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TISHREI 5775

ROSH HASHANA EDITION

KESKET  
קהילת שארי תפילה  
CONGREGATION SHAARE TEFILLAH

FROM THE RABBI'S STUDY

RABBI KENNETH A. SCHIOWITZ

If we had to ascribe colors to sin and purity, it would most likely be white for purity and red for sin. According to international surveys (as recorded on Wikipedia), white is the color most often associated with "innocence, perfection, the good, honesty, cleanliness, the beginning, the new, neutrality, lightness, and exactitude." White is certainly the "theme color" of the High Holidays, as we wear white kituls and cover the Torah and bima in white. The first to write of this symbolism was most likely the prophet Isaiah (1:18): "God said, though your sins are as scarlet, they

shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

If you have ever had the experience of trying to remove red or purple stains out of white clothing, you certainly know that this is no easy task. Had the metaphor been the reverse, and sin was symbolized as white and teshuva compared to red, then we would have a much easier time. Even my youngest children are experts at turning white into red or purple. But how can we succeed at turning red into white?

A basic understanding of color may help us out. While white may seem to be defined as the absence of color, in fact, white light is actually created by the combination of light from all of the colors in the spectrum. Snow appears to be white because it reflects all the light that shines on it. Red, on the other hand, is made by combining a small portion of all the colors of the rainbow. In fact, in the RGB color model, often used to create colors on TV and computer screens, white is made by adding blue

(Cont. on pg 4)

*Shaare Tefillah members getting involved-- more highlights within this issue!*



*Staying hydrated at the Cook-off.*



*Eli Ebreinfeld building a shed in the rain.*

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

MICHAEL CANTOR

Usually, at this time of year I attempt to deliver a message of renewed focus on family, spirituality, and community as we enter the new year. However, as we head into 5775, a year where the majority of the Shaare Tefillah Board seats (7 of 10) will be up for election, I would instead like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the work that the Shaare Tefillah Board and other communal volunteers have accomplished over the last year, hopefully encouraging others to consider running for a seat come December. 5774 was certainly an active and busy year for Shaare Tefillah. Here are some highlights:

\* We completed our second year of partnership with Teaneck Chabad Preschool. Roughly 20 youngsters came for schooling every day in our facility, under the leadership and guidance of Rabbi Ephraim and Mrs. Nechamy Simon. This relationship serves our community two-fold: first, it provides significant revenue for the shul, offsetting our expenses and reducing our need to overtax our membership; second, it provides a local early-childhood program for our families with younger children. As we head into 5775, I am pleased to announce that Teaneck Chabad Preschool will be nearly doubling in size next year, to be at

(Cont. on pg 4)

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CONGREGATION SHAARE TEFILLAH  
510 CLAREMONT AVENUE  
TEANECK, NJ 07666  
TEL: 201-357-0613

<b>Rabbi &amp; Rebbitzin</b>	Kenneth Schiowitz	201-289-5474	schowitzk@gmail.com
	Shira Schiowitz	201-928-1490	schowitzs@gmail.com
<b>President</b>	Michael Cantor	201-248-1567	amichaelcantor@hotmail.com
<b>Ritual Committee</b>	Benjy Burnat	201-692-7903	benjyburnat@gmail.com
<b>Gabbai</b>	Benjy Burnat	201-692-7903	gabbai@shaaretefillah.org
<b>Sisterhood</b>	Heather Kagedan		hkagedan@gmail.com
	Ashley Klapper		ashleyklapper@gmail.com
<b>Shul Administrator</b>	Kate Davis		office@shaaretefillah.org
<b>Youth Committee</b>	Nomi Schwartz	201-530-0530	nomigs@aol.com
<b>Kiddush</b>	Mendy Schwartz	201-530-0530	markjschwartz@waterbills.com
<b>Finance Committee</b>	Eric Orgen	201-692-3956	ericorgen@gmail.com
	Avi Goldin	201-836-6528	avigoldin@gmail.com
<b>Fundraising</b>	Michael Cantor	201-248-1567	amichaelcantor@hotmail.com
<b>Membership</b>	Matt Diamond	201-286-5639	membership@shaaretefillah.org
<b>Security/Building Committee</b>	Eli Ehrenfeld	201-913-2490	eselliot@gmail.com
	Jonathan Mantell	917-692-3919	jimantell@gmail.com
	Larry Gilbert	201-692-0831	gilb1050@gmail.com
<b>Strategic Planning</b>	Josh Wasserman	201-540-9277	joshwasserman@gmail.com
<b>Welcoming Committee</b>	Deena & Golan Elias	845-641-9954	deena.elias@gmail.com
<b>Shifra-Puah Committee</b>	Audra Lichter	201-692-0352	AudraDSny@aol.com
<b>Webmaster</b>	Keith Kaplan	201-357-2213	kkaplan@gmail.com
<b>Newsletter</b>	Dena Cohen	201-357-5100	dcroog@gmail.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**President:** Michael Cantor

**Vice Presidents:** Avi Goldin, Josh Wasserman

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**Past-President:** Mendy Schwartz

KeSheT

The Newsletter of Congregation Shaare Tefillah

**Editor:** Dena Cohen

**Layout Editor:** Kate Davis

**Advertising Coordinator:** Stefanie Diamond

**Contributors:** Alec Borenstein, Dena Cohen, Becca Glassberg, Rabbi Yehoshua Gold, Ashley Klapper, Audra Lichter, Jon Mantell, Neil Normand, Reuven Pinsky, Nomi Schwartz, and all those who provided event photos.

A special thanks to Benjy Burnat for providing the Yom Tov schedule.

