

The Shofar



April 2017
Nissan-Iyar 5777

How Did the Rabbi Spend His Winter Vacation?



Warning: this article is not for the faint hearted. The reader might find some of the content objectionable.

A common ritual in returning to school in the fall is writing a composition on how we spent our summer vacations. This article is not an exercise on regression to those days but

some thoughts as clergy. If you have attended services at CBT-BI you will know that since 2009 I made New Mexico my regular place to spend my vacations. Over the years I have moved from the fancy art stores in Santa Fe to develop deep friendships in Albuquerque that have introduced me to other aspects of the hardships in life in the "Land of Enchantment."

Probably you have heard me talking about my experiences at the soup kitchen joining the team of volunteers. However, I want to share with you the story of a young man I met there. This young man, 19 years old, was kicked out from the parental home at age 16 for being gay, after his parents abused him psychologically and emotionally. For the last three years he has been homeless, earning his daily sustenance from prostitution and escaping the harsh reality by the daily use of crystal meth and heroin by intravenous injection.

Four months ago a generous institution gave him a free ticket to Albuquerque (one way, of course), a city where he had no connections. After a chat with this young man, we were able to convince him to take HIV, hepatitis C, and STDs tests. I was his driver and I accompanied him to the testing center. After a while the first results came back. He tested negative for HIV and hepatitis C. That was a big triumph! Later on I helped him get connected to social services, doctors, therapist, etc. Being on vacation and having a car was really helpful.

One morning, while having breakfast, it hit me: a new sense of gratitude. So many things could have gone wrong with me, and here I was having my orange juice and healthy breakfast, realizing the many blessings around me. I felt surrounded by the warmth of family, friends, teachers, and mentors who have supported me all along my way. Also I am grateful for your support because you made it possible.

I was on vacation but I could not be blind to the needs of this young man. Poverty is not just a matter of political pressures, political party lines, and specialized groups. As a Jew I felt a duty to help, and collaborating with the soup kitchen has shaken my conventional understanding of poverty as the gap between rich and poor widens in our country.

Over the past weeks, I have been in contact with this young man. It was rewarding when he told me I was one of the very few people he trusted because I opened my heart to him without expecting anything in return. Aspects of being human and its socio-economic dimension only rarely overlap. This also applies to those who live in poverty and those who fight poverty. Faith or philosophical belief can give meaning to a dead-end situation, while, at the same time, they help provide a lever in the intellectual and emotional fight against poverty.

A final thought: Religious institutions play an important social role, whatever anyone says. Those who are not eligible for government help can find their needs met through religious organizations. This assistance is based on religion, because religions (regardless of creed) emphasize helping those who are in need.

But outside the walls of the religious institutions we also can find those whose faith would not stand a critical examination but who bring a considerable inside view. Those people finding themselves in poverty and being at risk of social exclusion do not like to talk about what motivates them to keep going, perhaps because theologians accuse them of unacceptable deviations from the true doctrine or because those who are to help deny them the possibility of a faith.

We already have enough in our plates to make us think.

ברכה

Rabbi Jordi



Happy Passover
to All!



Welcome to the "New" Shofar

As you look through this issue of the Shofar, you will notice some significant changes. All of the articles are of a personal nature, allowing the reader to get to know more about the people at CBT-BI. The Shofar will now be published quarterly, rather than every other month.

Do you have a personal story that you would like to share with the congregation in a future issue? All CBT-BI members are welcome to contribute to the Shofar. If you have a story but don't feel comfortable with writing, we can set up an interview and make an audio recording. The transcript would appear in the Shofar.

I hope you will take the time to read about your fellow congregants. Feel free to send me feedback on the "new" Shofar, as well as your questions or story ideas. Thank you!

