on coins, medals and banknotes called *A Stellar Type Set*. All but one of the pieces photographed are from his collection and were part of an exhibit by the same name he put into competition last March. The journal cover featured one of his medals.

**Neshama Rovinsky** will be living with a host family and attending school in South Africa from the end of February to mid-August as part of the AFS Intercultural programs. Neshama's stay is supported by the George School, where she currently attends 10th grade, and by a Global Leaders Merit Award.

Her dad, **Bob Rovinsky**, enjoyed being invited by one of his Basic Judaism students, an Austrian foreign services officer, to attend the Hanukkah party at the Austrian Embassy. The Austrian Ambassador and the head of the

local American Jewish Committee office lit the first candle and recited the customary prayers, and the Embassy's chef served a delicious vegetarian meal.

#### Thirty

**Myrna Goldman** retired after 30 years of federal service on December 30, and she celebrated by sponsoring the kiddush on December 31. In addition, her office took her to lunch, and many family members came to a formal retirement ceremony earlier in the month. With her new-found time Myrna plans to get slightly involved with the Sunday morning minyan.

Myrna recently attended the *bris* of her newest grandnephew, Arlo Benjamin Rubin, in New Jersey on January 4. Proud parents are Josh and Meredith Rubin of New York City, and proud (possibly) sister is Sylvie Ann. That brings the total to four grandnieces and two grandnephews for Myrna.

**Michael Kraft**'s new counterterrorism book, *U.S. Government Counterterrorism: A Guide to Who Does What*, has been published. Your faithful columnist is impressed that anyone actually knows who does what in any part of the federal government.

The book is the first publicly available comprehensive description of the many U.S. government agencies, bureaus, offices and unclassified programs involved in countering terrorism threats at home and abroad. Mike and his co-author, retired Ambassador Edward Marks, are veterans of the State Department counterterrorism office and the National Defense University. In December, Mike and **Lisa** attended

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## Kol Nashim

Paula Flicker

### Games Night

Kol Nashim and Chaverim hosted another successful Games Night on January 21. About 30 people braved the predictions for refreezing of Friday night's snow and ice for an evening of games and snacks. Reportedly, the anagrams game was intense. Through what game was Simcha Kuritzky guiding players?

### Upcoming Programs

Don't get bogged down by winter. Attend the unique Kol Nashim programs for February and March! First, we will have TI member Dr. Maxine Grossman talking with us about Jewish rituals, old and new. Second, we are offering a series of Yoga Nidra sessions tied to the Passover ritual and text.

### "Newish Jewish Rituals:" How Are New Rituals Created?

Sunday, February 12, 10:15a.m.-1:30 p.m. Some rituals such as Bar and Bat Mitzvah, weddings, and funerals, are a familiar part of Jewish culture. However, Jewish religious practice constantly grows and changes. Thinking about the

invention of new rituals and the adaptation of old ones provides insight into the nature of ritual and contemporary Jewish culture.

Our speaker, Dr. Maxine Grossman, is an associate professor of Jewish Studies and Religious Studies at the University of Maryland. Maxine has spoken at TI in the past and always is an interesting, engaging speaker.

### Yogic Meditation for Passover

Four Sunday Evenings, February 26, March 4, 11, and 18, in the TI Chapel, 7-8:30 p.m. Prepare/Relax for Passover with Yoga Nidra. The four sessions will be taught by Shira Oz-Sinai. Ms. Oz-Sinai will use the Passover story to explore its themes in our lives today.

She tells us that "every class will begin with a brief discussion of a Passover ritual or text, usually followed by some time for self-reflection and/or writing. Then, we will examine our reflections and sense of freedom through a series of meditative self-inquiry exercises known as Yoga Nidra. This practice is extremely relaxing, effortless, and healing."



Each class will end with ideas for how to continue the process of exploration. This series will give you a fresh outlook on Passover and allow you to prepare and then enter Passover with new energy. Perhaps you will develop a new personal ritual for Passover preparation.

**Sign up now!** We need a minimum number in order to sponsor the classes but space is limited. Each of the four 90-minute sessions is designed as a stand-alone unit and can be registered for separately. The cost for each session is \$15, with a 4-session cost of \$60. Those who register in advance for all four sessions will be given space preference.

For more information on the class, links to additional information about our instructor and Yoga Nidra, and most importantly, to register, see the online TI announcement at [www.tifereth-israel.org/yoga](http://www.tifereth-israel.org/yoga)

## Nayes un Mekhayes for TI'ers (continued)

the Toronto wedding of a niece by marriage: two nice young Jewish doctors marrying each other. Awww! It is the third Canadian-American wedding in the family. They met up there with their daughter **Dina**, now a Nieman journalism fellow at Harvard, their son-in-law, a Torontonion (Hey, that's a real word!), and their two children.