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KeSheT is published seasonally to announce news, activities, davening times, and other important information to the Shaare Tefillah congregation and the neighboring community.



## MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Baruchim Haba'im:

Karen and Michael Sorkin	Yitzchak Handel and family
Leah and R. Yehoshua Gold	Tali and Yaakov Bina
Ilana and Jeff Turk	Dovid and Daniella Katz
Nessa and Noah Liben	Arye and Shana Dworken
Chaviva and Joe Nagari	Daniel and Reeni Pollack
Adina and Elliot Bernstein	

### Condolences:

To Teri Normand on the loss of her grandfather, Moishe Baum.

### Tzeitchem L'Shalom

Gittel and Avi Levin and to Esther and Yoni Jozsef on their recent aliyah to Eretz Yisrael.

### Mazal Tov:

David and Michal Kahan on Ariel's bar mitzvah.

Shoshana and Reuven Pinsky on the birth of a baby boy, Akiva Dovid.

Alexis and Maccabee Avishur on the birth of a baby girl, Eden Hadar.

Rabbi Schiowitz for the publication of three volumes of his "Madrikh La-Moreh" series on teaching Talmud, on Masechetot Berachot, Sukkah, and Sanhedrin.

Rikki Yudkowitz on her engagement to Danny Hoffman of Hillside NJ. Also to Rikki's parents, Tikva and Larry Yudkowitz, and to Danny's mother, Maddie Hoffman of Hillside NJ.

Rabbi Jeffrey Manas, who fulfilled all the requirements of Semicha and received his ordination.

Naomi and Aaron Mandelbaum on the birth of a grandson, Kenneth Aiden (Adin Yehoshua), born to their children Carolyn and Yossi Mandelbaum.

Gary and Chaya Rothschild on the birth of a baby boy, Daniel Yehuda, and to the extended Gantz and Kelsen families.

Bess and Ezra Bogner on the birth of a baby boy, Dov Simcha.

Lea and Alec Borenstein on the birth of a baby boy, Jack Shai (Yehoshua Avishai).

Aggie and Mark Siletski on the birth of their granddaughter, Allison Josephine (Yehudit Tova), born to their children Erica and Ari Siletski.

Aggie and Mark Siletski on the marriage of their son Yoni, to Dana Rossiello of Deal, NJ.

Rebecca and Moshe Raab on the marriage of their son, Yonatan, to Sarah Brecher.

Larry and Debbie Gilbert on the engagement of their daughter Jordie to Moshe Honick. Also to Nomi and Mendy Schwartz and Gabe and Miriam Gilbert and families.

Tzivie and Fred Fisch on the birth of a granddaughter, ZeeCee Layla, to Moshe and Caitlin Fisch.

Judy and Robert Friedman on the birth of a granddaughter, Leeba Ori, to Joyce and Nachi Friedman.

Baruch Cohen on his marriage to Elisheva Aeder of Kew Gardens Hills. Also to Baruch's parents, Lyn & Fred Cohen, and to Elisheva's parents, Dr. Lita and Mitch Aeder.

Elliot and Adina Bernstein on the birth of a baby boy. Mazal tov to grandparents Abraham and Feige Leidner and Paul and Rachelle Bernstein.

Michael and Tsippi Cantor on Kira's bat mitzvah.

(*Rabbi*, Cont. from pg 1)

and green light to red light at full intensity:



Thus, we can turn our red sins into pure white by adding other colors at full intensity.

How does this happen?

Sometimes, we think about the process of teshuva as the rejection of our pasts, and the attempt to create a new future for ourselves with a brand new-and-improved religious personality. However, perhaps there is a different way. Teshuva in general, and the period of the Yamim Noraim in particular, represent the greatest gift to humanity—the opportunity for self-growth and improvement. This is not accomplished by the suppression of one’s self, but the addition of “blue and green at full intensity.” Our pasts can become pure if we can find ways to channel our energies in more positive directions. White is not the innocence of naïveté; that would be transparent. A

“mature white” is a purity that is the perfect merger of all experiences and qualities in perfect proportion.

Our sins in our pasts are likely not motivated by an “evil spirit,” but rather by a misdirected positive energy—or, by an energy that is isolated. Teshuva is about redirecting those inner resources, or by balancing them with other complementing forces. At this time of year, we have the opportunity to really think about how we are spending our time, where we are exerting our energies, how we engage in mitzvot, and what kinds of family dynamics we are creating. We can think about our own resources and energies and how they can be improved, where they can be channeled to, and what we can add into the mix to elevate ourselves.

Let us all take full advantage of this opportunity to identify the colors that can be added to the red of our lives to complete our spectrum and to transform that which appears to be red into snow white. And may we, in turn, be blessed with a year of blessing and of peace for our families and for the entire world.

(*President*, Cont. from pg 1)

maximum capacity in our space. Also, we have entered into a 2-year extension with Chabad, securing their tenancy through the summer of 2016.

\* 5774 was the first full year where our Adult Education Committee was put to the task of offering classes and shiurim to meet the educational needs of our membership. The offering of diverse topics and eclectic speakers has certainly exceeded my expectations and we are grateful to both the Committee members and our Rebbetzin Shira Schiowitz for their time and efforts to continue to grow and develop our shul.

\* We had our most successful fundraiser to date with our 11th Annual Dinner, where we recognized the Mandelbaum and Bieler families for their contributions and efforts on behalf of our shul and community. Our Dinner Committee worked tirelessly to make this event happen, and plans are already in the works for our 12th dinner coming in January 2015. Stay tuned!

\* We made significant improvements to our physical space, mostly to ensure our building provides a safe and secure environment for our congregants.

