



Am Echad, Lev Echad
One People, One Heart
עם אחד לב אחד

HIGH HOLY DAY READER
2024 • 5785



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Am Echad, Lev Echad

by Rabbi Steven Wernick

Jewish peoplehood is a profound concept deeply woven into Jewish identity, uniting Jews across the globe. It is rooted in the shared foundations of religion, history, culture, and collective experiences. As a people of the Diaspora, we have cultivated a powerful sense of connection, emphasizing that Jews worldwide are part of a single, extended family with a shared destiny. The establishment of the State of Israel has further solidified these bonds, as many Jews, including our own family members and friends, have made Israel their home.

This unity becomes especially evident in times of crisis. The events of October 7 and the Israel-Hamas War have tested and reaffirmed this sense of solidarity, highlighting the deep bonds that tie the Jewish community together.

This year's theme, *Am Echad, Lev Echad*—One People, One Heart—is particularly resonant. Our shared experience of trauma and our collective response to the conflict has reinforced the concept of Jewish peoplehood. The crisis has deepened our awareness of being connected by a common history, destiny, and set of values.

This summer, while studying at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, I experienced a powerful moment of *Am Echad, Lev Echad*. Jon Polin and Rachel Goldberg-Polin called for a week of activities, hope and peace for the sake of the hostages and missing. That Monday evening, over 500 people gathered at the First Train Station to sing. The group represented every facet of Israeli society—Haredi, secular, religious, queer, men, women, Jewish, Arab, and Christian. Everyone was there.

Leading the gathering was Yahala Lachmish, a woman *chazzan* from our Masorti Movement (whom we hope to bring here for Shabbat Shirah). She has a beautiful, melodic voice. And everyone sang together. Everyone sang!

The music was somber, sometimes profoundly so, reflecting the mood of the country and the concern for both the hostages and the young people who went off to war. That somberness turned to sadness upon the news of Hersh's, and five other hostages' murder the end of August.

Yet, in reflecting on that evening of song, there was something empowering about the group. That something was peoplehood—that profound sense that we are One People and of One Heart. And that gave me hope.

The entries in this *High Holy Day Reader* beautifully reflect our theme *Am Echad, Lev Echad*. Inside, you will find readings, poems, songs, pictures, and artworks that will enrich your High Holy Day experience. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the contributors for their participation.

May this year bring peace to Israel, the Jewish people, and all humanity.

Shanah Tovah.

You, Me, We

by Goldie Schlanger

Immersed in the depths of connection
From a time we did not physically exist in
Held together by a strength and bond that even oppression could not destroy
Sadly we continue to live in a world divided
Hunger for power and control consumed with hate
We must not stand alone
Wholehearted understanding restores healing
To be delivered into the openness of truths forgotten and ignored
To respect the spirit of our collective ancestors and all our souls of the now
For unity manifests in the mindfulness of love

A Coat of Many Colours

by Racheli Moshkovitz; translated by Chavi Swidler Eisenberg

My son returned from battle, his duffel bursting
With things that I had not packed for him.
Socks donated by the Jews in Argentina.
A quilted blanket smelling like someone else's home
A blue towel from a family from the Moshav,
Tzitzit from Jerusalem.
A fleece jacket, gifted by a high-tech company,
A scarf knitted by an elderly lady,
Undershirts purchased by online shoppers,
A sheet that was given to him by a friend,
Gloves bought by teenage girls,
A jacket from the closet of someone who
Came and requested to give.
I spread out all those garments
And weave together a new coat of many colors.
See, Yosef, your brothers were there for you.

כתנות פסים

בְּנֵי חוֹר מֵהַמְעֶרְכָּה וְתַרְמִילוֹ מִתְּפַקֵּעַ
מִכָּל מָה שֶׁלֹּא אָנִי אָרַזְתִּי לוֹ.

גַּרְבִּים שֶׁתְּרַמָּה קֹהֵלָה מֵאַרְגֵּנְטִינָה
שְׂמִיכָה מְשֻׁבָּצֵת בְּרִיחַ בֵּית אַחֵר
מִגְבֵּת כְּחֹלָה מִמְשֻׁפָּחָה מֵהַמּוֹשָׁב
צִיצִית מִירוּשָׁלַיִם

פְּלִיז מְתַנֶּת חֶבְרַת הַיִּטָּק

צְעִיף שֶׁסָּרְגָה קְשִׁישָׁה

גּוּפִיּוֹת שֶׁנִּקְנוּ מִקְבוּצַת פִּיבּוֹקִס

סָדִין שֶׁנָּתַן לוֹ חֵבֵר

כִּפְפוֹת שֶׁנִּקְנוּ נְעֵרוֹת

מֵעִיל מֵאֲרוֹן שֶׁל מִישָׁהוּ שָׁבָא וּבִקֵּשׁ לָתֵת.

פּוֹרֶסֶת אֶת כָּל הָאֲרִיגִים

וְרוֹקֶמֶת כְּתָנֵת פְּסִים חֲדָשָׁה.

רְאֵה יוֹסֵף, עֲרְבוּ לְךָ אַחִיקָה.

Achdut/Unity

by Rabbi Robyn Fryer Bodzin

June 9, 2024 was one of my favourite days in recent memory. Fifty-thousand people came out to support Israel. If you weren't there and you didn't see any pictures, it looked like a sea of blue, white and a bit of red, as far as the eyes could see. It reminded me of the Israelites crossing the Sea, even if it was just Bathurst Street.

I bumped into people from every single stage in my life. We just showed up and together showed our love for Israel.

