

THE PATH SEEKER

CONGREGATION M'VAKSHE DEREKH
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Shevat 5772

February 2012



From Our Rabbi's Desk



The design axiom of form follows function can even be applied to the growth and maturation of Judaism.

As we begin the month of Shevat, Tu Bishvat is a great example of the evolution of an observance.

The first Mishna in the tractate Rosh Hashanah stipulates that there are four new years. We've studied that passage. One of those new years is deemed to be the first of Shevat, with a dissenting opinion from the school of Hillel that it is actually the 15th of Shevat. And except for three cases, Hillel always wins.

So the 15th day of Shevat is the "new year of the trees." In its Talmudic understanding, it is purely functional date. The trees begin to bloom in Israel around this time of the year, about the earliest of which is the almond tree with its beautifully fragrant blossoms. Awakening from winter is a natural human point of significance but the function was important. Blooming trees means produce is to follow. And produce is taxed at the rate of 10%. Hence any system of taxation requires a fiscal tax year. Functionally, then, Tu Bishvat is the beginning of the fiscal year for purposes of agricultural tithes. Its form was no doubt very pragmatic—tally the crop and pay your 10%.

To the later Kabbalists, though, to every form there was a hidden meaning—the "sod"—the secret which could only be decoded through the textual code words. Every act to these late post Lurianic Kabbalists embodied a component of redemption, of repairing (tikkun) of the "shattered vessels" of a perfect primordial world. Just as Jews always had participated in a Seder for Pesach with its blatantly overt message of final redemption, so did the Kabbalists adapt the "form" of a Seder to their function of human intervention in the achieving of divine purpose. Among those Kabbalistic practices coming from Tsevat was a

"seder" for Tu Bishvat utilizing the agricultural symbols of the land to represent not just the desire for redemption but even, with typical Kabbalistic chutzpa, mystical acts to bring about redemption. Redemption of the land becomes then a component of Messianism.

Another function needed to be activated in the 19th century. With the rise of Zionism came the Jewish National Fund, whose mission very literally was redemption of the land through buying properties from absentee landlords in Ottoman cities. The form—playing upon the Biblical and Talmudic agricultural motifs of Tu Bishvat. The motto of the JNF then and to this very day—planting a tree in Israel. What more appropriate a role for Tu Bishvat.

The land was bought. The State of Israel came to be. JNF remains with a different but equally important function in the development of that real estate and the custodianship of the forests it planted. It is an act of consummate redemption and repair (tikkun)—both physically and spiritually. Thus in the spirit of tikkun and in the spirit of finding new forms to express the function, it is JNF who breathed new life into the Kabbalistic notion of the Tu Bishvat Seder, centered still around both the appreciation of the agricultural diversity of Eretz Yisrael as well as the human redemptive potential integral to post Lurianic Kabbalism.

This month we celebrate that day which originated merely as an economic marker but which has become a symbol of the very literal land of the land of Israel. It is a month where I urge our continued support of the work of JNF even as we celebrate the spiritual dimensions which derive from our mystical traditions.

Chag Ha-Ilanot Sameach!

Rabbi Ned Soltz

Calendar Outline Spring 2012 / 5772

Wednesday, March 7 Erev Purim	Book Club discussion: <u>In the Garden of the Beast</u> , by Erik Larson. Led by Historian, Mark Kaplan	8 th Day Pesach/Yizkor April 11, Wednesday – Tuesday, May 1, 2012 Dates for the Jacob Burns Annual Westchester Jewish Film Festival 2012. Synagogue Night TBD.
March 10, 17, 24 Saturday Mornings Rabbi's Pre Service Lectures at 9 AM on "The Basic Tenets of Reconstructionism" . Bagels and coffee will be served	April, date to be determined Card/game afternoon at the Kaplans	Saturday, May 26- Memorial Day Shabbat. Veteran Norman Coplan to speak on serving his country
March, 25 Sunday Afternoon, Visit to Discovery Museum to visit the Dead Sea Scrolls	Saturday, April 7 evening Pesach, 1st day (second Seder) Congregational Seder	Saturday May 26 Evening—Shavuot
Saturday, March 31	Saturday, April 14	

What Better Way?

**To commemorate your loved one's Yahrzeit,
or celebrate a family or friend's Simcha than to
send a Tribute or Donation to M'vakshé Derekh?**

The celebrant will be notified, your contribution acknowledged.

