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Headlights

Spring 2013 Vol. 5 No. 1

Shining lights: Jewish education for people with special challenges

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Special Marriages
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NEW!
Gertrude Schechter
Holiday Visitation
Program



...and more!

A PUBLICATION OF **JEP!** - JEWISH EDUCATION FOR EVERY PERSON

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Jewish Education for Every Person
 wishes to express its profound gratitude to
Rabbi Baruch and Mrs. Claire Cohon
 AND THE
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We gently lowered her into the unadorned wooden casket. Fulfilling the Biblical declaration, "from the dust you came, to the dust you shall return," holes were drilled in the bottom of the casket, allowing the body contact with the dust of the earth.

Naama placed a shard of pottery on each of Rachel's eyes and on her mouth, symbolizing human frailty. Golden sand from the land of Israel was lightly sprinkled over her. We covered Rachel's face with a piece of the linen, and asked her to forgive us for any rough or disrespectful handling. We wished her a speedy journey to *Olam HaBah*--the world to come.

Lifting the heavy casket cover and positioning it onto its fastening pegs felt like an act of finality. Ruth opened the door to the refrigerated room. The whoosh and blast of cold air was startling, breaking the meditative mood. We wheeled Rachel inside, where she would wait for the next step of her voyage.

Stepping out of that quiet, windowless room into daylight, time, and schedules, we collected our purses and cell phones, and stepped back into our day; a sunny summer one.

I felt buoyed throughout the day. Catching up on the phone with one of my daughters, now a new mother, I told her, "I did my first *tahara*." She gasped. "Really?"

But, it wasn't a gasp type thing, not of horror, and not of an Oh wow mystical high. It was an ordinary, extraordinary thing to do.

Rachel's image flittered though my mind once or twice. Not morbid. Just an image of a friend I was glad to have helped.

Early Thursday, I awoke and remembered her. I said *Modeh Ani*, a prayer expressing thanks for the new day. No rote recital this time; I really felt it.

Rachel was in her place in G-d's universe--stripped down to her essence, purified of her worldly concerns. And I was thankful to be in mine: unfinished business, chaos, imperfection and all.

Reprinted and excerpted from Hadassah Magazine, January 2013



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She is Pure

By Miriam Karp

Just her and me.

I took a deep breath and followed the three women.

Early that Wednesday morning we had taken side-roads for our half-hour trip, avoiding rush hour traffic, coming together to do a special *mitzvah*. There she lay. Everyone else faded into the background.

In that refrigerated room two *meisim*, newly deceased, lay covered with sheets. I recognized Rachel's bulky shape, from visiting her during her months of decline.

As the women wheeled Rachel into the preparation room, I followed, a bit nervously.

For several years I had been thinking about taking part in this *mitzvah* of *taharah*/purification, preparing a Jewish body for burial. I was both touched and intrigued when I first heard about this. For many years I'd been busy with the kids; nurturing life, not yet physically or emotionally ready to deal with its end.

Now, in my early fifties, I was starting to feel ready, and somewhat obligated to try. Obligated because purifying a *meis* is a sacred ritual, performed with care by Jews all over the world. Some unknown *tahara* team had done it for my grandparents and in-laws, *alei hem hashalom*. In our small community, we all share the joys and responsibilities of Torah life, and every set of willing hands counts.

Alei hem hashalom, may they rest in peace. According to Jewish law and tradition, the living help soul get ready to rest in peace, by preparing its earthly home--the body--with well-defined rituals of cleansing and dressing in simple shrouds.

These rituals are done with the utmost dignity, privacy, and respect. Rather than making an attractive façade for the funeral, they focus on purity and simplicity, each step suffused with deep *Kabbalistic* meaning. I knew all this. In my head. But, question was, could I do it?

To be honest, I wasn't here just for altruistic reasons, beautiful and compelling as they were. Helping the dead is called *Chesed Shel Emes*--true kindness: you give with no possibility of being paid back. Beyond noble acts and community spirit, I wanted to expand my spiritual horizons. Surely helping a soul and its body in this transition would meet the bill. The burial committee is traditionally called the *Chevre Kadisha*--the holy society. With a name like that, I reckoned, they must be privy to some deep, mysterious truths.

The *tahara* turned out to be like most of Jewish life, where searching for rarified or transcendent "spirituality" wasn't exactly it -- was kind of off the mark.

Was it profound, quiet, hushed; Spiritual? Yes--and no. The *tahara* was surprisingly prosaic. Earthy. Even ordinary. Naama, the group leader, a brisk and efficient woman, helped dispel my initial discomfort by referring to Rachel as "her." "Move her over here," she instructed. "Hold up her head."

There was nothing macabre about the scene. We were about to help a real woman, a she, a person. We had a job to do.

Watching my experienced partners' faces, for a cue in this new universe, I felt both humbled and relieved: Humbled by their ability to just step up, with earnest and every day kind of caring. Relieved to see them show signs of compassion, even distress, at some of the bodily signs of the suffering Rachel must have endured these last few months.

The first glance at her was hard. The first touch was hard.