\* And of course, we continued to grow. As we welcomed new families and new members, we also expanded our programming: Youth minyan, Beit Medrash minyan on the High Holidays, parent-child learning, weekly shiurim, etc, are examples of where volunteers have taken time to help meet our community's growing needs.

These are but a handful of examples of the accomplishments and collective achievements of the past year. Every one of us who has contributed to our growth and progress should take pride in what we have been able to build; and for those of us who are still waiting for the right opportunity to contribute their time and effort to our shul, I hope the above highlights indicate that each and every one of us can bring a unique perspective to craft and mold the future of our community.

Jerry Leshaw and Avi Goldin will be leading this year's Nominating Committee. Please do not hesitate to reach out to either Jerry or Avi if you have any questions about running for a Board seat. The positions up for election in December are: President, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and two Officers.

Thank you and Shana Tova,  
Michael

# Member Spotlight: Yossi & Steffie Sipzner

BY JON MANTELL

## What do you both do for a living?

Steffie: I am in my third and final year of Pediatric Residency. Basically, my 30th year of schooling. It has been a long and not-so-fun road, but I'm happy I'm almost there!

Yossi: I am a professional tooth brusher. I also enjoy making adults and little kids scream on an almost daily basis. Just kidding—if you couldn't guess, I'm a dentist. I work in Rochelle Park and can't really complain with my 6-minute commute (HINT HINT).

## Where are you both originally from?

Steffie: As if it wasn't obvious, I grew up in Lakewood. I'm quite the typical Lakewood girl, except for everything about me.

Yossi: I grew up mostly in West Orange, NJ, although I lived in Queens and Memphis beforehand.

## How did you meet?

Yossi: It was a long and exciting story.... Well, actually, we were just set up (Lakewood style). We were supposed to meet a few minutes earlier than we did though, but Steffie missed that part of the first phone call and was waiting in the totally wrong spot.

Steffie: Actually, Yossi was just waiting in the wrong spot. It's a miracle we even found each other on the first date. NYC is a big place.



## What is the most embarrassing thing your child or spouse has said or done?

Yossi: Steffie managed to hit her head on a pinball machine (the lower part) when we were dating. It was quite humorous, actually.

Steffie rebuttal: I was pretending to laugh at one of Yossi's jokes.

Steffie: We were being hosted by newlyweds in the Westgate apartments and our kids were acting like nuts, as usual. Sammy kicked a ball up in the air and it landed right in the cholent pot.

## If you could be any age or in a certain time of your life, what would you pick?

Yossi: High school years were really great. I had a solid Chevra in West Orange and would love to hang with them all again.

Steffie: I would love to be 18 again and go back to the year in Israel. That said, I wouldn't want to take the MCAT again.

## If you could switch places with any person, dead or alive (though you wouldn't be dead; just saying that the person actually is dead), who would it be and why?

Yossi: That's a no brainer. Superman. Although I'm not too far off from Superman in this body either.

Steffie: I would be Yossi so I could always be right.

## What three things, aside from family (which everyone says, or if they don't say they feel like a jerk), would you not want to live without?

Yossi: Meat, scrubs, and Shalom Zachars.

Steffie: Seltzer, coffee, and Bloomingdales.

## What are the top two things you love about our shul?

Yossi: Great minyan pace and solid chairs.

Steffie: I'll answer serious on this one for both of us. We like the warmth and welcoming nature of those who daven at the Shul. Although I have only been inside once or twice, it's quite clear that our shul is special and unlike any other.



# Member Spotlight: Larry & Debbie Gilbert

BY JON MANTELL

## What do you both do for a living?

Larry: I am an Independent Manufacturers Representative. Our company sells equipment on the east coast used to make solar cells, computer chips, coat optics, and simulate deep outer space, among other things. (I have an opening in New England for anyone interested).

Debbie: I am a nurse and work for the Rutgers School of Nursing Child Health Program.

## Where are you both originally from?

We are both originally from Rochester, NY, located in Western NY.

## How did you meet?

We had some common friends in school, but first met each other after high school, while working as counselors at the Rochester JCC Day Camp.

## What is the most embarrassing thing your child or spouse has said or done?

Larry: Being at Back-to-School Night and the first grade teacher was describing how two boys had made a mess in the classroom with their glue, only to find out one of them was mine.

Debbie: One summer when I was working as a nurse at the day camp, one of my children, who was 5 at the time, told his counselors that his mother was having a baby (which was untrue at that time).

## What are the top two things you love about our shul?

Larry: Its friendly and welcoming atmosphere; and all the kids (especially seeing our grandchildren in shul)

Debbie: Larry has the right answer, and I whole-heartedly agree. I think the best thing about our shul is the children. Each one is cuter than the next!

## Given the growth of the shul over the years, what are you most proud of?

Larry: Having been an active part of the shul from its birth and seeing it continue to evolve.

Debbie: I'm most proud of Larry and Mendy and everyone who worked so hard to create a thriving communal shul.



# ADULT EDUCATION

BY REUVEN PINSKY

Our Adult Education programming has had a strong first year since our launch last November. Over the past few months since our last newsletter update, our committee has managed to provide some unique and thought-provoking speakers in a variety of forums, including:

- Continuation of our legal holiday shiur series, including a second visit by Rabbi Mordechai Willig to discuss halachic challenges in the workplace
- An interactive session led by Doctor Zal Suldan on ways to make our Pesach seders more kid-friendly
- An insightful shiur by Gabriel Wasserman on the origin and meaning of piyutim, coupled with an inspiring selichos night kumsitz led by Gilli Houpt.