*Rabbi Ned Soltz presents his Spring 2012 discussion series on
Saturdays March 10, 17, and 24, from 9:00-10:00 am.*

*The topic will be a discussion of selected topics from the newly published work
A Guide To Jewish Practice: Everyday Living, Volume 1 by Rabbi David Teutsch.*

*This work outlines approaches to Jewish observance, practice and ethics in
contemporary Reconstructionist interpretations.*

*While selections will be available,
participants are encouraged to purchase this book for your family library.*

Please Remember the Poor and the Hungry:

Bring a can or two or package(s) of dry food on Shabbat for the Food for the Hungry.

Iris is continuing the work she had done with our beloved Izzy,
and will transport collected food to the Church for distribution to those in need.

Jewish Genealogical Tidbits # 14

By Joe Fibel

In the first of my Path Seeker articles, I wrote about Matt Singer, a Masters Degree candidate at the University of Pennsylvania, who was researching early German immigrants to the U S and how my own family research meshed with the subject of his thesis.

Yesterday morning, a similar posting appeared on the Litvaksig on Jewishgen from a Masters student, Jules Feldman from the University of Haifa. His topic was completely different. He was researching the shtetl of Rokiskis, (the Lithuanian spelling, Rokishok and Rakishok being alternate Yiddish spellings.) His research concerns emigrations from this shtetl from its beginnings until its destruction by the Nazis. He asks for any help whatsoever. Jacob Lipkunsky (later Lipcon), Harriet's grandfather's first cousin, lived in the Lithuanian shtetl of Eisiskis, also called Eishishok and Aishishok in Yiddish. Eishishok is in the western part of the country, Rokishok is to the north and east, closer to Latvia. I passed on to Jules many citations about the community he is researching as well as additional information about Eishishok, which he asked for. There is no Rokishok landsmanshaft, nor Rokishok cemetery plot in the U S but there is a landsmanshaft in South Africa. Their Yizkor Book was published in South Africa since so many Rokishokers were able to migrate there. Jules reports happily that he has received a large number of replies from families of former Rokiskis inhabitants.

The above two Jewishgen postings re-

mind me of the very first PhD candidate in Jewish Studies whose thesis related to Jewish Genealogy. Her name is Rachel Fischer. When the Center for Jewish History was completed about 10 years ago, not only was the JGS of NY allotted an office there but two benefactors financed a Genealogical Library. The first full time librarian was Rachel Fischer. She had her Masters and decided she wanted a PhD. She chose as her topic "How Studying Jewish Genealogy and Researching Their Family History Has Affected the Lives of 70 Long Time Jewish Genealogists." I may have fudged that title a little but that is the gist. In any case, Rachel sat at our kitchen table for almost 4 hours on a Sunday and asked us a long series of related questions which we answered in substantial detail. Of course, our real names were not used. I think Rachel called me Ralph in her thesis. She subsequently did get her Doctoral degree.

Another posting on the Jewish Genealogy Discussion Group intrigued me. Jill Seskin Williams from New Mexico asked if anyone knew anything about her Chaschkas relatives who were shown on their ship's arrival manifest as coming from Grodno in Belarus, at the time of their arrival, 1909, from Russia. I passed the posting to Jack and Norma. Jack responded with the information that their family came from Austria, which is nowhere near Grodno, but the name is rather unique so you never know. Jack says he may pursue it.

Joe Fibel

Dear Members;

Please let us know if there is a simcha in your family.

Kindly call or phone Mary Soltz if you would like to share an important event in your or your loved ones' lives. Let us all be happy with and for you.

Mary's phone: 817-654-9572 E-mail: masoltz@aol.com

Partners

By Iris Farber

Larry Shapiro is a live-let-live person. Handsome in a rugged athletic way he has an easygoing charm. Everyone who knows him thinks he is a great guy. He likes all kinds of people, children and animals. At forty-five, he has never been married, but he has lots of friends, both married and unmarried. People are attracted to him because he is both genuine and generous. He is even Godfather to a great ten-year old boy. How his Catholic friend Anthony pulled that one off no one has any idea, but that Jewish boy loves being a Godfather. I guess being Anthony's best man had something to do with it. Larry is straight. Sometimes when a guy does not get married by a certain age, he might be suspect, but there are no doubts about Larry. He has always been attracted to interesting and good-looking women, and there certainly have been a lot of them, but no one is in the picture for too long. Larry always tells his friends that if he hangs in too long, then the women he dates want to get married and marriage is not for him. Larry's parents had a troubled marriage. It wasn't too pleasant for him, or his sister and brother growing up in his home. There was lots of acrimony. Maybe that's what soured him on marriage. Playing the field has never been a problem for him. Women drop at his feet.