The Walk with Israel was peaceful and inspiring and uplifting and unifying. There was a sense of *achdut*, of Jewish unity, that I cannot remember ever feeling before in this city. The atmosphere was filled with positivity.

But the most memorable part of the day for my family, was when Moishe Cohen entered our lives. You might wonder who Moishe Cohen is. I think he is an angel in human form.

After the Walk with Israel, my entire family was exhausted. I was tired. The pain in my arthritic leg was way past a ten. While we had figured out our start plan, we never planned out how we would return home.

We walked south on Bathurst and then west on Sheppard and then south again and got ourselves to a street called McAlister. We called one Uber and then another. They kept canceling on us.

Suddenly, a man wearing a kippah, along with an adorable little boy with flying *tzitzit* and a huge Bucharian kippah that covered his entire head, came out of the house across the street from where we were standing and started walking to his car.

My husband yelled out to him, "Any chance you are going south?" The man said, "Yes, hop in." And so, we did.

His son, my daughter and I sat in the back seat, while my husband sat up front with Moishe. Because he lived in the neighborhood, Moishe Cohen knew how to maneuver all the street closures and construction in the Clanton Park area. He literally drove us to my brother's house, where we had parked earlier that morning.

We don't know where Moishe was planning on going when he walked out of his house. Maybe he wasn't going south at all.

When we got out of the car, Aaron and I thanked him profusely for driving us south. But do you want to know what he did next?

He thanked **us** for giving him the chance to do his mitzvah for the day.

That is *achdut*. That is unity. He saw three stranded people wearing UJA Walk with Israel shirts, and he offered to drive us home, with his own child in the backseat.

If I am ever invited to write a chapter in the history book of the time we are living in now, I will start with:

Vayehi yom shachor. There was a black day.

But then the Jewish people all over the world banded together like they had never done before. They came to Israel on missions. They opened their hearts and their wallets. They rallied, they walked, and they danced with a renewed sense of *achdut*.

We are Responsible for One Another

by Lara Rodin

This past spring, I was traveling on my weekly route from Toronto to New York, commuting between Beth Tzedec and the Jewish Theological Seminary where I am completing my studies. As I was boarding the plane, a Haredi man in front of me dropped his boarding pass. I picked it up for him, and we got to talking. He asked me what I do in New York. I told him that I am training to become a Conservative Rabbi.

He could have responded in so many ways. He could have ignored me, brushed me aside. He could have spoken condescendingly to me. He could have even argued with me about women in the rabbinate. Instead, he simply said: "*Am Echad, Lev Echad*. One People, One Heart. The events of October 7 certainly reminded us of that if we forgot".

We are responsible for one another.

It is with that in mind that I share Rabba Tamar El-Ad Appelbaum's Prayer for Unity.

Ruler of all worlds,
God of mothers, fathers, and children,
God of the righteous and the pious, God of All,
Show mercy to me and grant that I be able to love peace and to cherish it above all else.

When I encounter someone whose opinions are directly contrary to my own,
And when to embrace that person peacefully feels an absolute impossibility,
Or when I encounter two individuals who are each other's polar opposites,
Keep me from saying that I am being asked to do the impossible.

Let me ever recall that I can make peace in the world through words spoken to reconcile opponents,
Just as You Yourself managed to do by bringing together water and fire, two irreconcilable entities,
And yet in their impossible admixture were born the heavens themselves,
Such that to be truly God-fearing means to admit the possibility of reconciling them nonetheless.

Grant me the grace to work towards reconciliation and to grant others the benefit of the doubt,

Even when those others are causing me personal pain by disagreeing with me so intensely.

You, God, Who is good and Who does good, ever grant that I view others generously and kindly,

And watch over me lest I succumb to the unwarranted hatred of others.

Be compassionate with our generation and save us from pain and suffering
Lest we, God forbid, uproot each other or abandon each other.

Let us be responsible for each other and concerned for each other
In the manner of brothers and sisters bound by familial ties to reconcile for reconciliation's sake and to foster bonds of true friendship between us.
And turn our hearts toward You, God, and turn our hearts toward each other.
Grant me the ability to love You, God, wherever I find myself,
And to love other people wherever they find themselves,
Be with us, God, and gracefully grant us to share in Your divine patience So that we exist in a state of peace with the world.

May the God Who makes peace in the heavens,
grant us with compassion that we too know peace, we and all Israel.
Blessed are You, Who listens to heartfelt prayer.

Shanah Tovah.

24 Holding Blue @ 9 Mos: Whose Counted, Whose Questioned

by Lee Haas



One People, One Essence— A Singular Heart

by Patti Rotman

The fabric of Judaism is woven
In countless, magnificent hues
Our people's canvas so unique
And extraordinary to view

Diverse in culture and in thought
Within our grand design
A bridge connecting the past and future
Quite often will intertwine

Opinions may clash and conflicts may soar
When our world experiences strife
Yet, we come together in peace and compassion
Common threads to help guide our life

Tragedy and discontentment
Overwhelmed by every voice
And through it all, we connect as one
When we celebrate and rejoice

Rituals, prayers and customs
Individually we choose our refrain
History is our beacon of hope
Traditions we strive to retain

Unique in nature but collective in pride
Our heritage is profound
Through generations of struggle and antisemitism
Our roots are always found

As Jews we honour our birthright
A symphony of wisdom to impart
We are a rich and complex community
One people, one essence—a singular heart

Joy as Strength

by Kyle Brill

This year, I am getting married. These past months have been enlivened by a steady hum of planning, learning, and anticipation. This flurry of activity has been punctuated by reflection on what this next step in our lives signifies, and we have come to understand that marriage holds a uniquely central place in Judaism. It feels as though our traditions are intricately woven around it, designed to support the creation of family and, through that act, to fortify our people. The mitzvah of marriage is, quite simply, revered in our culture; its importance underscored by the joy it brings.