The other women started washing Rachel with washcloths, keeping as much of her face and body covered as possible at any one moment, respecting her privacy, even now. Initially I stood back, watching. As they turned Rachel to wash her back, I reached out tentatively and held her hand to keep it from flopping over.

I helped more as we proceeded, following my friends' spoken and intuited guidance. As we gently washed her body, a body that had lived and loved and borne children, it seemed almost like bathing an infant, with its total dependence, as we hovered protectively around.

Trying to talk only as necessary, we gave each other instructions in subdued, focused voices. The quiet was punctuated by coughs, sighs, the sound of water filling the buckets, the snap of latex gloves.

We took off whatever bandages we could, along with other substances that would block the purifying water, so it could cover her as completely as possible. Removing her frosted pink nail polish was like stripping away her earthly life. I imagined a kind nurse or grandchild sitting patiently with Rachel and applying this reassuring slick coat of certainty and vanity on her worn, fading hand.

That was all behind her now.

In a non-broken sequence, Naama, Ruth and Malka poured cascading buckets of water from the *mikveh*/ritual bath from her head to toe.

"*Tahara hee*-- she is pure," they intoned. Over and over in almost a chant-- rhythmically, asserting, defining. The sound of the water splashing against the metal table accenting the words.

Pausing at several points, Na'ama murmured several prayers and parts of *Psalms*, the familiar sounds of the ancient Hebrew washing over Rachel and clothing her in a cocoon of comfort. We listened, understanding the intent, even if we couldn't translate each word. Our wishes for this woman cushioned and cloaked her as well.

Then, we gently patted her dry. Ruth brushed her hair. I watched the wet grey-white hair spring into soft, fine curls. This tender act was touching, like giving a small child that final mother's touch.

Working together, we dressed Rachel in *tachrichim*, simple white linen garments: tunic, pants, gown, bonnet--each put on and tied in a special way.



Editorial

All's Well That Ends Well

B"H

Everyone loves babies. Birth is the most joyous of events. So why does the Bible say definitively, "Greater is the day of death than the day of birth?" (*Ecclesiastes, 7:1*)

We all live a dual existence: a body from the dust and a soul from heaven. G-d selects a soul, matches it with just the right parents and sends it down to this world to accomplish its mission in a human body. There's a general mission which we all share (perfecting the world and ourselves) and a specific mission which only that soul can accomplish.

"Down you go, little soul." Through higher heavens, lower heavens, celestial forests, gardens and oceans until...plunk, into a body. A brand-new, cute, fresh, unspoiled newborn. Now, soul, do your work. Develop that little person into a happy, kind, ambitious, generous, fair, upstanding and successful adult who a) desires goodness in all its forms and b) rejects evil every hour of every day.

60, 80, maybe 100 years later. How successful was I? We can only tell on the last day, as we exit this world and all the accounts are in. And *that's* why the day of death is greater than the day of birth. At birth, there's only potential. Optimistic, fresh, beautiful and unlimited. But nothing has been accomplished yet. Many years later, as we drag ourselves over the finish line, covered with the sweat, joy, blood and tears of a life of all kinds of battles, we can proudly say, here's what I accomplished (and, honestly, here's what I didn't accomplish).

How much can one person accomplish in a lifetime?

"A person must see himself and the world as equally balanced on two ends of the scale; by doing one good deed, he tips the scale and brings for himself and the entire world redemption and salvation."-- Maimonides, Laws of Repentance, 3:4

A lot. A Kosher and Happy Passover!

Yaakov and Miriam Karp

About JEEP Jewish Education for Every Person

OUR VISION: A Jewish community in which **every person** has access to our spiritual inheritance and can use it to reach his or her full potential.

OUR MISSION: To help local people with special needs access Jewish education and connections to empower them to better overcome their life challenges.


JEEP SERVES:

- **Children** and youth with learning and other challenges
- **Seniors** in nursing homes and those who are homebound
- **Adults** with disabilities
- **Patients** in hospitals
- **Alcoholics and addicts** wishing to obtain or maintain recovery using Jewish spiritual tools and support


Please visit us at Jewisheducate.org

feel free to contact us about *Headlights* or Jewish education.
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Jewish Spiritual Tools for Meeting Life's
Challenges Weekly class/discussion
Wednesday, 7:00 - 8:00PM

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Preserve This Child A Story

by Robin Hirsch

“Martha wants to know what to wear.”

“I don’t know. Whatever you wear to a conventional bloodletting.”

I am not uncivilized. My wife is a clinical psychologist. Our son was barely a week old. And here we were, new and excited parents, about to submit our beautiful, tender, sweethearted boy, whose journey into the world had been hard enough, to the sharp and terrifying instruments of a certified *mohel*.

“This is the twentieth century,” my mother-in-law protested. “They can do it in the hospital. It’s barbaric. Why are you doing this?”

Why were we doing this? Neither of us is an observant Jew. We fast on *Yom Kippur*, we attend the occasional *seider*, even more infrequently we hold one, but we don’t keep kosher, we rarely worship, and we belong at the moment to no *shul*. And yet, one of the few things we had decided before the birth was that if we had a boy we would have a *bris*—a ritual circumcision. Now, as the hour approached, a flood of feelings, questions, memories, apprehensions overtook me.