The Adult Education is hard at work trying to keep the momentum going with ideas for additional programming. And, we're always on the lookout for fresh proposals. So feel free to reach out to the committee



# YOUTH UPDATE

BY BECCA GLASSBERG

The Youth Committee has been very busy this summer preparing exciting activities for the new school year! Many of our events last year were very successful, such as our Friday night onegs, craft night, spa night, and karate night, and we plan to continue and add onto these programs. Everyone who came to our Picnic in the Park had a blast. We enjoyed snacks and ran around playing sports and running relays with Coach Dan. Junior Congregation continues to be a success. We also have fun activities in the works for the older kids as well. As always, we work hard to plan programming your children will enjoy, and we are always open to constructive feedback and ideas.

On the home-front, our youth leaders have all been trained and certified in CPR! They've also been busy, along with other members of the youth committee, painting a beautiful mural of the Kotel on the wall outside the Beit Midrash. Additionally, some of our children have "moved up" to their older groups. As our community continues to grow, so have our youth groups! Our children have almost doubled in size since last year! As a reminder, we need to strictly stick to the appropriate ages in groups to ensure safety and that our groups can run smoothly. We're looking forward to our upcoming events, beginning with entertaining programming planned for the High Holidays.

## Our Youth Department

Miriam Blackstein.....Director

Elisheva Gold.....2-4 year olds

Yaeli Rothschild.....2-4 year olds

Ahuva Ehrenberg.....2-4 year olds

Allie Orgen.....2-4 year olds

Akiva Gold.....Pre-K & K

Chezkia Lauer.....Pre-K & K

Yaakov Lauer.....Pre-K & K

Aviva Ehrenberg.....1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

Ehud Adler.....1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

Gabi Benjamin.....1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> grade

Aryeh Halpert.....3<sup>rd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> grade

Naomi Manas.....3<sup>rd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> grade

### Floaters:

Talya Adler, Gabe Isaacs, Ely Kaplan,  
Yonatan Kaplan, Tehila Shedlo

# SISTERHOOD UPDATE

BY AUDRA  
LICHTER

On June 4, for a Tea and Torah event (and by tea we mean cheesecake), the Sisterhood held its annual Shavout shiur with our very own Rebbetzin Schiowitz, called “Contemporary Messages of Sefer Bamidbar.”

On June 28, the Sisterhood held its very first joined event with the Adult Ed Committee—the first women’s only shalosh seudot—with good food, company, singing, and a shiur given by Tzippy Staum.

On July 12, at the Ladies Open Mic/Game night, the women of Shaare Tefillah had fun acting out scenes from movies, reading excerpts from our favorites books, and dancing to a chorus line, among other fun games. Thanks to Chana Schneck for hosting this event and to Ashley Klapper for refreshments.

On August 9, Lisa Schlaff, Assistant Principal at SAR Highschool, gave a shiur on “Motherhood in Midrash.”

Special thanks to Teri Normand and Stacy Lansey for finding our guest speakers.

August 17 was Shaare Tefillah’s 2nd Annual Barbecue/Cook-off. Families came together to eat, mingle, and watch the competition. We would like to thank our contestants, Robyn Adams, Vikki and Seth Minsk, and Larry and Gabe Gilbert, for signing up to compete. All three groups of contestants cooked up a storm of finger-licking good BBQ chicken. They each had 40 minutes to chop, season and BBQ their very own recipes to be judged by a discerning group of judges that don’t mess around when it comes to BBQ chicken: Former BBQ/Cook-off champion Adam Gussen, Motivational speaker/lawyer Alec Borenstein, and, reprising his role from last year, Shul President Emeritus, Mendy Schwartz. They judged the chicken based on three categories: Presentation, Flavor, and Originality. **Robyn Adams**, and **Vikki and Seth Minsk**, tied for first place! As our winners, they received gift cards to Chef Central, their names in bold in this newsletter, and shared bragging rights for a full year until our next cook-off competition (unless they would like to battle it out with each other for the title; feel free to come use the shul grill)! We would like to thank Laurie and Zev Beckerman and Nomi Schwartz for helping in the preparations. Special thanks to Natan Cohen and Jonathan Lichter for lighting up the grill and cooking burgers, dogs, and wings for the masses.

September 13 was our annual Meet and Greet Shalosh Seudot in the... shul! Due to rain, families new and old mingled in the social hall instead of the usual Phelps Park location. There was a pot-luck spread of great food and fun for everyone. Thank you to all of those who contributed to the event.

Lastly, we (Dena and Audra) would like to take this opportunity to say good-bye as the Shaare Tefillah Sisterhood Co-Presidents. It has been a great two years working for the Shaare Tefillah community, organizing events for all to enjoy. Of course, we didn’t do it alone! Also ending their current terms on the Sisterhood Board are Laurie Beckerman, Jennifer Bieler, Rena Goldin, Meredith Gottesman, Ashley Klapper, Gittel Levin, Hillary Wasserman, Rachel Yolkut, and Sisterhood President Emeritus, Nomi Schwartz. Thanks to Teri Normand for arranging the last few shiurim and organizing the first women’s only Shalosh Seudot. And thank you to all those who showed up at meetings, helped with ideas and events, schlepped to stores, made calls, and packed Mishloach Manot, among other tasks. Thanks also to Keith Kaplan for distributing e-mails to the shul for our events, and to Mendy Schwartz for helping with supplies.