Joy is a profound force. It is an emotion that etches itself into our minds and hearts, drawing us back through time. Through every era, we have come together to mark joyous occasions; from the exodus out of Egypt to the founding of the modern State of Israel, expressions of joy have brought us together and solidified our peoplehood. In other words, the act of finding joy in celebrating our culture, despite adversity, marks the strength and resilience of the Jewish people. Shared moments of joy have not only sustained our collective spirit but serve as a testament to our enduring strength. In a world now freshly marked by the stain of antisemitism, remembering this fact is critical. We cannot let forces of hatred diminish our spirit. This would be decidedly un-Jewish. After all, as my grandmother says, living well is the best form of revenge.

This year, it is my sincerest hope that we continue to seek joy defiantly, amidst a growing darkness. I pray that together we continue to have the forbearance and strength to persevere, to keep our heads held high despite the harshness of the world.

As my fiancée and I prepare to step into this new chapter, in this difficult time, we have committed ourselves to the Jewish legacy of joy, knowing that these moments will bind us as a family, connect us to generations past, and help solidify the future of our people.

Tree of Life

by Jacqueline Benyes

When I heard the theme for the Rosh Hashanah reader “עם אחד לב אחד—*Am Echad, Lev Echad* - One People, One Heart”, I imagined images of nature and the interconnectedness of all the elements in nature, how the sum of its parts creates an even more beautiful and awe-inspiring whole. Different species of flora grow side by side and how that can also be a metaphor for us human beings from different backgrounds, nations, cultures and religions. The variety of beauty in nature mirrors the variety, diversity and beauty of us all. Shana Tova, wishing all beings much love, light, health, joy, prosperity and peace throughout the year. Amen.



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Google Maps and GPS (God’s Positioning System)—Divine Guidance to a Rosh Hashana Adventure

by Larry Wallach

My daughter, who lives outside of Los Angeles, was due to give birth in early October 2022 and wanted my wife, Nina, and I to be there. We decided to take our two dogs, drive cross-countries and spend a month together. The drive west takes about a week and with an early October birth, we needed to hit the road before Rosh Hashanah. We weren’t driving 2,500 miles only to miss the birth or Yontiff.

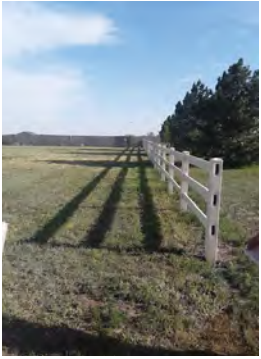
Logistical Considerations—There are two primary westward routes. We needed to synchronize our departure date to arrive in a city with a Conservative synagogue (free reciprocal High Holy Day tickets through our BT membership) where we could make Yontiff. We wanted to arrive with enough time to get to shul on Erev Rosh Hashanah, rested and refreshed. We needed to account for crossing into a new time zone. We needed dog-friendly hotels, preferably near the shul, so Nina and I could trade off dog watching and shul going. We chose the northern route. There are no synagogues in Fort Morgan, Colorado was too far to reach before *Yontiff*.



We chose Omaha, Nebraska. It’s about 1,000 miles from Toronto, a two-day drive. We brought some non-perishable Yontiff foods and booked a hotel near the shul with a kitchenette.

Family Considerations—My father, Ruby Wallach²¹, was an explorer with an insatiable curiosity. He particularly loved driving trips, new synagogues and listening to investment programs late at night on his Sony AM transistor radio.

Whenever Dad and I travelled to someplace new, we would try to add a synagogue visit. Despite my father’s passing, I still save him an adjacent seat with every new shul visit. In September 2022, Omaha, Nebraska was a brand-new locale and finding synagogue seats together during Covid was not a problem.



Religious Considerations—Dad would have loved (or perhaps did love) Beth El Synagogue (“BES”) (<https://www.besyn.org>) of Omaha, Nebraska, a beautiful medium-sized synagogue. The rhythm and melodies of the service were familiar and especially comforting after far too many Zoom *Yontiffs*. Despite the loneliness of being in a strange city during a pandemic when justifiably very few will greet you, BES felt unusually familiar for a shul I had never been in before. It wasn’t immediately apparent why—until I read their shul *Bulletin*.

Rabbi Myer Kripke of blessed memory led their congregation for 29 years. Although a notable theological figure, he is probably best remembered for philanthropy. Mrs. Kripke became good friends with Omaha Local Susan Buffet. And Susan’s husband Warren and Myer also became friends. Yes: that Warren Buffett was managing the rabbi’s nest egg in a fledgling company called Berkshire Hathaway, which funded many charitable endeavors. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/04/us/rabbi-myer-kripke-100-early-buffett-friend-and-investor-dies.html>).

Amongst Rabbi Kripke’s many charitable works was rebuilding and restoring the iconic seven-story tower at JTS, where I spent three memorable undergraduate years. The tower (and the adjacent world-famous library) were sad victims of a 1966 fire, until the 2001 re-dedication of the restored and renamed Kripke Tower, which Nina and I attended.

On Erev Rosh Hashanah, in the Sanctuary of Beth El Synagogue, with my father’s usual place beside me, I had an uncanny sense that Rabbi Kripke’s presence still greeted those in attendance, including my dad, who was especially delighted to trade stories with the rabbi. That made me very happy.