Had I had a *bris*? I didn’t know. Certainly I had been circumcised, but had there been a ceremony? My father is dead; my mother is elderly and no longer remembers.

I was born in London during the war. My parents were refugees from Germany. How anxious, I wonder, would they have been for so conspicuously foreign an occasion. If there had been a *bris*, who would have been there? Certainly no immediate family beyond my parents. All my grandparents were dead—both my grandfathers had died in Berlin, mercifully, long before Hitler; both my grandmothers had lived to die in concentration camps.

Bris or no *bris*, I think of my parents choosing to have children in a foreign country, in middle age, during the Blitz, and I think of it as a decision of extraordinary, almost palpable courage. In the face of the destruction of their families it seems such a life-affirming act that if I dwell on it, I weep.

And yet, here I am, more than forty years later, and some of the contours of my life have a familiar shape. I live in a foreign country. What remains of my family is scattered. In terms of immediate family, there are eight of us in five different countries. Scattered about the globe, all these years later, we are shards from the explosion and there is very little holding us together.

And here I am in New York, six months older than my father was when I was born, and here, miraculously, is Alexander. And now, suddenly, however briefly, we are nine. And complicated, turmoil-ridden, tenuous though my family history has been, it is still, willy-nilly, a Jewish history, and there is still a tattered fabric to sew him into.

Reading the *mohel’s* book the night before, I learned a number of things. For example, that the ritual of circumcision, according to the Talmud, is one that the Jewish people have always observed with ecstatic joy.



The ceremony was set for 1:30. I had called what little family there is, some friends, bought smoked salmon, champagne, one bottle of kosher wine, thirty three-inch gauze pads, Neosporin ointment, rubbing alcohol, flowers, candles. Behind closed doors, on a quiet city street, in the middle of an ordinary Wednesday, normal-looking men and women and even the occasional child would assemble, and a man would, after a few Hebrew words, cut off my son’s foreskin in our living room. Why were we doing this?

“Why are you doing this?”

It’s half an hour before the ceremony and the question comes from Ingrid, a writer, a Jew, who lives most of the time on an island off the coast of Maine. There is no challenge, no criticism, it is a simple open question. But I don’t have a simple answer.

“I don’t know exactly,” I say. “It’s a mystery. It has something to do with family, something to do with community. Somehow I felt it was important.”

“Are you nervous?”

“Of course I’m nervous.”

Amazingly, almost everyone I called is here. We are maybe two dozen. I look around—writers, psychoanalysts, filmmakers, rock musicians, lawyers, business people—not exactly a crowd Abraham might have anticipated. And yet, a family—a lateral family, a chosen family, the only kind of extended family a decimated family can have.

The *mohel* arrives. We go upstairs. Leona holds the baby, kisses him. I kiss him. His godfather presents him to his grandfather, who sits in the chair opposite the *mohel*. And the *mohel* says, “*Baruch haba*. Blessed is he who comes.” And the *mohel* begins. My father-in-law holds his grandson. And after an age the *mohel* looks up and says, “A nice Jewish boy.” And I smile wanly. And he soaks a piece of gauze in Schapiro’s Naturally Sweet Concord Grape Wine from Rivington Street and Alexander bites on it like a sailor in the British navy and he stops crying. And the *mohel* recites the blessing, “*Elokainu velokay avosenu...Our G-d and G-d of our fathers, preserve this child for his father and mother, and may his name be called in Israel: Alexander Moshe ben David.*”

And the *mohel* bandages the tiny wound. And when he is done he produces a miniature red, white, and blue knitted *yarmulke* with the legend “I love NY” crocheted around the edge, and he places it on Alexander’s head and he holds him up and people laugh and there is applause.



Gertrude Schechter Holiday Visitation Program

Imagine how elderly people may feel, lying in bed in a nursing home or hospital, alone, bored, sick, worried. Their kids may live out of town or they may have little or no close family. Imagine how anxious and vulnerable they would feel. A regular, caring visitor could do so much to lift their spirits and give them some needed hope and perspective.

The Gertrude Schechter Holiday Visitation Program aims to do just that - bring needed companionship and support to hospital patients, nursing home residents and home-bound individuals. Around Jewish holidays, holiday foods, *mitzvos* and mini-celebrations are added. If needed, a Jewish pastoral perspective is sensitively offered, including support with end of life issues and burial.

Nancy Schechter, a vice-president at a prominent financial services firm in NYC decided to sponsor the naming of this program in her mother’s honor and memory. She recently spoke with Headlights about her experience with JEEP.

H: How did JEEP meet and help your mother?

N: JEEP had offered their services to many non-Jewish nursing homes. Soon afterwards, my mother moved into one of those homes, and asked to see a rabbi. They called JEEP. Rabbi Karp came out to see her, although the home was about a forty minute drive from his area.

H: When did you learn about JEEP?

N: Well, I got a message from Rabbi Karp, letting me know he had visited my mom, but I resisted returning his call. I was sure she must have wanted to talk with him about her life ending and dying—that she must have been depressed. I just wasn’t prepared to hear that. When I finally called him a few days later, I was taken aback to hear that they had talked about life! He sang to her, played some musical instruments, shared some Torah ideas with her, and really lifted her spirits. When I spoke with Rabbi Karp, he exuded so much warmth and caring. After he left my mom, the nurses told me this visit was all she talked about and how much she had enjoyed it. This was how I got to know about JEEP’s work in reaching out to those Jews that have special needs or are not in the parameters of the regular Jewish community services.