We would now like to welcome our new Sisterhood co-presidents, Ashley Klapper and Heather Kagedan. We know they will do a great job! We also welcome Chana Schneck, who has taken over for Gittel Levin as our new treasurer. There are still some positions to be filled on the new Sisterhood board as well as general Sisterhood board members. If you are interested in being part of this wonderful group of women, please e-mail either Ashley Klapper at [ashleyklapper@gmail.com](mailto:ashleyklapper@gmail.com) or Heather Kagedan at [hkagedan@gmail.com](mailto:hkagedan@gmail.com).

Sayonara, baby!

Dena and Audra



# When I Look at Israel and I Don't See Tragedy

BY ALEC BORENSTEIN

I'm confused. I want to write a depressing piece about how the world feels like it's going to, well, you know, but I can't. I want to write about the tragedies that I see happening in Israel, where our brothers and sisters are forced to endure torment as rockets rain down on them, but I can't go to that place. I want to connect all of the terrible things that are going on with last month's Tisha B'av, but my mind sends me further, to Rosh Hashana. This, because with all of the terrible things that are going on in the world, and especially in Israel, it's hard not to see the hand of Hashem guiding this whole thing. When I see Hashem guiding us, even into and out of tragedy, I feel instantly better about our place in the world. This has never been truer as we approach the Day of Judgment.

Let's start from the beginning. This crisis began with the tragedy of our fallen brothers in Israel, our three boys who were taken from us simply because they were Jews. It was a tragedy of the greatest degree, but in that tragedy something unusual happened.

There's an old joke of an old Jewish man who was saved from a desert island, and when the coast guard came to pick him up they found two buildings. The guard on patrol asked the old man, why are there two buildings? The man said, oh, that first one is the shul I daven in. The second shul is the one I won't go into.

The point is that we don't have the greatest history when it comes to Jewish unity, achdus. Yet, when those boys were taken from us, I saw a level of unity that I haven't seen in years. I saw Jews feeling connected to each other because we know that at the end of the day we only have each other. The kidnappings galvanized us in ways like never before. And when we are united, when Hashem sees us united, then He will not fail us.

Which leads me to Moses. Moses sole, to be more exact. There is a fish in the Red Sea called the "moses sole" fish. This fish has an amazing ability to escape shark attacks. All of the other fish in the Red Sea are constantly eaten by sharks, but the moses sole prevails. How, you ask? Great question! The moses sole has toxins that it releases, so that when the shark gets too close, its jaws actually freeze up and it cannot chomp down on the fish. There are pictures online (google it) where you can see sharks with the moses sole in their jaws but the sharks can't kill them because of the smaller fish's toxins.

What's the point? The point is that right now we can see our situation as dire. We can see our situation in Israel and in the world as tragedy. Or, we can see that Hashem is ready for our salvation if we'll only just unite and believe in Him—believe that Hashem wants us to succeed in a war and in a world where it seems we cannot win. Even when we are in the jaws of the enemy, Hashem is looking out for us to let us survive catastrophe.

Catastrophe. I don't know if it's true or accurate, but I read about how there was a planned massacre for Rosh Hashanah which the IDF discovered in its destruction of the tunnels. Again, I cannot

verify the story completely but my sources seem convinced that it's true (I always wanted to say that—my sources are probably your sources).

But even if that specific story isn't true, which one of us can doubt that something similar is not true? Who knows what battles Hashem is fighting for us behind the scenes? Who knows what worse catastrophe we can now avoid as a result of our incursion into Gaza? Hashem has been planning our salvation before He planned the tragedy that caused it.

Every Shabbos, we say Mizmor Ledavid. Every Shabbos we reaffirm our belief that Hashem will protect us. We quote the words of David: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me." David doesn't say, "Though I stay in the valley of the shadow of death..." but he talks about the fact that he is walking through the valley. In our lives, we will often walk through the valley, but Hashem doesn't want us to stay there. He wants us to walk out of it. It's more than His "desire"—Hashem is planning our redemption, if we would only unite and believe in Him.

I want to add one more thing, a caveat. I know that this war is not over. I know more of our brothers and sisters are going to die (even after a ceasefire), and I view each death as a massive tragedy. I'm not trying to belittle or downgrade any of the terror our brothers and sisters are facing and I hope that none of my words are perceived as dismissing the terrible events that are occurring (and will occur).

I simply believe (and yes, it's easier for me to believe this in the comfort of my American home, without any air raid sirens, yet I still believe) that Hashem is somehow setting things up for our redemption. That has been our history. Tragedy leads to salvation. The ashes of the Holocaust bring us a Jewish homeland. The death of Torah in Europe sprouts the seeds of great learning in America. As we spend the majority of these days in shul reconnecting with Hashem, we should remember that Hashem will protect us if we unite and rally around Him. We often walk through the valley of the shadow of death, but Hashem will never let us linger there.



# Why the Late Start on Selichot?

BY NEIL NORMAND

As we approach Rosh Hashanah, we know that the month of Elul is to be used to prepare ourselves for the upcoming new year. In this vein, our Sephardic brethren begin to recite Selichot, special supplicatory prayers from the beginning of the month of Elul. However, the custom among the Ashkenazim is to begin the recitation of Selichot much closer to Rosh Hashanah, from the Saturday night prior to Rosh Hashanah. One could pose the following question; if the month of Elul is supposed to prepare us for Rosh Hashanah, then why do we get such a late start of the recitation of Selichot? Why do we refrain until the Saturday night right before Rosh Hashanah?