As did one other very unanticipated experience. Twenty-one years earlier, I had left the otherwise perfect dedication of the Kripke Tower somewhat disappointed by the absence of the Kripkes themselves, due to their temporary ill health. An unresolved emptiness, until Erev Rosh Hashanah 5783, when I celebrated Rosh Hashanah in the congregational home of Rabbi and Mrs. Kripke, whose welcoming presence is still very much felt if you know where to look. It made my 2022 *Yontiff* much more than just another rest stop on a long road trip.

The rest is a story for another time.

Am Echad, Lev Echad

by Rabbi Shalom Schachter

As we enter the Jewish year 5785, which in Hebrew numerology is *Taf Reysh Pey Hey*, we focus on the last two letters—*Pey Hey*, which are the letters for the Hebrew word for mouth.

How we use our mouths can impact the ability to interfere with or bring about *Am Echad, Lev Echad*. The “*Al Chet*” in the Yom Kippur liturgy sets out numerous ways we can hurt others with the words of our mouth, while using our mouth to say Amen to strangers reciting Mourners Kaddish can provide them consolation. Bringing *Kavanah* to our prayers by joining our *Lev* to our *Peh* can enhance our efforts to bring about *Am Echad*.

As we note in the *Nishmat Kol Chai* prayer Shabbat morning, our mouth is not the only one of our organs that we use to engage in holiness. We quote from the Psalms “*Kol Atzmotai Tomarna*”—All my limbs shall praise you.

The Yom Kippur liturgy also gives us guidance on how we can use the limbs, aside from our mouths, to move towards *Am Echad*. The Haftarah between *Shacharit* and *Musaf* comes from Isaiah. He berates those who feel that their prayers and fasts are sufficient to secure forgiveness while still oppressing their workers. No, instead the prophet states “*Halo Zeh Hatzom Evchareyhu*”—“This is the fast I choose—Loosen the bindings of evil, and break the slavery chain...Break your bread for the starving, bring the dispossessed into your home, clothe the naked person you encounter”

It is our deeds that can more powerfully bring us closer to *Am Echad*. Let us take Isaiah’s words to our hearts—our *Levs*, to inspire the functioning of the rest of the limbs of our bodies.

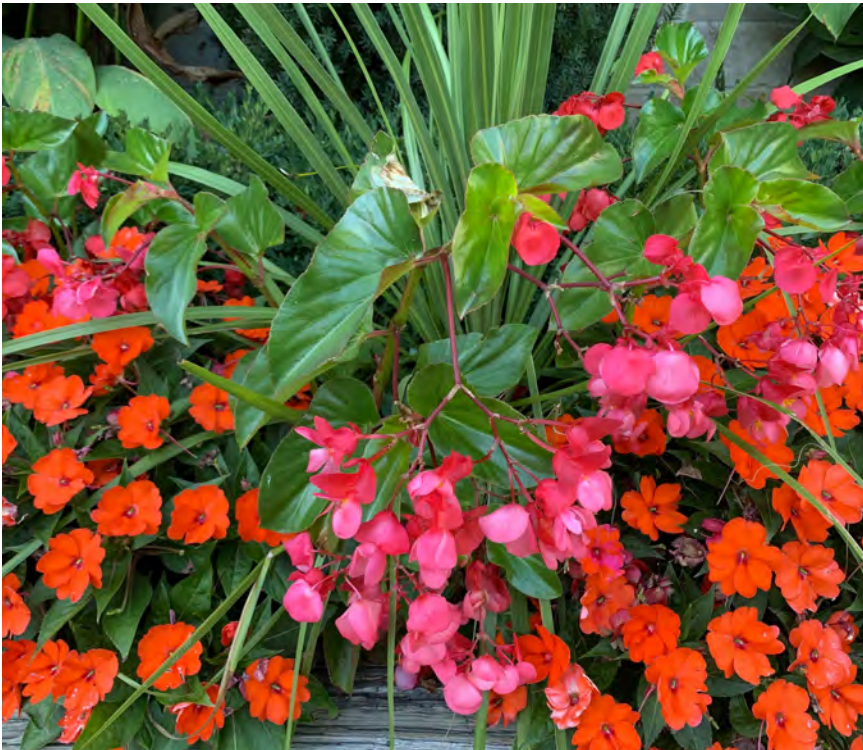
This year Yom Kippur falls on Shabbat and before Yizkor we will recite the prayer *Y’kum Purkan*. That prayer calls upon the Divine to bless valued members of the community, including those who give candles, wine for Kiddush and Havdalah and food for meals to the poor. May we all merit this blessing by taking action to fall within the phrase “*V’chol mee she’oskin b’tzarchey tzibur be’emuna*”—all who faithfully occupy themselves with the needs of the community. In this empathetic way of joining our hearts to the hearts of others, we can feel we are part of *Lev Echad* and in this way facilitate the achievement of *Am Echad*.

On another trip to London, it's Friday night and we're stopped outside the shul. What did we want? We want to go to services! We were inspected and questioned, but we got in. It was the Saatchi Shul and Mr. Saatchi's wife was the guest speaker that night—Nigella Lawson, celebrity chef. Security was in abundance. There was dancing and singing and lots of fun. You never know who you'll meet or see.

So—we know that whenever we're in a strange place, we can always go to shul. We meet new people, share experiences and leave feeling we connected yet again, with our people.