H: Was it just a one-time visit?

N: Oh, no, Rabbi Karp visited my mom regularly throughout the ensuing months and also during subsequent hospitalizations. It was such a comforting relief for both me and my mother, especially since I live in NY. Although I was commuting back and forth often, I couldn’t be there constantly. She really looked forward to his visits. And throughout my mother’s illness, Rabbi Karp was staying in touch with me offering his support during this difficult time.

H: Was there any other involvement besides the visits?

N: Well, there came a time when my mothers’ health was rapidly declining, she was clearly dying. The nursing home called me and told me that I should come as soon as possible. It would be about 24 hours until I could be at her bedside. I called Rabbi Karp right away. He told me not to worry; he would go and stay with her until I arrived. He stayed late into the evening but had to leave for another emergency. He called a

friend to stay with my mother until he could get back, so she wouldn’t have to be alone. Rabbi Karp returned to her bedside around 2:00 AM and stayed with her until I arrived late in the afternoon. JEEP provided this extraordinarily caring, they really reach out to those in need.

H: Tell us why you decided to sponsor this program.

N: My mother was a good hearted, kind, lively and positive person who loved to laugh and was very often the life of the party. She enjoyed life and loved her family and friends. And I get my strength from my mother. She was blessed to have had a long and healthy life; she didn’t become ill until the end of her life. But then she, like other elderly people, reached a stage where she became ill and was so vulnerable. There are many elderly who become ill, have little or no family and are alone at a most vulnerable time in their lives. JEEP does such important work, befriending and supporting them and their families. I want to make sure their work continues.

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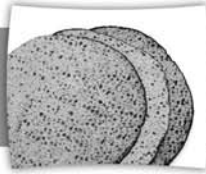
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The Second Passover Second Chances

by Rabbi Ben A.

If any man of you, or of your future generations, shall be unclean . . . or be on a journey far off, he shall keep the Passover to G-d on the fourteenth day of the second month . . .

(Numbers 9:10-11)

On the date commemorating the Exodus from Egypt, it is a *mitzvah* to celebrate the holiday of Passover. When the Temple stood—may it be speedily rebuilt in our day—this celebration would entail bringing a special sacrifice on the day before Passover, the Paschal lamb. The Torah tells also of a “Second Passover” granted to a group of men unable to fulfill their obligation with the rest of the nation on the regularly appointed holiday. Because they were ritually impure, they were excluded from performing the sacrificial offering in honor of Passover.

Aggrieved because of their missed opportunity to fulfill a commandment of G-d, they approached Moses and asked that he somehow make an exception for them. G-d spoke to Moses and told him to establish a makeup date, one month later, after they would have a chance to purify themselves. The “Second Passover” thus became a *mitzvah*, a commandment of the Torah, eternalized for all time.

But if the Second Passover was destined to become a commandment, why didn't G-d simply relate this commandment to Moses at the outset, as He did with all of the other commandments? Why didn't G-d just tell Moses about the “backup plan” when He told him about the regular Passover? Why did the people first have to ask for it?

The Second Passover represents the power of *teshuvah* (literally: “return”). By returning to G-d, one has the power to retroactively transform past failings into veritable merits. For it is the penitent's prior distance from G-d that serves as the very springboard for his current heightened desire to cleave to Him. Ironically, had he not once been estranged from his G-d, he would never have come to the kind of yearning for Him that he feels now. The darkest moments of his past, what were once his greatest liabilities, now become his greatest assets, the source of an intense motivation for re-found closeness with G-d.

Such a condition, however—where past misdeeds become virtues—cannot be premeditated. G-d's rulebook could never prescribe failure to serve G-d properly as a way to later become closer to Him. The opportunity to transform the past must come from the penitent himself.

He must ask for it, and only then is it granted.

In recovery, we've found a new relationship with G-d. We have an appreciation for His wisdom, love and guidance that we are quite sure could never have been possible had we not been forced to turn our lives over to Him as the only known treatment for a disease which is progressive, incurable and fatal. We did not become alcoholics in order that we could later discover G-d in recovery. Nor is that something that we could ever have planned. It isn't even something G-d would have told us to do.

A certain *chassid* was once chided about the fact that the *chassidim* tend to make a big to-do about the Second Passover. “You celebrate a holiday established for impure people,” his detractors laughed. “No,” he

answered, “not a holiday for impure people. A holiday for impure people who became pure.”

Some might think it odd when they hear an alcoholic in recovery say something like “Being an alcoholic is the greatest thing that ever happened to me.” Perhaps they think that recovery is meant only to make us more like normal people, to catch us up. But we do not have the dubious luxury enjoyed by “normal people” who decide how and when to let G-d into their lives. Such is our fortune: that we must strive to join that happy lot for whom their very survival dictates that they give themselves entirely over to G-d.