The answer to this question lies in the special Haftarat that are recited during this time of year. In contrast to the majority of the year where the Haftara is thematically similar to that of the weekly parsha, starting from the three weeks, the custom

has developed to associate the theme of the Haftara not with the weekly Torah portion, but rather to the vicinity of Tisha B'av. For the three Haftarot leading up to Tisha B'av, we recite "gimmel d'puranuta"—three selections that foreshadow the calamities that will occur. For the seven weeks subsequent to Tisha B'av, we recite "shiva d'puranuta"—seven selections of consolation. One could ask, why does it take seven weeks to read Haftarot of consolation? The midrash, quoted by the Avudraham, a 14th century halachic authority, gives a somewhat surprising answer. He states that the initial overtures of consolation are rejected by the Jewish people, so it is only after seven weeks of consolation that the Jewish people are sufficiently consoled and are confident in our relationship with Hashem. We can infer from this midrash that the consolation is a process. Initially, reeling from the tragedy of Tisha B'av, we are in no state of mind to accept consolation

from Hashem. It is only after several weeks of consolation that we can fully accept the consolation. (See also Mesora Journal, Vol. 1, pgs. 20-22, in the name of the Rav Zt"l, for a similar analysis).

Perhaps, this consolation is a prerequisite to the recitation of Selichot. After all, much of Selichot is pointing out our flaws and imperfections and crying out to Hashem for forgiveness. However, if we are still in the process of accepting God's consolation, then we may not have the confidence to ask God for forgiveness after acknowledging our flaws. Rather, we will become too despondent to continue. It is only after the seven weeks of consolation are complete and our relationship with Hashem has been restored that we have the confidence to recite Selichot. This perhaps underlies the Ashkenazic custom to wait until just before Rosh Hashanah to recite Selichot.



# Decisions, Decisions!

BY RABBI YEHOShUA GOLD

“ee - I have placed before you today life and good, and death and evil...and you will choose life so you will live, you and your offspring." (Devarim 30:15,19)

As Moshe was speaking to the Bnei Yisroel during the morning of the day he would die, he encouraged the Bnei Yisroel one last time to maintain their consciousness of Hashem and remain true to their promise. Moshe also reminded them of the consequences of their decisions. At the start of this account, Moshe made clear that the commitment he was asking the Bnei Yisroel to make that day was specifically a renewal of the promise of old. Why did he need to stress that this crucial choice between good and evil is being made "today"?

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt”l explains that every day we are faced with a choice of two paths to pursue, and that day's decision is entirely independent of what has happened in the past. Someone who may have previously made spiritually destructive and harmful decisions throughout life can and should choose that today's decisions will be completely different. They can now be spiritually beneficial and wholesome and focused on positive growth. Similarly, one who has always made spiritually productive decisions cannot rely on past performance to guarantee future outcomes. The Yeitzer Horah, the path of evil, is always there and always extremely enticing. On any given day, it can and will present itself as a very tempting and more enjoyable option. Therefore, every day must have an active decision between good and evil, to live with awareness of Hashem. Furthermore, the educational and instructional process of our children, from the time they are young, must be imbedded in and enhanced by spiritual nourishment and positive choices.

As we approach Rosh Hashanah, it can be very easy to become demoralized and dejected when we reflect on our failures to achieve our growth goals of the past and the limited success we may have felt in this struggle between choosing good over evil. But we must remember who we are: "You are children to G-d, your L-rd." (ibid 14:1) Hashem promises us that we are His children, He loves us, and it is never too late. No matter how many previous times we made choices that were not in our spiritual best interests, Hashem promises us that we can be forgiven through teshuva, and we can start that process by making the right choice now by choosing TODAY good over evil. One of the most amazing aspects of Judaism is that we always have the opportunity to correct the wrongs we have done in the past through teshuvah and to have that wrong completely wiped away as if we never did it at all. So let us all decide together that this Rosh Hashanah we will make a change and TODAY choose good over evil and change the course of our life trajectory forever.

Have a wonderful Yom Tov!



# Carpe Diem and Around Again

BY DENA COHEN

**R**osh Chodesh marks the new month, another lunar cycle where we can begin again.

This phenomenon implies a new hope, ushering our approach from darkness to light as the new moon begins its journey toward fullness. Similarly, Rosh Hashanah fits this mold on a larger scale. We prepare for a new beginning, readying ourselves, in prayer, to be inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life. Also coinciding with the High Holidays is the "school year," which is a kind of new beginning of its own. I'd like to think of the new moons, months, and seasons as new beginnings. Opportunities to start fresh.

As I began writing this column, my plan was to expand on the concept of the school year and how it connects to Rosh Hashanah, the New Year. How we get to start class, the next grade up, with fresh eyes; how we have a chance to reform any negative habits from the previous school year; how we find ourselves excited about new subjects, classmates, and teachers; how we stand at the ready in anticipation for what this new school year may bring. I planned to throw in something about Labor Day as well. I even planned a cute little analogy of apples and honey to an apple for the teacher.

And then Robin Williams happened.

I use the word "happened" as a safe medium between those who argue that his depression was an illness over which he had no more control than if it had been, say, a virus, versus those who argue that he actively chose to kill himself. I hold what I deem to be a more constructive approach — that Robin Williams died by suicide as a result of his depression. That's what "happened." In the wake of this tragedy, there has been much public communication about depression and suicide. I can go on and on about how important it is to have such dialogue (as I mentioned in my February 14th column [in the *Jewish Standard*], "I have bipolar disorder"), and I can try to navigate through the details of his later months, but I'd rather do neither. Instead, I'd like to find something positive to relate to by focusing on his life.

Some readers are scratching their heads now, wondering how Williams's life has anything to do with the Jewish New Year. As we approach the holidays, I—as a human being who, naturally, wants to put order to chaos, make sense of something tragic, and find some trace of a silver lining—want to talk about what we might learn from his body of work as well as from his persona.