**Elizabeth Handwerker** has been selected to participate in the 2012 ConnectGens Fellowship, powered

by Presentense. This is the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington's leadership training program for Jewish Social Entrepreneurs. Her project is MoEd: A Jewish Afterschool Community ([www.MoEdCommunity.org](http://www.MoEdCommunity.org)), which is on its way to opening next year thanks to the support of many TI'ers.

And now for the meaning of last month's word, *small beer*: "something of small importance: trivia" (Merriam-Webster Online).

Thanks to all who sent me news, sent me to others who sent me news, or otherwise helped sniff it out. Please send information for next time to your faithful columnist with `s p r a c h g e f u h l`, at [baraimondo@gmail.com](mailto:baraimondo@gmail.com), with "Nayes un Mekhayes" in the heading, or to P.O. Box 466, Washington Grove, MD 20880.

This brings to a close this edition of Nayes un Mekhayes for TI'ers.

## Bat Mitzvah

Hi. My name is **Margaret Wolfson** and my bat mitzvah is on February 11. My *parashah* is *Yitro*, which is an especially powerful one as it contains Moses bringing down the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai. I've enjoyed learning and working with my great tutor, Judy Cohen.

I live in Kensington, Maryland, with my mom, dad, two younger brothers, Thomas and Alex, and my little sister, Rachael. My brothers and sister drive me crazy sometimes, but we have lots of fun together, too. We also have a yellow lab, Ira, whom I love, even though he eats everything (especially my headbands and socks).

I attend North Bethesda Middle School. My favorite subject is English. In January, I was honored as the "Student of the Month" for "Caring." I enjoy soccer, tennis, piano, and competitive swimming. I've been on the All Star Aquatic swim team for the past four years, and in the summer, I swim for my neighborhood swim club, Cedarbrook. My best stroke is the breaststroke. I also enjoy reading (I've re-read the Harry Potter series about six times and most recently read *Tom Sawyer*), writing poetry, and watching re-runs of *Bonanza* and *Little House on the Prairie*.



My bat mitzvah project is to swim 5,000 yards to raise money for the American Cancer Society in honor of my late grandmother, Judith Pearlman Wolfson. I hope to see you at my bat mitzvah!

## February/Early March Highlights at Tifereth Israel

<b>February 4</b>	<b>Family Service, 10:30 a.m.-Noon</b>
<b>February 4</b>	<b>Israeli Movie Night, 7:30 p.m.</b>
<b>February 6, 13, 20, 27</b>	<b>Monday Learning <i>Parashat HaShavuah</i>, 11 a.m. Job Club, 1 p.m.</b>
<b>February 8</b>	<b>Tu B'Shevat Seders Family Seder, 6 p.m. Adult &amp; Teen Seder, 7 p.m.</b>
<b>February 11</b>	<b>Margaret Wolfson Bat Mitzvah</b>
<b>February 12</b>	<b>Newish Jewish Rituals, 10:15 a.m.-1:30 p.m.</b>
<b>February 12</b>	<b>Yiddish Poetry Reading, 7:30 p.m.</b>
<b>February 26, March 4, 11, 18</b>	<b>Yogic Meditation for Passover, 7-8:30 p.m.</b>

## Judaism Empowered

### Frank Solomon

If you want to sing your heart out at a Shabbat service, try one of the “independent minyans” in town. Over the last decade, there has been an explosion of these groups, services led by lay people for Shabbat worship, that have developed independently of established denominational and organized synagogue structures.

The first of these independent minyans began in the late 1990s, with most of them formed since 2000. Similar to the *havurah* movement that sprang up in the late 1960’s during the Civil Rights and Vietnam War era, these new groups strive to combine a commitment to *halakha* with egalitarianism and creative services where traditional prayer can become a highly spiritual experience.

They are often held in borrowed spaces on borrowed times, at churches, community centers or someone’s home. Some operate in synagogue space while maintaining their own leadership and organizational—or lack of which—structures.

#### Three Minyans in DC

There are three such independent minyans in town, two of them founded by members of Tifereth Israel. Tikkun Leil Shabbat meets at a downtown D.C. church and Segulah meets at Tifereth Israel. The older, more-established D.C. Minyan meets at the D.C. Jewish Community Center.

These minyans comprise disproportionately young Jewish leaders and professionals—precisely the people the institutional community has tried and failed to reach with huge initiatives and costly programs. Some say that they are successors to *havurot*, many of

which are seen to have outgrown their size and purpose and “gone establishment.”