We could never have planned it. G-d would never have advised it. But this is how things worked out. And this is what has made us closer to Him today.

Rabbi Ben A. is the most famous anonymous rabbi. Using his pen name, Ben A. draws from his personal experience in recovery to incorporate unique chassidic philosophy into the practice of the 12 Steps.

B's'd This month's Recovery event:

Sober Passover Seder

Cincinnati Jewish Recovery-Friendship House




Passover is a great time to get together with friends in recovery and meet new people. Matzo, grape juice, the four questions, Passover songs. Home cooked meal, relaxed and accepting atmosphere, enjoyable and useful conversation.

Friends and family are welcome.

Monday night, March 25
7:40 Candle lighting, 8:30 Seder begins
“Jewish recovery: Living the exodus”

7325 Elbrook Ave, Amberley Village, 45237 (1/4 mile north of Section Rd)
RSVP: 513-307-2386, Rabbi Yaakov Karp or RabbiJewishEducate.org
Holiday accommodations available
Next: April 28, 6:30 PM Bonfire-Bar-B-Que (L'ag B'omer)



finally.f.r.e.
friendship, recovery, enlightenment.
Cincinnati Jewish Recovery-Friendship House

The place for Jewish recovering addicts to meet, communicate and support each other in their recovery.

And Alexander is returned to his mother.

And Lacy, my father's distant cousin's husband, who finds himself here in Brooklyn via Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Shanghai and the Upper West Side, breaks the *challah* and says the blessings over the bread and the wine.

And we open the champagne and we dig into the bagels and cream cheese and salmon, and slowly the mystery recedes, and we are once again in a pleasant light-filled house on a pleasant street in the borough of Brooklyn, New York City. And no one cries. And there is only the faintest memory of blood.

Excerpted from Last Dance at the Hotel Kempinski: Creating a Life in the Shadow of History, by Robin Hirsch



Baby Naming

by Rabbi Aron Moss

Question: *My wife has entered the seventh month of pregnancy, and we have started discussing names for our baby. She wants something traditional, but I want my child to be an individual and am thinking of something more exotic. What does Judaism have to say about name-giving?*

Answer: Choosing a name is a big deal. A person's name is not a mere label, it expresses the essence of its bearer. The letters that make up your name, its sound and its meaning are descriptions of your soul. Only a prophet has the vision and foresight to know which name fits the soul of your child.

You are that prophet.

Kabbalah teaches that parents are given temporary prophecy to choose the right name for their child. This flash of insight can come at any time, but when it does you just know you have got it right. A certain name suddenly grabs you or gradually grows on you. It is divine inspiration leading you to give the name that truly belongs to your child.

Look through the names of the great characters of Jewish history, or the names of grandparents who have passed away. If one of these names jump out at you, it may indicate that the child has a spark from that person's soul, or may even be their reincarnation, and will emulate the positive traits of that person. Souls tend to stay in the family, and a child named after a departed loved one will continue to carry their flame.

Originality should not be a factor in choosing a name. Trying to be different to everyone else means basing your choice on everyone else. This can hardly be called individuality. But giving your child a Hebrew name that both you and your wife agree upon means giving a name that is true to your child's unique soul.

Remember, you are not just naming a baby. You are also naming a teenager, an adult and a senior citizen. Today's cool names will be out of fashion by the time your baby starts teething. Use your chance to be a prophet for a day, and choose a name that describes your baby's soul.

Rabbi Aron Moss teaches Kabbalah, Talmud and practical Judaism in Sydney, Australia.



Passover

The Festival of the Child

When did you last experience freedom? For many of us, burdened by our jobs, our familial and social responsibilities, and the other entanglements of the human state, freedom seems as rare as it is essential, as elusive as it is desirable. We want it, we need it, yet how do we achieve it?

But look at the child. Observe him at play, immersed in a favorite book, asleep and smiling at his dreams. Assured that father and mother will feed him, protect him, and worry about all that needs worrying about, the child is free. Free to revel in his inner self, free to grow and develop, open to the joys and possibilities of life.



This is why Passover, the festival of freedom, is so much the festival of the child. For it is the child who evokes in us the realization that we, too, are children of G-d, and are thus inherently and eternally free. It is the child who opens our eyes to the ultimate significance of Passover: that in taking us out of Egypt to make us his chosen people, G-d has liberated us of all enslavement and subjugation for all time.

The child is thus the most important participant at the Passover *seder*. Many of the *seder* customs are specifically designed to mystify the child, to stimulate his curiosity, to compel him to ask: *Mah nishtanah halailah hazeh...* “Why is this night different from all other nights?” For the entire *Haggadah*, the “telling” of the story of our redemption from Egypt at the *seder*, is built around the concept of “When your child shall ask you... You shall tell your child.” On Passover, we want to enter the child's mind, to view reality from his perspective. For how else could we taste freedom?