His Mom died right after he finished college, she had cancer and his dad died a few years later from a heart attack. They were much too young to die. Larry was the youngest in the family and being the youngest it was hardest on him. These tragic events, however, did bring his family closer together. His brother and sister had no trouble finding great marriage partners. His brother has two little girls and his sister has a son. He is a devoted uncle.

In college Larry was a business major and he felt he would like to work in finance. After graduation, he found a job on Wall Street, but he wasn't happy. He quit after a couple of years and spent a year backpacking through Europe until his savings ran out. When he returned he had a series of jobs in food service, sales and tending bar. Nothing had a future and that seemed to be O. K. with him. All his old friends were worried about him.

His best friend, since kindergarten, Peter always knew what he wanted to do. His great Uncle Rocco, who never had any children of his own, told Peter from the time he could walk that he wanted him to take over his business some day. Rocco was in the Italian ceramic importing business. It wasn't a big business but it gave him and his wife Rosa a good life, a nice house on Long Island and no financial worries. Peter knew he would have no choice in this matter. All through high school he would work with his uncle weekends and after school learning the business. He too was a business major in college; he went to Brooklyn College while Larry was at Columbia. By the time Peter graduated Uncle Rocco was pretty old and he had had a mild stroke. Aunt Rosa wanted to retire to Florida. Peter took over the business.

Peter was doing well. The business took care of Uncle Rocco and Aunt Rosa who had bought a house in Naples, Naples, Florida, that is. But Peter knew his business could become much bigger if he had the right partner.

From the beginning Peter had urged Larry to join him. "Larry, he would say, with your good looks, killer smile and razzle, dazzle gift of gab you could wow the buyers, especially the women. What a salesman you would make, come into the business. I'll make you a partner, and with your great education you can help with the financial end as well. We would be great together. What a team we could be." Peter was already a team player, having married his childhood sweetheart and having had three children in rapid succession.

Then Larry got tired of bumming around. He saw all his friends marrying, buying houses in the suburbs and having kids. Yes, they had to schlep the kids around all weekend to basketball and soccer and ice skating and birthday parties, while he lazed around. On the other hand, they had reached some level of success. When he had trouble making ends meet he realized that he wanted more disposable income. He needed a better, more dependable car, he desired more than a one-room apartment. Also, a motivating factor was the cost of dinner and drinks had

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gone up, and continuing his way of life was becoming impossible.

When he told Peter he was going to join him, Peter was ecstatic.

Peter had thought correctly. With Larry on board the company grew. Larry was a great salesman, and truly enjoyed each challenge. He did not regret his decision. In addition to calling on clients he spent many hours in the office planning strategy and working on finance. He went after the big accounts, like department stores and high-end specialty shops in upscale neighborhoods. They started importing higher end goods to add to their inventory.

The company had, for many years, taken a booth at the house wares show at McCormick Place in Chicago. This year, Larry wanted to land a large Midwest department store, which had promised to stock their merchandise, but somehow never did. He had learned that there was a new buyer, a woman named Abigail Anderson, but other than that he knew nothing about her. He had sent a presentation to her by mail a couple of months earlier, but had heard nothing so far; just a form acknowledgement saying the material had been received. A follow up by him was not acknowledged. This was not the way other stores handled things. It was unprofessional.

He had heard from other vendors that she was not the most organized buyer and others too had been left hanging by her. There were some rumors about nepotism, but they were unconfirmed.

While at the show he had gotten some nice orders, but he was eager to do business with Anderson's firm. The night before the last day of the show he planned to attend a cocktail party being held that night. Lots of business was always conducted at those events and word had it that Anderson would be there.

He called Peter in New York. "Burn one of those candles this afternoon and say a prayer, he said. I think I might get to meet Anderson tonight and let's hope I can make the deal." Peter was used to him being irreverent. He knew he respected his great family, and he was just teasing.

"O. K. Larry, you got it. I'm off to church, he joked. Good luck pal, I know you worked hard this past week. Have fun. See ya soon."

It was a crowded event. The liquor flowed, the food was lousy, but he wasn't there to eat or

drink. He was out to meet Anderson. One of the other vendors pointed her out to Larry. "Good luck, he said, it would be nice if she knew what she was doing, but she's got the power," he joked.

Larry was surprised that she was so young. She looked like a schoolgirl. She was wearing a short black skirt and camel colored suede jacket. She was tall and wore flat-heeled shoes. Her long blonde hair was loose and held back with a headband. He walked toward her and even though a large group of people surrounded her he managed to catch her eye. He introduced himself, "Larry Shapiro, Rocrose Italia," he said as he held out his hand.