While some synagogues and clergy see independent minyans as a threat, because they operate outside the traditional, established Jewish organizations, others see them as quietly reshaping American Judaism, as young Jews looking for alternatives to denominational, and organized forms of worship.

#### A Wide Variety of Options

These independent minyans come in different styles and sizes, with fluid, volunteer leadership. What they share is a desire for a communally-governed, non-denominational, self-serviced, egalitarian environment where they can have a vibrant, song-filled spiritual experience. Their leadership and ranks tend to have high levels of Jewish and Hebrew education. Volunteers act as Torah readers and *gabbaim*.

There is typically little English or calling out of pages at the service. This leaves the davener plenty of room to meditate or find his or her way around the *siddur*. Daveners use different *siddurim* or bring their own. There is little “dead air” time during services, which are remarkably vibrant with their spirited singing. In most cases, there is no *drash*, and minimal announcements—they make announcements in e-mails.

Traditional Zionist goals seem to play little role in the workings of independent minyans, while communal action and social justice take a much bigger role in the activities. One common characteristic of these minyans is their savvy in using social media to spread news of their activities.

“Melodic” is probably the best description for these independent minyans. Go to any of them and you will find yourself drawn to or drowned in a sea of vocalists singing to their hearts’ content. While music is “not everything,” as one rabbi commented about these independent minyans, it provides the vibrancy, passion and link that these young enthusiastic Jews find missing in what they see as often uninspiring traditional synagogue services.

While those unfamiliar with the melodies complain about not being able to follow them—each prayer leader may have a different melody to lead the prayer each week—most of the melodies are easy to pick up. In fact, the singing and the melody are their language. After a while, the melodies grow on you.

#### A Threat or Positive Trend?

Some synagogue and Jewish community leaders take a negative position and feel these new groups are weakening conventional synagogues and Jewish community organizations. Others view the groups as a positive trend that will lead to new approaches to religion and spirituality within the modern Jewish community.

In the meantime, these groups serve a purpose in keeping our younger Jews involved and allowing them to experiment with new paths to their Judaism.

Independent minyans may not be for everyone, but for some Jews, they are the best thing that has happened since Goucho Marx. To learn more about these new groups, read *Empowered Judaism*, by Rabbi Elie Kaunfer, one of the leaders of this movement.

## Five Poems

### Bruce Berger

#### Blessings

“Make your ear hear what your mouth utters”  
But how does one hear even a loud noise  
When the heart is shut against the world?

How much of the Holy must be imagined  
Before It can be ignored to remain  
Held in Its place by words?

Words will spill freely and not have their  
Meaning overflow from the heart  
Yet nothing else is needed.

#### Blessings #2

He stood to praise the minor miracle  
To seek blessing at the  
Coming of the new moon

When dusty from the road came upon them  
Rav, the son of Shava,  
Rabbi with few students

Not impressed with dust or paltry learning  
Nor his lateness for prayer  
Ravina did not greet

Surely a day of only small wonder  
He could have said “Shalom”  
Or smiled at Shava’s son

But to interrupt his words needed more  
Someone he could respect  
Required a better man

#### Blessings #3

Seven days without a dream  
Without a trace of fire in the night  
Without a visit from the heavens  
I’ve been left far behind  
Forgotten in the rear  
While others have been  
Led to safety

Seven days without a dream  
Yet I’ve done the hardest studying  
I’ve read ‘til candles burned themselves out  
My eyes teared with madness  
Sated as best I could  
But still my sick sleep  
Has been empty.

Now what evil will befall  
When God has turned His back so fully  
When Divine concern has run its course  
Never to return to  
One who’s waited always  
Burdened by fear and  
Challenged for love?

#### Blessings #4 — The Beginning of a Prayer

So what is the beginning of a prayer  
When one is bound to carry through?

If I enter Your house  
Is there no retreat  
Until I fast repeat  
Those certain words of truth?

So where is the beginning of a prayer  
That we are bound to carry through?

If we need not come in  
What forces us to stay?  
When must we continue  
Or else say “never mind”?

So when is the beginning of a prayer  
That I am bound to carry through?

If I say “Dear God, please ...”  
And then forget the rest  
Or stumble with my thoughts  
Have I sinned or floated free?

#### Blessings #5 — On his way

On his way to pray he saw there ahead  
A scaffolding swaying in the strong wind

He could cross four busy lanes of traffic  
Or could walk under and hope it withstood

The force of God’s breath

Either way, the obituary would  
List his name, accomplishments, and mourners

He dare not think if a prayer might spare him  
He could just quickly voice his last Sh’ma

Ready for judgment

*Bruce’s other writings can be found at: <http://brucejberger.wordpress.com>*

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(Continued on page 14)

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