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| | Empowerment | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Community cherishes and values young children—Children are welcomed and included throughout community life. Children seen as resources—The community demonstrates that children are valuable resources by investing in a child-rearing system of family support and high-quality activities and resources to meet children's physical, social, and emotional needs. Service to others—The child has opportunities to perform simple but meaningful and caring actions for others. Safety—Parent(s), caregivers, teachers, neighbors, and the community take action to ensure children's health and safety. |
| | Boundaries & Expectations | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Family boundaries—The family provides consistent supervision for the child and maintains reasonable guidelines for behavior that the child can understand and achieve. Boundaries in child-care and educational settings—Caregivers and educators use positive approaches to discipline and natural consequences to encourage self-regulation and acceptable behaviors. Neighborhood boundaries—Neighbors encourage the child in positive, acceptable behavior, as well as intervene in negative behavior, in a supportive, nonthreatening way. Adult role models—Parent(s), caregivers, and other adults model self-control, social skills, engagement in learning, and healthy lifestyles. Positive peer relationships—Parent(s) and caregivers seek to provide opportunities for the child to interact positively with other children. Positive expectations—Parent(s), caregivers, and teachers encourage and support the child in behaving appropriately, undertaking challenging tasks, and performing activities to the best of her or his abilities. |
| | Constructive Use of Time | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Play and creative activities—The child has daily opportunities to play in ways that allow self-expression, physical activity, and interaction with others. Out-of-home and community programs—The child experiences well-designed programs led by competent, caring adults in well-maintained settings. Religious community—The child participates in age-appropriate religious activities and caring relationships that nurture her or his spiritual development. Time at home—The child spends most of her or his time at home participating in family activities and playing constructively, with parent(s) guiding TV and electronic game use. |

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to be continued

Purim Joy with JEEP!

JEEP and its supporters were busy taking full advantage of the 24 hour special day of Purim, striving to bring it's joy near and far. Over 120 Purim goodie bags, complete with *hamantaschen* and *gragger*, were distributed to hospital patients, and residents of nursing homes and assisted living communities. Seven families joined together with JEEP, and helped distribute the packages and visit the recipients.



The residents at one of the Homes enjoyed a Purim party, complete with dancing, music and a *megillah* reading. One participant brightened up, sharing how the *megillah* brought back memories of her childhood. It seemed a dam was opened, she then started telling stories about her bubbly's matzo ball soup, and sharing other fond memories.

As the festive day ended, JEEP hosted a sober Purim party for the Cincinnati Jewish Recovery community. Sober in substance, but not mood. A warm, happy, enjoyable atmosphere pervaded, as the *megillah* was read, *Shalach Manos* exchanged, recovery insights and discussion based on the Purim story shared, and a delicious meal served.

Chanukah Light

The eight days of Chanukah were a busy time, as JEEP tried to bring the holiday celebration to as many people as possible. Children's parties, *menorah* lightings, parties, *latkes*, *dreidels* and songs were brought to many seniors, to Halom House, to hospital bedsides, spreading Chanukah's message of light and hope. Over 200 Chanukah packages with *menorahs*, *gelt*, information and *dreidels* were hand delivered and enjoyed.



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Shavuot (May 14-16 2013/ Sivan 6-7) marks the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai, over 3300 years ago.

Does this sound like a vaguely familiar story? Guess what--you were there! Our sages teach that every soul, from all time, was there, at the foot of the mountain. Each soul experienced the special revelation and closeness to G-d as He gave humanity our mission statement and the inspiration to carry it out. Every year, on Shavuot, we get another shot of that unique energy and reconnect with G-d's gift. Shavuot morning is a special time to bring the family to the synagogue and hear the actual reading of the Ten Commandments.

We eat dairy foods on the first day of Shavuot, including cheesecake and blintzes. Please enjoy this cheesecake recipe. Happy Shavuot!

Shavuot Recipe: Easy No Bake Cheesecake

- 1 graham cracker pie crust
- 8 ounces cream cheese (softened)
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 8 ounces whipped cream or non-dairy substitute

Directions:

- Heat cream cheese in microwave for 30 seconds.
- Stir in sour cream, sugar, and vanilla extract.
- Fold in the whipped cream.
- Fill pie crust, refrigerate until ready to serve.

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Happy Passover



I Want to Get Married, Too!

by Sarah Kahan

“Is it possible for my disabled child to get married?” This is a question that parents often ask. Their son or daughter may often convey the sentiment, “I also want to get married, just like my sister or my brother or my friend.”

It is painful for people with disabilities to see others get married while they are left behind. At the same time, there are, naturally, additional challenges in marriage amongst those with disabilities.

How can we navigate the best path?

Everyone needs hope. People with disabilities need to feel that it is possible for them to achieve and accomplish their life goals, up to and including enjoying the companionship of a relationship and marriage. Considering how to help a child with disabilities prepare for marriage, there are many challenges that parents and adults face. Sometimes parents have difficulty learning to let go and allow their child to make their own decisions. Since they have been managing their child's life for so long it is hard for parents to envision their child functioning without their assistance. Dealing with one crisis after another for many years, has accustomed them to constantly being on alert. It is understandable that it can be very difficult to view such a “child” differently. Often, someone from outside the family, such as a mentor or coach can see things more objectively. A dating mentor can make an assessment as to whether the child is capable of learning the socialization skills necessary to have a relationship and get married. A dating mentor can coach the individual in skills that are basic to having a strong foundation in a relationship, such as how to communicate, solve problems, compromise, show and give respect and how to have empathy.