"Larry, she said, nice to meet you. I'm sorry I haven't gotten back to you. I have been planning to give you an order. I liked the presentation you sent me. I will see you tomorrow at the show. We are going to get your line in for Christmas."

He was a very happy guy at that moment. "Thanks, Abby he said. I think you will be pleased doing business with our company. If there is anything you need, contact me anytime and I will get right back to you."

She asked him if had ever been to Chicago before. "Oh yes, he said, many times. I like Chicago, but I always look forward to returning to New York whenever I am on a trip. My partner will be happy to have me back."

"Your partner, she responded. How sweet, have you been together long? I think it is so great that people are now so forthcoming and honest and out of the closet. It's about time. Good for you."

Oh my God, he thought, but I have to remember in today's vernacular I have to say business partner, because partner is not enough. Before he could explain the misunderstanding to Abby, she turned and was already in conversation with someone else. There were at least five more people waiting to talk to her. At that moment an exhausted Larry decided it probably was best to just leave it alone. He could not see the point of waiting around to explain. He could straighten it out when he saw her the next day. Actually, the most important thing was to get the order.

When he got to the lobby he pulled out his cell and called Pete. Pete answered right away.

"I have good news and bad news, he said. The

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PARTNERS**Continued from page 5**

good news is we landed the account, the bad news is we're gay."

"What are you taking about, Peter asked. Did you have too much to drink at that party?"

Larry related the events of the past half hour and he roared. Then, he said, "If we were

gay I wouldn't date you. Your not my type." Peter sounded hurt. "What do you mean I'm not your type? You mean you don't like me."

I wouldn't find you attractive, he said, you are just too fat."

"You are too fussy, said Peter, that's why you can't find a bride."

Lord and Taylor

We just heard from Lord and Taylor and received a nice check from them. Since there was no note included with the check, we have to assume that this check of \$256.49 was our portion of the pool for Charity Day/Do-Good Day for November. We had already made \$855.00 on that day and the combined monies total \$1,111.49. We don't know how they portion up that pool but we received more money than we thought we'd get. Last spring's pool was only \$107.54.

Again, I want to thank everyone for their contribution and effort in making this event a success. I have not heard from Bloomingdale's about their Charity Day in October/November for this coming year. If Lord and Taylor have a Do-Good Day in the Spring, we will participate in it once again.

TRIBUTES

From Rita and Jack Clark	In memory of Sarah Clark, Jack's beloved mother, on her Yahrzeit
From Mary and Rabbi Ned Soltz	In memory of Sylvia Soltz, beloved mother of Rabbi Ned Soltz, on her Yahrzeit
From Mary and Rabbi Ned Soltz	In memory of Lois Abel, beloved mother of Mary Soltz, on her Yahrzeit
From Charlotte and David Rosensweig	In loving memory of Izzy Farber
From Miriam and Al weiss	In celebrations of the birthdays of their daughter, Dr. Janet Shapiro-Weiss and granddaughter Emma Shapiro-Weiss

SHABBAT AND HOLIDAY SERVICES

Weekly Torah and Haftarah Readings

February 4

Torah : Parashat Beshalach (Exodus 13:17 - 17)

Haftarah : Judges 5:1 - 5:31

February 11

Torah : Parashat Yitro (Exodus 18:1— 20:23)

Haftarah: 6:1—6:13

February 18—Shabbat Shekalim

Torah : Parashat Mishpatim (Exodus 21:1 - 24:18)

Haftarah: II Kings 12:10-12:17

February 25

Torah: Terumah (Exodus 25:1 - 27:19)

Haftarah: I Kings 5:26-6:13

From Iris Re: Passover Community Seder

I am writing today to ask the members of our congregation if they are interested in doing this again this year. In order to make this seder (which is not a fund raiser) cost effective we need to have at least thirty attendees. Please respond to this note if you are interested in attending. Last year the price was \$45.00 per person and \$20.00 for children 5 to 12, under 5 no charge. We will try to hold that line, but before pricing the food, etc. we cannot commit to that price at this time. Just to remind you, it is a three course kosher for Passover buffet meal. It comes from an authorized kosher for Passover caterer. The kitchen is also koshered for the holiday. It is conducted by Rabbi Soltz and Cantor Chiel. You are welcome, as well, to make reservations for friends and family at the same price.