Lisa Parker
editor@cbtbi.org

Why I Joined

We asked the members of the executive board, "Why did you join our synagogue?" Here's how they responded:

I joined CBT-BI a few years ago while I was working from home for an executive recruiter. I found working from home to be very isolating and needed to feel like I was part of a community. People were so warm and friendly the minute I walked into my first Shabbat service. It's very comforting finding my Jewish identity again, and being surrounded by others who celebrate the High Holidays, and complain about matzah at Pesach. — *Leora Rothschild*



My husband Behrooz and I joined the synagogue in 1991 when it was little CBT off of Fish Pond Road in Sewell. We had moved to Pitman three years earlier and now that our daughter, Amy, was about to begin kindergarten, we were looking for a place to educate her. Jewish neighbors, Karen and Bob Holwitt, highly recommended the Hebrew school. We ended up carpooling there with their two girls, and because the synagogue was so close, it was very convenient.

I had grown up in a secular family; with little knowledge about Judaism, coupled with the fact that I'm shy by nature, it took me a while to feel comfortable at the synagogue. As Amy grew older, I began helping out with classroom and school activities and enjoyed spending time with the other young families, but I was still not very comfortable with religious services. Then at Amy's request, she and I began attending services almost every Friday night and Saturday morning the year preceding her bat mitzvah. I started going to the adult ed classes offered, including the Read Hebrew America class taught by Rabbi Rick and the trope reading class taught by Rabbi Miriam. I read Hebrew pretty slowly, but I'm now able to follow along in services and chant from the Torah. I've also gotten involved in such synagogue activities as Sisterhood, the board, the kitchen committee and, social action.

CBT-BI is like part of my family now. We don't always agree on everything, and sometimes we get on each other's nerves, but like a family, we love each other and are there for each other. — *Beth Nazer*

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Why I Joined *Continued from Page 2*

In 2003 I moved to Washington Township because I remarried. I was very active and a teacher in my synagogue in King of Prussia. My new husband was already a member of Congregation B'nai Tikvah, so we joined as a family. It took a year for me to get involved. One day my phone rang and it was a member named Lori Samilson. She told me they were having an auction and needed my help. Would I work on food, publicity, or baskets? She wasn't giving me a choice to say no! That phone call continued my involvement from that day on. CBT-BI became my family through happy and sad moments. It's been 16 years of meeting new friends, learning and thriving in my Jewish community. — *Marcy Kaufman*

Free Health Fair at CBT-BI

Do you have medical questions or want to learn about a new health care approach? Doctors and other medical professionals — including some of our own members — will be on hand to discuss health care issues and answer questions. Refreshments will be served.

**Sunday, April 23
8:30 AM to 1 PM**



It's been a journey for us as we joined Congregation B'nai Tikvah, moved to Beth Israel, and finally to the combined congregation. We have belonged to a synagogue since shortly after we were married 39 years ago; we think it is important for Jews to belong to support synagogues as a way of maintaining and protecting our traditions and freedoms.

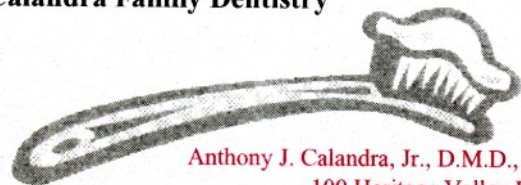
When we first moved to Gloucester County over 30 years ago, we had a choice between two equidistant congregations. We chose the one with a Hebrew school, CBT. We knew of CBT's conservative bent and the fact that women were not included in the minyan. I grew up that way and thought it would be a good fit. In a strange coincidence, Rabbi Zucker was a student in my grandfather's congregation and knew my father when he was a child. That was a nice sense of history.

When my father died, I was not part of the minyan and found that that reality made Kaddish difficult and painful — a reaction on my part that was very surprising to me. I felt very strongly that I never wanted my daughter to have a similar experience. By then, BI had a Hebrew School and we moved there. We have many fond memories of Rabbi Kaplan and his Eagles. We came back to B'nai Tikvah after Rabbi Kaplan left and we learned that the traditions had evolved.

So— we are much like almost everyone else. Our initial choices were driven by geography and Hebrew School. Our feelings about tradition changed as our lives evolved. Our current membership is related to a desire for ongoing connections and also to our belief that Jews should belong to and support synagogues in some way as part of a more global responsibility.