Of course, there are serious concerns and obstacles. Many such couples will require ongoing supervision and support in order to maintain a stable relationship. Furthermore, while most marriages include an expectation of establishing a family, these couples in consultation with mental health professional may need to think along different lines. In the short and long term, there are no “one-size fits all” solutions.

Chana Silver of Chicago, recently participated in “the most meaningful wedding she'd ever been at,” that of her niece with developmental disabilities to a young man from New York. “The joy was simply out of this world,” she related. “The couple lives in an apartment down the street from my sister, where they have privacy and as much independence as they can handle, yet she is able to discreetly monitor and assist them as needed. I admire both families for carefully crafting a fuller life for their beloved children,” she said.

Recently, David Mandel, CEO of OHEL Children's Home and Family Services invited some of OHEL's married couples for dinner to talk about how to help more individuals inside OHEL and in the larger community improve their chances for having meaningful relationships, and possibly getting married. The couples had the opportunity to share what helped them get married and what helps them successfully remain married. Their case managers and resident managers were also present at the dinner.

Many shared how the support of their case managers has been helpful to

them in addressing problems before they escalate, as well as their assistance with being connected to appropriate resources, such as marital counseling in order to deal with the typical and not so typical stresses of married life.

Some participants shared their joys and struggles, making the listeners laugh and cry with them. One couple invites friends every Shabbos in order to increase their chances for finding someone to befriend. Stigma is still an issue many struggle with, especially when trying to find a partner or caring third parties to facilitate their meeting and dating.

Clients with mental illness have found that many people are unfortunately very dismissive of individuals who seek to marry and who are effectively managing their mental illness-- an understandable disposition that requires much more community education. One person offered to be available to help fill that void. Another suggested joining online websites and having a special section for individuals with psychiatric diagnoses. Such discussions are important to break down the barriers that prevent individuals from pursuing their goals for establishing meaningful relationships and getting married.

Chesed/loving kindness is a cornerstone of Jewish values and the *chesed* of helping Adam find his mate was performed by none other than G-d. Persons with disabilities have the right to enjoy as much of life as typically developing people do, and it is great *chesed* to help those who need the extra support and guidance to achieve their goals. We are embarking on a new frontier to give individuals with disabilities some of the same opportunities the mainstream population appreciates. There are no easy answers and the road can be long and bumpy; however, we need to join together and ask, “what are the obstacles that we need to overcome” until we reach our goal.

Sarah Kahan, LMSW is the Coordinator of the Simcha Program @ OHEL Children's Home and Family Services. Individuals interested in the program should please contact OHEL at 1(800) 603-OHEL. Additionally, Sarah has a private practice in Flatbush. She provides psychotherapy to individuals, couples, adolescents and their parents. She can be reached at 347-764-9333 or Sarah_kahan@ohelfamily.org

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The Strange Egg

A Known Parable

by A.A.R.

A sturdy nest was perched on a tree branch, filled with eggs. A strong wind blew and dislodged the eggs. One egg fell without cracking, somehow nestled in bramble. It rolled all the way to the edge of the forest, rolling and rolling until it reached a chicken coop.

A mother hen gathered it in with her eggs, and nested them all with love. One by one, the small eggs hatched, until only the big egg remained, refusing to hatch. The mother hen continued nesting patiently, until finally, one bright day, it happened. The big egg hatched! The mother hen trembled at the sight that met her eyes. The new chick was very different than the rest of her brood. “How did this happen? This chick is so big, so strange.” She finally comforted herself, thinking, “it happens to the best of them...”

Happily, the mother hen went out for a walk with her cute little chicks. The big strange chick joined in, following the rest. They busied themselves with typical chick activities, gathering seeds, eating worms, and going to sleep at the day's end.

One day, as the group of chicks was happily jumping along, a magnificent and noble eagle flew overhead.

The eagle suddenly noticed the huge chick jumping with the little ones, and almost fainted! It dove down and landed next to the strange chick.

Pandemonium broke out in the group. The mother hen quickly gathered together her brood, and left. Only the big strange chick was left, stranded, as the eagle blocked his path.

“What are you doing here?” The big eagle asked it.

He answered, “I live here. I'm just out for a walk with my family.”

“This is not your family!” the eagle replied.

The chick responded, “How can you say that? This was my family from the day I was born!”

The big eagle said, “I will tell you a secret. You need to know your greatness. You're not a little barnyard chicken, you are a mighty eagle!”

The chick laughed and told the big eagle that he must have gone crazy.

The big eagle said, “I will prove it to you!” He immediately brought him over to a rooftop of the highest building around.

Bringing him to the roof's edge, the big eagle said, “Now, you fly.”

The chick answered, “If until now I thought you were crazy, now I am sure of it!”

The eagle responded with a smile, “You can fly.”

He gave our chick a small nudge...

The chick panicked at the challenge, lost his footing, and felt he was about to fall.

Suddenly, his wings opened-- wings that he never knew he even had. He began to fly!

Slowly he realized that he was really flying, and he was amazed at the beauty of his wingspan. He was amazed to realize it was him, flying.

He soared and dipped, enjoying the sensation, his strength, his magnificent wingspan.