Orange, Red & Green Flora

by Jacqueline Benyes



© Jacqueline Benyes

5-4-3-2-1

by Dot Whitehouse (04.09.23)

There is plenty of time
And no time at all
Even my shallowest breath
Catches
When I think of you

It's easy to remember
The twinkle of your gaze
Harder though
To look you in the eye

I'm counting the heartbeats
Until I see you again
Willing myself to expand time
Without counting down the minutes
Knowing our next goodbye
Is an endless blink away

©Dot Whitehouse

Four Reflections on Completing 11 months of Saying Kaddish for My Father

by Gary Elman

#1) The moments of saying Kaddish gave me an opportunity to really focus on my dad. A terrific father, husband, brother, son, grandfather, and great-grandfather. A wonderful mentor in many ways. Given all the time I had to think about him deeply, the 11 months only confirmed what I already knew. He really was a wonderful guy.

#2) I appreciate the power of community. It is not a fluke that we need a minyan to say Kaddish. Somebody was thinking about this. The support of those around us makes all the difference. And for me, the support of Reb Steve, Rabbi Fryer Bodzin, Rav Baruch, Cantor Sid, Lorne, Aviva and Yacov especially in those early days had a value that I can't begin to articulate.

But here's the piece that didn't crystallize for me until my Kaddish was ending; here is how I visualized it in my mind's eye. We all go to services, we pray together and we support one another. But those who are saying Kaddish regularly are part of an inner circle holding hands as it were, and the rest of the minyan is surrounding us. Though part of the same service, the Kaddish Circle has a different pulse, a different feeling; a separate entity within the whole. When one begins saying Kaddish on a regular and frequent basis, the Kaddish circle opens, and you begin holding hands with those who are part of it. You feel its pulse and energy as you are welcomed in by those who are already there. It was a palpable feeling that can't be explained. It came with an understanding, a responsibility to keep it intact as a legacy for those who have come before, and to keep it welcoming for those yet to join.

It is true that the community piece is all about support, but I learned that the Kaddish Circle is a gift for and between mourners. It is a sacred trust and should be treated as such. I hope that as I was part of it, I treated it with the respect it deserved. As I helped welcome others in, I hope I have done enough to show them the value it holds.

#3) I knew Jan always supported me and I knew she would do whatever was needed as I said Kaddish those 11 months. But here is the part that I did not fully appreciate and only recognized as I looked backwards. Although it was my father who passed away and I was the one saying Kaddish, Jan also suffered the loss of somebody very important in her life as well. Coming to shul with me gave her the opportunity to grieve and honour him as I did. That was an unintended consequence but a very positive one. She too was developing community and finding her own place in the ritual of prayer and as part of the minyan. Our paths simultaneously crossed and ran in parallel.

The experience confirmed for me the support I get from Jan, but I now know that daily Kaddish is not only a positive thing for the mourner, but can be positive for those with whom the mourner shares a life.

#4) I discovered that my engagement to Judaism is via action and ritual. The words of the *siddur* do not always inspire me, but I feel totally engaged when I am building a sukkah, or making *charoset*, or banging on the *Shulchan* during Kabbalat Shabbat, or standing on the side of the *Shulchan* as a *gabbai*. It is the ritual, the activity, that I enjoy and that helps fill my spiritual need. I think that is exactly what I found fulfilling and meaningful when saying Kaddish. I was engaged in an activity. I was "doing" the ritual.

That leads me to a Jewish "miss". There is no ritual, no ceremony, there is nothing for me to do as Kaddish ended except step away from the Kaddish Circle. I had no activity to mark the end of 11 months of Kaddish. For people like me, who relate to their Judaism by "doing", that is a void. I hope eventually the Rabbis produce some ritualistic way to mark the event.

Until then, we are on our own to figure it out. I suppose that's why I'm writing this. It is the activity that I have come up with to help me transition from grieving to remembering. It is my path out of the Kaddish Circle.

To quote Sylvie Shaffer:

Jewish mourning practices tend to focus either on showing respect for the dead or comforting the mourners. For me, saying Kaddish all those months was an expression of both.

Shanah Tovah.

Yom Kippur in a Gym

by Nora Gold

This is an excerpt from Yom Kippur in a Gym, a novella about five people during the last hour of Yom Kippur, at a Neilah service in a gym. This section is about Lucy, as she leads the prayers. Yom Kippur in a Gym was published (with another novella, In Sickness and In Health) on March 1, 2024 by Guernica Editions.

Lucy loves to sing, and as she sings these prayers now, she's filled with elation, even ecstasy. She feels like she's flying, as weightless as an astronaut floating in some upper celestial sphere, a place of zero gravity. And indeed she does not feel grave at all. Serious yes, but not grave as in death. It's the euphoria of singing, she knows, but also the special rapture experienced on Yom Kippur. One of her favourite stories is about a rabbi who always led Yom Kippur prayers using joyful melodies. A guest visiting his town found this surprising and asked him why he did this.

The rabbi replied, "A servant cleaning the courtyard of his king—if he loves the king and wants to give him pleasure—is happy to clean the garbage from the courtyard, and therefore sings joyful tunes." In another version of this story—with these old parables, there is always more than one version—the rabbi replies, "While the servant is cleaning the courtyard, he is not thinking about the filth all around him, but of how beautiful the courtyard will be when it's clean." Now, in this spirit, the prayers rush through Lucy like a happy, powerful river, emptying out everything inside her, cleaning her, cleansing her. They flush away all the lies, pretenses, and foolishness inside her—the usual assortment of petty thoughts and emotions, deceits and self-deceptions, that all human beings engage in every day. Instead of these, in Lucy now there is a shimmering light, a glowing, womb-shaped space with room in it for something new, alive, and as yet unknown to grow and emerge.

She cries out, "God, awesome and holy, we have no God but you!"