— *Lynn Helmer*

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A Shpiel to Remember



Putting its own spin on the Purim holiday, The CBT-BI Menorah Theater rocked the house with “A Very ‘Glee’ Megillah” earlier this month. Mazel tov to the cast and crew for a wonderful performance!

Bob's Garage



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The Shofar

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*We look forward to celebrating with you
and paying tribute to our dedicated past presidents,
whose leadership inspired and sustained
a Jewish presence in our community for decades.*

Sunday, June 4
The Mansion, Voorhees
6 to 10 PM

\$60 per person (if RSVP is postmarked by April 21)
\$75 per person (if RSVP is postmarked April 22 - May 5)

Invitations and RSVP cards have been mailed out.

Tributes honoring past presidents will appear in an End-of-Year Dinner program.

Tribute forms are available at cbtbi.org.

Contact Diane at (856) 740-0081 or ashapdee@msn.com for more information.

A shekel for your thoughts...



What's Your Favorite Book?

My favorite book is **"A Tale of Two Cities,"** by Charles Dickens. Sydney Carton is a central character, a brilliant lawyer but with many faults. He is devoted to Lucie Manette who loves another. Court cases, love story, action — all keep your attention throughout the book. Sydney Carton's final words are among the most famous in English literature: "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to, than I have ever known." — *Betty London*

My favorite is Jane Austen's **"Pride and Prejudice."** When I grow up I want to be like Elizabeth Bennett. She's not afraid to be who she is. She's not shy about speaking her mind. She's got the chutzpah to say no to the mega rich guy's marriage proposal. And she ends up getting him in the end anyway and lives happily ever after in Colin Firth's mega gorgeous mansion. — *Debbi Judlowitz*

I am presently reading an absolutely fascinating and wonderfully written book on the life of one of the greatest geoscientists who spawned a revolution, equal to those of Copernicus, Newton, Darwin, and Einstein. The book is entitled **"Alfred Wegener: Science, Exploration and the Theory of Continental Drift,"** by Mott T. Greene, a first definitive biography (2015). Wegener is the "father" of continental displacement theory, which ultimately led to the modern theory of plate tectonics. Though all human beings are flawed, we can all learn from the best of humanity. — *Lou Detofsky*

I don't have a favorite book but favorite books by category. My favorite Hebrew text is the **"Pirkei Avot — The Wisdom of the Elders"** from the Talmud, specifically from the Mishna. I know this sounds hokey; it's not. It is on my night stand and I often read from it because it is a blueprint for how to be a mensch. Rabbi Jordi, Rabbi Miriam and Rabbi Mike frequently reference it as many others. — *Jay Chaskes*

My favorite book is **"Outlander"** by Diana Gabaldon, because the author uses three major writing genres, all of which I have read individually in separate books. The genres are historical fiction, romance, and time travel. Outlander was the first of a series, which now includes eight titles (other shorter novellas were written also) and weaves together the lives of Jamie and Claire. The book starts in post WWII Scotland, where nurse Claire is being reunited with her husband, and goes back in time to 18th century Scotland, where Jamie is fighting for the survival of the Scottish clans. I learned so much about Scottish history, an intense subject, and yet the author still managed to interject humor along the way. A "cannot-put-down" novel has been made (extremely convincingly!) into a Starz TV miniseries. What better way for me to remember the lives of Jamie and Claire? — *Leora Rothschild*

Up next:

What's your favorite vacation spot?

Send your answers to Lisa Parker,
editor@cvtbi.org.

Responses will appear in the next Shofar.



Four Americans Walk Into a Bar... by Lisa Parker

In 1989, I was working in New York as a reporter and editor for a travel trade publication. Our readers were travel agents and tour company executives. In early January, my office received a letter from the Israeli Government Tourist Office in New York, inviting a member of our staff to join a group of journalists traveling to Israel. It was the middle of the first Intifada, the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation of the West Bank. Tourism from the U.S. had plummeted, and the goal of the junket was to show journalists how safe Israel was for visitors. In turn, we journalists would (hopefully) write glowing articles about our experiences.