The big eagle was at his side, encouraging him “I believed in you, and still believe... Fly little eagle, you will yet reach far...”

AAR and her husband and family came to Cincinnati from abroad about 7 months ago for medical treatment for one of her children. Although busy with treatments and helping her family adjust to their huge changes, AAR has found time to share her message of faith and strength. She has performed, inspiring others with her beautiful voice illuminating the psalms, prayers, and Shabbat melodies. Women who heard her were extremely moved and uplifted by her talent and even more, by her dynamic faith and positive outlook on life. She brings alive the message that we are always in G-d's hands, and He does what is best for us. He brings us challenges in order for us to discover our inner strengths, which we may have never known existed. The more we can live with that awareness, the greater joy and strength we can have as we each face our own challenges.

May our efforts to find joy, even in the midst of challenges, be a merit for a speedy and complete recovery for Elai Yehuda ben Ayala Ayelet.



Bar Mitzvah at the Ballgame

By Josef ben Eliezer

What does it mean to become *bar* or *bas mitzvah*? Big party? Learning that *Haftorah*? Fancy *Kiddush*? These are all ways this coming of age is often marked, but the actual meaning of becoming a Jewish adult means something different altogether. One boy learns from a wise rabbi, and..... Major League Baseball.

I met a great rabbi- we discussed---- baseball.

It was a month before my *bar-mitzvah*, and my grandfather wanted me to meet a great rabbi he had contact with, and receive his blessing. My parents were minimally involved in Judaism, so my grandfather taught me Torah basics, took me to the synagogue on Shabbat, and guided my Jewish education.

My first surprise was the rabbi's youthful appearance. I had expected an elderly sage with a long white beard, but this rabbi was middle-aged and looked young and vital. My second surprise was his first question to me: "Which is your favorite sport?"

"Baseball," I replied.

"How do you enjoy the game more," he asked, "when one team plays or when two teams play against each other?"

"Rabbi," I said, "you can't play baseball with only one team."

"Why?"

"Rabbi," I patiently explained, "the entire point of the game is--which side is going to score more runs than the other. You must have two teams." The rabbi understood.

"So who usually wins?" he pressed on.

"Whoever plays best," I said, proud of my inspired reply.

I don't know what Grandfather thought of our conversation, but the rabbi continued to direct all his attention to me. "Tell me," he now asked me, "do you and your friends play much baseball?"

"Sure. We play a lot."

"Do you also go to watch the baseball games at the stadium?"

"Sure."

"But why do you have to go watch others play, if you know how to play the game yourselves?"

Again I felt the frustration of needing to explain the obvious. "Rabbi," I said, politely suppressing my smile, "when we play, it's just a bunch of kids playing. With the Major League teams, it's the real thing."

"Joseph," the rabbi said, a warm smile illuminating his face, "your heart is like a baseball field. There are two teams competing there: the

'good inclination'—that force that tries to get you to do your best and the right thing and the 'bad inclination,' that voice of selfishness and wrong desires. But up until now, it was a kids' game.

Now, with your *bar-mitzvah*, the real game begins. G-d is giving you a special gift—a major league good inclination-conscience, along with the skills and talents to beat that bad inclination and guide you to live a positive, righteous, constructive life. Remember, Joseph, just like in baseball: whoever plays best, wins..."

My grandfather repeated the baseball analogy at my *bar-mitzvah*. But beyond that, I don't recall the rabbi's words making much of an impression on my 13-year-old self. But three years later, his words resonated and helped me.

I was 16, a sophomore in high school. My class won a school-wide competition and was awarded a weekend trip to a luxurious resort in New Orleans. I came home that evening bursting with excitement and joy; my parents, however, received the news in uncomfortable silence. Finally, mother said to me: "Joe, there's a problem. *Yom Kippur* is that weekend. As you know, we've always observed *Yom Kippur*. We fast and we attend services at the synagogue, honoring the holiness of the day, and we expect the same of you."

"Mom," I protested, "you don't understand. This is an opportunity of a lifetime! All year we've been dreaming of winning this prize. I can't miss it!"

The arguments continued all week. My parents said they understood how important the trip was to me, but, there are certain values that are not negotiable. I countered that I'd always kept *Yom Kippur* and would continue to do so, but nothing would happen if I made this one exception for a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Finally, my parents summed up their stance: "Joe, you know that we never forced our convictions on you. We've told you how we feel. Now, the decision is yours." The "decision" was easily made: New Orleans, here I come!

The night before the trip I was watching a baseball game at a friend's home. The game ended with a breathtaking comeback in the last inning by the team that had been trailing by several runs throughout the game. Over the cheering of the crowd we heard the broadcaster say: "Well, after all is said and done, there are no two ways about it in baseball: the team that plays best, wins!" Suddenly, I remembered my conversation with the rabbi. It shot through me like a bolt of lightning, and I felt a new clarity and resolve, a more mature perspective. I stayed home that *Yom Kippur*.

That lesson stayed with me. Fighting the urge for immediate gratification, choosing the good and right over the easy, that was an important lesson that I drew on often, it helped me immensely as I tried to "play my best game," and forge a wholesome and productive life.

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