She is alone on the podium, but she is not alone. She is praying on behalf of the whole community, representing it to God. To her, this is a great honour and responsibility. She is a petitioner, not a performer. Unlike one of the prayer leaders at her mother's nursing home, Marsha, who always led the service as if it were her operatic debut at the Met. Lucy, as she leads now, is

aware of the hundreds of people with her in the gym, each with their own problems, fears, hopes, and dreams, and for all of them she sings:

"Lord, have compassion on us!

"Pardon us, forgive us, take pity on us, and grant us atonement.

"Open the gates for us, even as they are about to close.

"The day is waning, the sun is low, the hour is late.

"Another year has slipped away.

"Let us enter the gates at last."

The congregation, listening, hears the joy in her voice, but also the sense of urgency and the hint of a sob. To them, this seems fitting. With the room darkening around them, she, the voice of their community, is begging God to forgive all their flaws, failings, and imperfections. There are abundant, well-known stories about prayer leaders who have burst into tears on the podium, sobbing and wailing loudly, unrestrainedly as they asked God to pardon, help, and save the Jewish people (and this not only in times of historical crisis, such as the Holocaust or the Inquisition). A prayer leader's anguish is to be respected. It is evidence of her sincerity and suitability for this role, and it is what one should expect when a community's representative is pleading with God for the well-being, indeed the lives, of hundreds of souls. As Lucy beseeches God for mercy and a good year for everyone present—a year of health, peace, and prosperity between now and next year at this time—the people in the gym listen to her warble, whisper, shout, moan, groan, and hit high, piercing notes. Her voice, now booming, resounds throughout the room, bouncing off the basketball nets, the white concrete walls, the hanging ropes, the old-fashioned, ever-ticking black clock, and the farthest corner of the running track upstairs.

You Get What You Give

by Jacob Citron

Just over a year ago, I was feeling a personal deficit. The world was still recovering from Covid and something was missing in my life. A sense of community, a sense of spirituality, a sense of belonging. I was frozen at times by some of the feelings of loneliness. I retreated inward and was grasping for something to be a part of.

It was June and my family was attending Beth Tzedec for my father's yahrtzeit, when I had the thought - why not try the synagogue? Why not try to lean into Judaism? I resolved that day to show up to Beth Tzedec in some capacity once a week, every week, for a year. To explore this community.

Since then, my experiences have been fulfilling, heartwarming, and have left me with strong bonds and connections that I didn't see as possible a year ago. Frankly, it was a lot cooler than I thought it would be too.

I've made friends that span generations. I've finally become comfortable navigating a prayer service. I've shared a scotch with the chief of police. I've been invited to Shabbat dinner at the Rabbi's house, I've opened the ark on the high holidays and paraded in the procession. I got to see one of my favourite podcasters speak in person. I've performed rituals I hadn't done in ten years. I had a sit down with a leading intellectual on Jewish thought. I even had the privilege of sitting in on a meeting with the Director from the federal office for combatting antisemitism.

On October 6, I was having dinner in the sukkah. On the morning of October 7, I was in the Sanctuary, learning, processing, worrying, and grieving with my community. That evening, as we tried to march and celebrate Simchat Torah, I grabbed the Israeli flag at the front of the room and handed it to someone at the front of the procession. The image of that flag waving has since stood with me and fills me with tremendous pride.

Most importantly though is the quality time spent with a good friend who has joined me in my increased involvement. We have a bit of a standing date now on Saturday mornings. One of my closest friendships is exponentially enhanced by the shared experience of belonging to this community together.

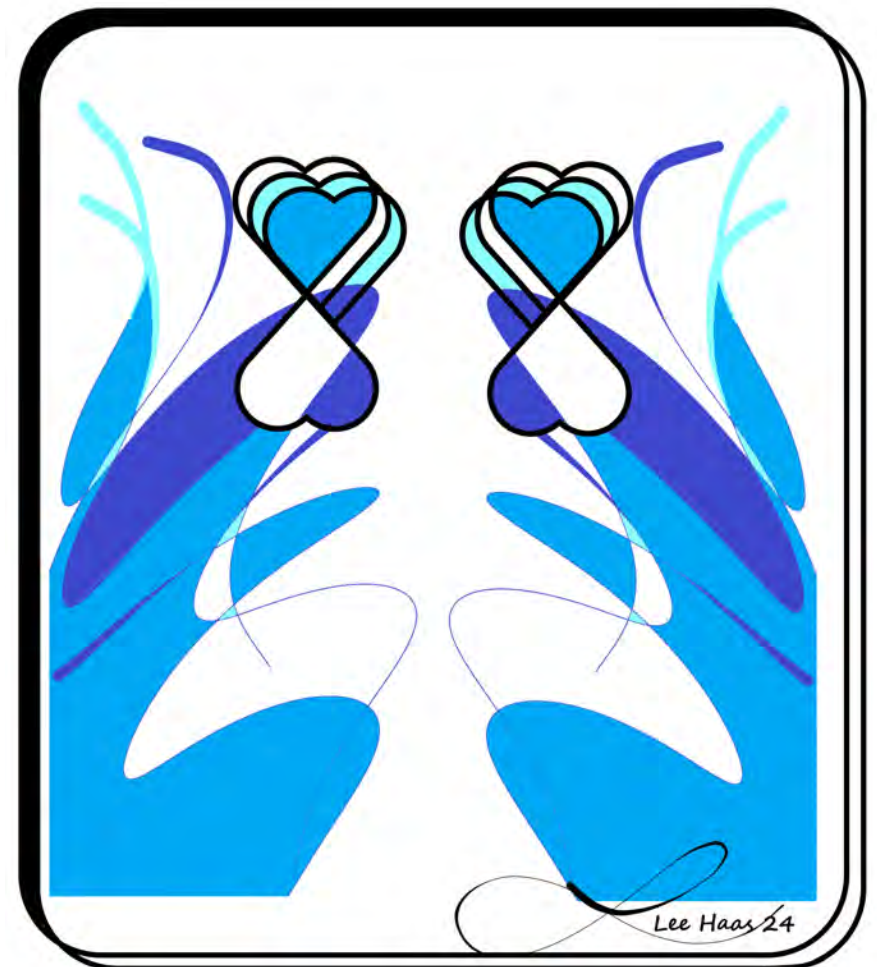
All this in just one year.