If you indicate you are interested, this is not a reservation and does not obligate you, but just an attempt to see if the interest exists and if we should go forward with this plan. If you think you would like to attend please respond to this email, or should you want additional information please contact me. Phone : 423-1883

Goings on Around Town

February 13 at 7:30 Iona College, Thomas J. Burke Lounge, Spellman Hall, 715 North Avenue, New Rochelle, New York

Intermarriage—Catholic and Jewish Perspectives.

Speakers: Reverend James Loughran (Director of the Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute) and Rabbi Gordon Tucker (Senior Rabbi of Temple Israel Center in White Plains). Event is free and open to the public. Light refreshments served.



"Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin" a talk by Professor Timothy Snyder, author of a 2010 best-selling, award-winning book by the same name about the mass killings that took place on the lands between Moscow and Berlin between 1930 and 1945, will be held on **February 15 at 5:15 p.m.** in the Donnelly Lecture Hall, Heimbold Visual Arts Center at **Sarah Lawrence College**. A reception will follow. The lecture and reception are free and open to the public.

A *New York Times* bestseller *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (Basic Books, 2010) was cited as "book of the year" by a dozen publications



At YIVO Institute for Jewish Research—15W. 16th Street, NY, NY 10011

Tuesday, February 28—3 PM— Free Admission

S. An-sky: Writing the History of Jews in the First World War—Free Admission

Friday, March 16 —12:30— Free Admission

As German is to the Germans: The Yiddishism of Khayim Zhitlovski (1865-1945) -

Tuesday, June 5—Free Admission

Destructive Creators: Jewish Immigrant Bankers, the Business of Mass Migration and the Failures that Reshaped American Finance, 1914

For additional programs please log onto www.yivo.org

Please call Marian or Arnold Edson if you are interested in attending any of the above lectures. They will be more than happy to take care of reservations, creating groups, and doing whatever it takes to make it a most pleasurable visit for all.

Jack Chachkes and Jane David

Iris Farber



Jack and Jane joined our synagogue in 2011 after attending an open house. They were impressed with the fact that we are an intimate and mature congregation. They were also impressed with our friendliness and welcoming warmth. They had been members for some time in a synagogue that had merged with another and had become very large. The size made them uncomfortable. They found it not to be a friendly place. It did not meet their needs. By the way, our members Norma and Ed Dworetzky are sister and brother-in law to Jack.

Jack was born in Yonkers, one of four children, at a time when the Jewish community of that city was close-knit and vibrant. Most of the Jewish families resided on the west side of the city near the Hudson River and there were several well attended synagogues. Jack's family name was well known since his family owned three furniture stores, located on Riverdale Ave., Main Street and New Main Street. The family worshiped at Congregation Oheb Zedek, on Prospect Street. With the changing demographics of the city that synagogue no longer exists. The building has been dismantled by the city.

Jack graduated from NYU and took his place in the family business, where he had worked since he was a child. When the last of their stores closed in 1985 Jack continued his career working for several department stores. Among them was John Wanamaker. When Wanamakers closed their doors he helped the rug vendor liquidate their merchandise and consequently was sent to a number of their stores in several states to do the same. He not only got to see the country, but he was able to take Jane with him. Jane said, "Wherever Jack goes I go." Jack currently volunteers for AARP as a tax preparer. He is very busy during tax season.

Jane grew up in Jackson Heights, Queens, and then moved to Manhattan to go to high school. A graduate of Barnard, her career was in the retail field. Before her retirement she had been Floor Manager for ten years for Alexander's Department Store, which was located in Yonkers. She started her career at Macy's so young she needed working papers.

Jane's son John and daughter-in-law Kari, have given her three wonderful grandchildren, twins Jason and Kevin who are twenty seven and granddaughter Kaitlyn who is twenty-two. Kevin and his wife, Jen, have also provided a great-grandchild named Keirsten, who is now two. Keirsten brings them all much happiness.

Jane was widowed and thirty years ago she made the decision to sell her home. Jane asked her friend and neighbor Florence Dworetzky if she could help her to dismantle her things and pack furniture. Florence had to refuse because she was about to go on a trip, but suggested she send over her brother Jack who would be excellent at such a task. Remember, this is the man who had grown up in the furniture business. Florence said Jack would be happy to work for a good home cooked meal and a drink. Jane was fine with that and so was Jack. Soon after, when she moved into her new apartment in Hartsdale she once again needed to call upon Jack for his able assistance. He was very happy to help her put up the heavy mirrors and artwork. Before too long, Jack was leaving Jane's apartment later and later. They have been together for thirty years.