Williams's comedic timing and dramatic touch popped right off the screen; he made us laugh and put us in awe. He was known for his quick wit and manic ramblings, accompanied by an exuberance that was contagious. We see this in "Aladdin," "Mrs. Doubtfire," and countless other performances, as well as in interviews and

comedy clips. I witnessed this once in real life, when, in between takes for a movie, he entertained the crew with flailing arms and, from my vantage point, inaudible ramblings. He had everyone in stitches. I had no idea what he was saying—only that there were a whole lot of smiling faces.

Robin Williams made us laugh. As I see it, few endeavors are more important than providing happiness to others. Williams's humor uplifted many people, and I would like to think that for each laugh or smile he extracted, he was credited with a mitzvah. We could all strive to bring more joy and happiness to others.

Even in his more dramatic performances, Williams showed an awareness and appreciation for living life to its fullest. The finest example is in "Dead Poets Society," where the overarching theme—carpe diem—relates, as I believe, to the meaning of our own Jewish New Year, and very much so. Carpe diem. Seize the day. In one scene with his students, Williams follows up this sentiment with a portentous whisper: "Make your lives extraordinary." This, because life is fragile, and for the most part, we don't know when our own lives might come to an end.

We address the finality of life when, in Unetanneh Tokef, we recite, "Who will live and who will die?" and then, most hauntingly in light of this recent event, "Who will die at his predestined time and who before his time?" We pray to be inscribed in the Book of Life. How can we make the best of our prayers during the Ten Days of Repentance? How can we each, in our daily living, bring meaning to this inscription? I think that learning from our past and current transgressions allows us to look forward to a fresh start in the coming years.

A new year; a fresh start. How close this ties to "carpe diem," not just in our day-to-day lives, but also in our view of life in general. Despite his problems with addiction and depression, I don't know if Robin Williams felt that he had an enriched life. What I do know is that his acting, personality, and wit enriched the lives of others. In the end, he, alone, knew what was going through his mind. With his tragic death, conversation about the need to continuously address mental health and illness has been brought to life. And in his death, maybe we can also internalize this reminder of life's fragility.

Carpe diem. Chai. Because life is fragile: "Who will live and who will die?" Live it to the fullest, and in doing so, also remember that laughter is good for the soul. We are reminded of this cycle of renewal on Rosh Hashanah. We should be reminded of it, thereafter, with each new month.

— This article first appeared in the *Jewish Standard*

# The Best Gelato In Town

BY NOMI SCHWARTZ

**W**e (Mendy and I) were lucky enough to travel to Italy this summer for four days. Though our trip was only to Venice and Rome, most people would argue that it would be impossible to tour these two cities in that amount of time—but let me tell you, it's truly amazing how much touring can be accomplished in a twenty-four-hour day without traveling with children. I highly recommend it!



After landing in Rome, we hopped a high-speed train to Venice, an amazing city like no other that functions on all water. When we weren't getting lost wandering through the many twisty narrow streets, we spent most of our time sightseeing while getting around on water buses, which are equivalent to packed subways in the form of a boat. We soon realized it was worth the extra money to take a private water taxi to avoid the packed-in-like-sardine feeling in the heat of a hot summer day—or, an even better alternative was to just walk throughout the city. The scenic ride through the Grand Canal on the gondola gave us a true sense of how the people in Venice live; just about everyone owns a private boat, which docks right outside their doors. There's a boat for every need imaginable, including garbage

collection, construction, catering, food deliveries, ambulance, and fire boats. We also enjoyed watching how the artisans created hand blown Murano glasses in the factory tour we took on the neighboring island. The famous tourist sites that we visited, such as the glorious Basilica in the Piazza San Marco, instantly took me right back to my college art history class.

Little did we know, Venice has been a home to Jews for hundreds of years. The Jews in Italy have suffered through many awful years of religious persecution and war. They were forced to live in the very first Jewish ghetto in the world; actually, the etymology of the word "ghetto" is the Italian word, "ghèto," which means "waste" in Venetian. At times there used to be thousands of people living in the ghetto, and today there are about 500. We took a very informative tour of the Jewish Museum, which has beautiful precious, historic, and religious objects from Jews who lived in the ghetto throughout its long history, some dating back to the 1500s. We went into four out of six magnificent shuls built hundreds of years ago—only two remain operational today. In the day-and-a-half we spent in Venice, we managed to eat our way through the kosher pizza place, bakery, and our favorite Israeli style meat restaurant, Gam Gam, where we were introduced to our first taste of an Italian Jewish delicacy, fried artichoke.

After one last train ride, we were back in Rome, which was an incredible blend of a bustling downtown modern-day city with boutique shops and cafes, mixed

with ancient larger-than-life statues, monuments, and Roman ruins all over the place. We couldn't believe how the locals would speed around town on the cobblestone streets, in and out of traffic on motorcycles in swarms, all while dressed in designer suits and high-heel shoes, often doubled up on their way to work during rush hour. We wasted no time: in just two days, we managed to see the Great Synagogue, Galleria Borghese Art Museum, Coliseum, Pantheon, Arch of Titus, Vatican, Saint Peter's Basilica, Sistine Chapel, Bernini Fountain, and Trevi Fountain, as well as walked miles through the many famous piazzas, from day and into the night, to counteract all the amazing kosher food we encountered in Rome. The choices of kosher restaurants in the Jewish Ghetto were plenty, but our favorite, hands-down most authentic Italian experience was at Yotvata. The food was just incredible. (Thanks, Stefanie Diamond, for sending us there!)