My boss passed along the invitation to me, knowing I would jump at the chance to go to Israel. So, in February of 1989, I boarded an El Al flight out of JFK with three other writers. We were all about the same age — late 20s to early 30s. Two of us were Jewish. We all bonded quickly. When we arrived at Ben Gurion airport, we were met by our Israeli tour guide, Gideon, who drove a mini-van. Our group overnights in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and the Kinneret; during the day, Gideon drove us to see the popular tourist spots and some places tourists don't usually visit. He even took us to his brother's orchard, where we picked oranges. It was a highlight of my trip.

Upon my return home, the first question friends and family members asked was: "Did you feel safe?" And my answer was: "Completely!" Well...there was one incident. But it wasn't what you're thinking.

One evening during my stay in Jerusalem, the four journalists went out for a walk after dinner. Gideon decided not to join us. We came upon a bar a few blocks from our hotel and went in for a drink. About a dozen locals were scattered at tables in the small room. At one table in the corner sat a group of seven or eight men who were laughing and talking very loudly. They spoke English with Australian accents and wore a variety of colorfully striped rugby shirts. A waitress came to our table and took our orders. We asked her about the Aussies. She told us they were soldiers with the U.N. Peacekeeping force, stationed in Cyprus. They were on

leave and had come to Israel for a respite. "They've been in here every night this week," she said, rolling her eyes.

The room was quiet, except for the soldiers. We could hear everything they said, a lot of it not fit for print. More beer was brought to their table. As the evening wore on, the soldiers got louder. One of them stood up, placed his backpack on the table, and pulled out an Australian flag, which he then draped around himself like a cape. His friends hooted and clapped. The soldier paraded around his table. The Israelis seated near us looked annoyed, and we felt uncomfortable. The caped man began to skip, and then run,

around the room, the cape flapping behind him. His buddies were practically rolling on the floor in stitches. Suddenly, as he approached our table, the Australian lost his balance and went flying. One of the Israelis had stuck out his foot and tripped him. The soldier narrowly missed our table as he fell to the floor. All of the Aussies leapt to their feet, followed by many of the Israelis. A melee ensued. Tables were knocked over, and punches flew, along with chairs. It was like something out of an old Western movie. My friends and I were terrified. "Let's get out of here," someone said. We ran for the door, and all of us made it out unscathed. We hightailed it back to our hotel.

The next morning, we decided to do some sightseeing and then return to the bar in the afternoon. We hadn't paid our tab, and we felt terribly guilty. So, later that day, we walked back to the scene of the crime. The bar's picture

window had been boarded up, probably shattered by a flying chair or human missile. A handwritten note taped to the door said: "Closed until further notice." We wrote our own note, explaining that we were the Americans in the bar last night and had come back to pay our bill. Each of us kicked in money, making sure we included a big tip for our waitress. We wrapped the bills in the note, and stuffed it under the door.

Our group departed Jerusalem right after that, so we never learned what happened at the bar following our escape. We wondered if anyone had been seriously hurt, or if the police had been summoned. Aside from this one incident, it was a wonderful trip. And I came away with a pretty good story to tell when I got home.



An alley in Jerusalem

Have a story to tell? Contact Lisa at editor@cvtbi.org.

Even as adults,
life is filled with opportunities
for transformation...



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JUDAISM AND THE AFTERLIFE

A PRESENTATION BY RABBI JORDI



Thursday, April 27, 2017

7:00 to 8:00 pm

Gloucester County Library

Mullica Hill Branch

389 Wolfert Station Rd., Mullica Hill, NJ 08062

Rabbi Jordi will explore 4,000 years of Jewish thought on the afterlife through pertinent sacred texts from each era. The practical implications of funeral, burial, and shiva (mourning period), as well as concepts such as heaven and hell, also will be discussed. All are welcome to this **FREE EVENT**.