So, I invite you to join me. I challenge you to commit just a little bit more of your time: quite simply just show up to Beth Tzedec in any way that makes sense and that feels comfortable to you. Come once a week, once a month, show up on one more occasion a year. The community will be far richer if graced with your presence.

In the end, I believe that you get what you give.

Heart Scribbles

by Lee Haas



Ready

by Soozie Schlanger

I never wanted this. I never wanted the weight of history on my shoulders.
The shame of victimhood. The glory of martyrdom.

I never wanted to look like this...dark...Semitic.
A moving target. A Jew.
I wanted to be fair and straight haired and non ethnic.
Like a blonde Barbie.

I wanted to feel normal
carefree
a girl in a song by the Beach Boys.

I didn't want to worry and to plan—before falling asleep at night as a young
child—what I will do to survive when the Nazis come back.
How far will I go? Will I take the gold out of my parents' teeth?

I never wanted this.

And I lived in defiance of the laws. Maybe that would do it.
Maybe that would absolve me from my obligations...
set me apart...set me free.

How far can you run before ending up back where you started?

Then October 7th happened to me and to all of us.
And I hear the world's response.
And I see those desperate human shiploads
being turned away.

Okay.

I get it.

I am ready.

Switching Gears

by Ivan Betcherman

What is going on? Up is down. Black is white. Is the problem being caused
by social media? Are our schools failing to teach humanities and ethics as
they stress skills for careers and employment? Is it “wokeism” and the
disregard for history? I don't know. I wish I knew. And the implosion has
become more alarming since October 7.

People siding with terrorists and dismissing their victims. Killers and
kidnappers of babies are being supported by college kids and others. I
repeat: what is going on?

There is horrific tragedy on both sides. Of this, there is no doubt, and it
hurts, and it is saddening. And frightening. We search for an explanation—a
logical one. But is there one?

A thought comes to mind, and it comes to me from the novel *A Driven Leaf*
by Milton Steinberg. There is a logic that is higher than Aristotle's that
springs from the heart and is just as real or as true as matters of the mind.
Maybe more so. Truth isn't solely a matter of the mind. There are truths that
come from the heart.

Maybe it's time for all of us, Palestinians and Jews alike, to switch gears and
come up with an explanation: to think with our hearts to try to understand
what is going on and why. And by switching to the “heart gear” the wish is
that we will then comprehend and see each other's tragedy, that we will start
to embrace compassion and empathy for each other as our tradition teaches.
I hope this can happen.

Today, I think of very dear friends from Israel. They have been in Canada for
a month. They flew home on Shabbat Pinchas. They are strong. And they are
worried.

ISRAEL FIELD SKETCHBOOK

BY JANICE GOLDBERG

IN JANUARY I WAS IN ISRAEL VOLUNTEERING DOING AGRICULTURAL WORK. IT WAS A WAY FOR ME TO DEAL WITH MY FEELINGS OF HELPLESSNESS AFTER OCTOBER 7. DURING A HARD DAY IN THE FIELDS AT MOSHAV BE'ER TUVYA - WE PLANTED OVER 15,000 FENNEL SEEDLINGS - I SPOKE WITH OTHERS ABOUT THEIR REASONS FOR BEING THERE.



PAM, CHICAGO



NEEDED AN OUTLET FOR MY FEELINGS OF BETRAYAL BY THE LEFT COMMUNITY.



"INCH BY INCH, ROW BY ROW, I'M GONNA MAKE THIS GARDEN GROW."
- ARLO GUTHRIE

IF I'M ONLY FOR MYSELF WHAT AM I?
SO GET OFF YOUR TUCHUS!

RABBI JOSH, VENICE, CA



ALEX, JERUSALEM

I LOVE ISRAEL AND I LOVE WORKING WITH PEOPLE. AS A GUIDE, THIS IS THE CLOSEST THING TO TOURISM I HAVE NOW.

VERANIKA, BUDAPEST

THIS IS THE BEST THING I HAVE DONE SINCE OCTOBER 7. I FEEL GOOD ABOUT VOLUNTEERING, SURROUNDED BY WONDERFUL PEOPLE.



GLORIA, MEXICO CITY



I WANTED TO SHOW SUPPORT FOR THIS LAND THAT SHOWS SUPPORT FOR EVERY JEW,

MENDY, BROOKLYN



I CAME TO HELP ISRAEL. THIS WORK IS TRANSFORMATIVE. I AM IN THE MOMENT, NOT FOCUSED ON EXTERNALS.



DIANNE, WHISTLER

I'M DEEPLY SADDENED BY THE HATE FOR ISRAEL AND ITS PEOPLE. I'M DOING WHAT I CAN TO SPREAD KINDNESS.



DON, NEW JERSEY

I'M HERE TO HELP MY FAVORITE COUNTRY ON EARTH TO DEFEND ITS PEOPLE AND THE WORLD - B'YACHAD.