The thing that really made a lasting impression on us and had the biggest impact was the way our incredible Jewish tour guides were able to speak to us from their first-hand, personal experiences as Roman Jews whose families have lived through hundreds of years of terrible anti-Semitism and

# **KIDS IN THE KITCHEN**

*In honor of Rosh Hashanah, I wanted to make an apple treat with my kids that was easy, fun, and YUMM! I found this handy dandy recipe while doing a Pinterest search, and they were a HUGE hit in my house! My kids love munching on these apple chips and had a lot of fun making them too! - Ashley Klapper*

## Oven-Baked Apple Chips

### Apples

**Optional: Fruit-flavored jello, any flavor (I used raspberry (pink!) and orange)**

**Optional: ground cinnamon**

Core apples and slice in thin slices (1/8 of an inch or less) and place on a parchment or silicone baking mat lined baking sheet in an even layer. Slices can touch each other, but try not to overlap. Fit as many apples on a sheet as you can (they shrink a lot!). If desired, sprinkle with cinnamon and gently rub in. Alternatively, you can sprinkle with dry fruit flavored gelatin (ignore instructions on box and just sprinkle the dry powder).

Bake apples at 170 degrees for 6-8 hours, until dry and slightly shriveled, and curled up around edges. Turn off oven and leave door shut until completely cooled. Remove apples from baking sheet and store in an airtight container.

Recipe found on [OurBestBites.com](http://OurBestBites.com)  
[www.ourbestbites.com/2012/07/oven-dried-apple-chips-two-ways/](http://www.ourbestbites.com/2012/07/oven-dried-apple-chips-two-ways/)



(Gelato, Cont. from pg 9)

persecution by the Catholic church and the Nazi occupation, yet they still carry on their Jewish lineage, family traditions, a love and pride for Judaism, and a deep-rooted connection to the Jewish Ghetto in Rome. While on a Jewish tour of Saint Peter's Basilica, our guide, Marco, blew our minds away when he pointed out a few pictures of the Kohen Gadol painted on the Ceiling of the most famous Catholic Church, wearing the breastplate with a crown on his head that says God's name in visible Hebrew letters. He shared stories with us about how Jews have lived in Rome for over 2,000 years, and how rabbis learned with and influenced Michelangelo in his painting of the famous scenes on the ceiling of the

Sistine Chapel. While touring the Jewish Museum, The Great Synagogue, and the old Jewish Ghetto, Micol, our guide, told of her grandmother marching backwards through the Arch of Titus after the establishment of the state of Israel, after 2,000 years of no Jew walking under the arch. She also showed us the barn doors behind which her grandparents hid from the Nazis during the holocaust and the spot where 2,091 Jews were deported to death camps. All over on the cobblestone streets in the ghetto are metal square plaques on the ground in front of all the homes where each person who perished in the holocaust lived, listing their name and age as a remembrance.

Despite all the years of suffering, fear, sorrow and bitter past, Rome today has the greatest population of Jews in Italy, numbering at 10,000. Though many are assimilated, non-religious, and living outside the ghetto, to them there is no better place to be than meeting up with an old friend for coffee or just kibbutzing back in the square in the heart of the Jewish ghetto, eating the best kosher gelato in town.



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						9/20 Slichot: 12:50
9/21 Shacharit: 8:30 Mincha: 6:40	9/22	9/23	Erev R"H 9/24 Remember Eruv Tavshilin  Candles: 6:31 Mincha: 6:30	R"H 1 9/25 Shacharit: 8:30 Mincha #1: 1:17 Mincha #2: 6:30 Maariv: 7:13 Candles/Preparations After: 7:35	R"H 2 9/26 Shacharit: 8:30 Mincha #1: 1:17 Mincha #2: 6:30 Maariv: 6:46 Candles Before: 6:28	9/27 Haazinu Shabbat Shuva Shacharit: 7:15/9:00 Drasha: 10:45 Mincha 6:15 Maariv: 7:28 Shabbat Ends: 7:34
Tzom Gedalia 9/28 Fast Starts: 5:25 Shacharit: 8:00 Mincha #1: 1:20 Mincha #2: 6:15 Maariv: 6:43 Fast Ends: 7:14	9/29	9/30	10/1	10/2	Erev Y"K 10/3  Mincha: 3:30 Candles: 6:16 Kol Nidre: 6:20	Yom Kippur 10/4  Shacharit: 8:45 Yizkor Not Before: 11:15 Mincha & Neilah: 5:05 Fast Ends: 7:22
10/5 Shacharit: 8:30 Mincha: 6:15	10/6	10/7	Erev Sukkot 9/18 Remember Eruv Tavshilin  Candles: 6:08 Mincha: 6:10	Sukkot 1 10/9 Shacharit: 7:00/9:00 Mincha: 6:10 Candles/Preparations After: 7:12	Sukkot 2 10/10 Shacharit: 7:00/9:00 Candles Before: 6:05 Mincha: 6:10	Shabbat C"H 10/11 Shacharit: 7:00/9:00 Mincha: 5:55 Maariv: 7:05 Shabbat Ends: 7:11
10/12 Shacharit: 8:30 Mincha: 6:05	10/13	10/14	10/15 Hoshana Rabba  Remember Eruv Tavshilin Candles: 5:57 Mincha: 6:00	10/16 Shmini Atzeret Shacharit: 7:00/9:00 Yizkor Not Before: 10:15 Mincha followed by Simchat Torah Auction & Maariv: 4:50 Candles and Preparation after: 7:01	Simchat Torah 10/17 Shacharit: 7:00/9:00 Candles: 5:54 Mincha: 6:00	10/18 Breishit Shacharit: 7:15/9:00 Mincha: 5:45 Maariv: 6:54 Shabbat Ends: 7:00

*Shana Tova u'Metuka!*