NADIA, MOSCOW



ARIELLE, MONTREAL

I'M HELPING MY PEOPLE IN THE LAND OF MY ANCESTORS. BEING WITH OLDER PEOPLE MAKES ME FEEL LIKE THE DAUGHTER OF THE GROUP.



ROBERTA, MANHATTAN

ISRAEL IS A PART OF ME. I WAS ON A NEARBY KIBBUTZ IN 1959, DOING AGRICULTURAL WORK SO WHAT BETTER WAY TO RECONNECT THAN BY GETTING MY HANDS DIRTY.

“What Do you See?”

by Roni Eldad

Translation by Jessica Bonn-Yavne and Melila Hellner-Eshed

What do you see:

Floating balloons, I see

Screeching birds, feathers, feathers in the doorways

A father pushing a baby carriage, frozen in midstep

What do you see:

Flames burning in a flower shop, I see,

good children in the house, pupils glowing, wearing bike helmets for fear of
artillery shelling

A woman screaming the terror of rumor into the telephone

What do you see:

I don't see, I hear gods crying

in the bushes or behind a towering tree

Only a flesh-and-blood mother hovering over her chicks, the whole world's
mercy glowing from her wings, as she is devoured in the teeth of a wild
beast

What do you see, I see

we've turned strange. The sun covered in angel-ash

Jackals gnash their teeth in our fields, all the children wide awake

We will never sleep again, woken by Divine darkness.

מה את רואה

בְּלוֹנִים פּוֹרְחִים אֲנִי רוֹאֶה,

עופות צוֹנְחִים, נוצות, נוצות על הפתחים,

אב מוליך עגלת תינוקת, קפוא באמצע התנועה

מה את רואה:

אש בנערת בחנות פרחים, אני רואה,

בתוך הבית ילדים טובים, אישונים זורחים

אישונים זורחים

קסדות אופניים לראשם מִפְחַד תוֹתְחִים

אישה צועקת אל הטלפון בלהת

שמועה.

מה את רואה:

אני לא רואה, אני שומעת אלהים בוכים

מאחורי אילן גבה או בתוך שיחים

רק אם בשר ודם סוככת על

האפרוחים, ובכנפיה

רחמי כל העולם זורחים, איך היא

נטרפת בשני חיה רעה

מה את רואה, אני רואה

היינו משנים. כסתה השמש

אפר מלאכים

תנים חרצו שן בשדותינו, כל

הילדים פקוחים

לא נישן יותר אף פעם, העיר אותנו

חשך אלהים

Four Things I Learned

by Gary Elman

There are four very important lessons that I learned in the days leading up to my father's death and in the days following.

As my dad had a terrific sense of humour, I'll start with a joke.

This old Jewish guy walks into a church and looks for the confessional. He finds it at the back, steps in and says. "Father, my name is Moishe Goldberg, I'm 96 years old and I've just been with a 28-year-old woman". The priest says "Mr. Goldberg, I can tell by your name that you're Jewish. You know I am a priest. Maybe you want to be telling a Rabbi about this". Mr. Goldberg replies "Father I'm telling EVERYBODY."

Like Moishe, I'm telling everybody.

I was, and still am a Montreal Canadians fan. I can remember one morning telling my father that Lafleur had 2 goals and an assist the previous night and his response was—"Does it help Jews?". I remember saying "I have no idea if it helps Jews, but he got 3 points". My Dad's response was "That's good, but it's better if it helps Jews".

In my father's memory, here are four things that I learned in the time around my father's death. I hope that reading, and learning about them, will "help Jews" as was my father's concern and interest.

Lesson number one.

We were overwhelmed with the outpouring of love and support that we received in and around the shiva. It helped sustain us. So, here's what I learned from that – I'm never again going to say—"I haven't seen them in a long time, I'm not sure If I should go the shiva". From now on I'm going, and I'm not going to make excuses. Having sat "in the small chair", I know that every visitor made a difference. To quote Nike—"Just Do It".

Lesson number two.

People don't always know what to say at a shiva. We'd chat about who wrote the speeches, the weather at the burial etc. I found it much more helpful and dare I say cathartic when someone would sit with me and say – "tell me about your dad", "what were some of your favourite things about him?", "did he have any hobbies?" etc. Next time I'm at a shiva, I'm going to

try to focus on giving the mourners the opportunity to talk about the deceased in a way that will hopefully be comforting to them.

The third lesson is a bit more complex.

As time went on and my father's MS and dementia became worse, and his lymphoma became more of an issue, there were many bumps in his medical road. When I prayed for a *refuah sheleimah*, in my own mind I was able to rationalize that what I was really asking for was, *refuah*, as *sheleimah* as he could be. In other words, to get back to baseline, wherever that was for him at the time. Right before he died, I was no longer asking for a *refuah* Shleimah of any kind, but rather I was asking for a painless, quiet, passing.

Here's the rub. We don't have liturgy to handle that.

Over those days I reached out to Reb Steve, Rabbi Fryer Bodzin, Yacov, Rav Baruch, Aviva and a few knowledgeable friends. I was looking for somebody to say, "look on page 287 in *Sim Shalom* and read the second paragraph". Nobody did, because it doesn't exist. One of The rabbis told me that they had never been asked for this kind of a prayer before.

I was shocked. I know that our faith dictates that we believe in miracles, and asking for a peaceful death is conceptually throwing in the towel on a miracle but still, I thought the Rabbis would have figured a way around that by now.

Someone explained to me that we don't have prayer for every occasion good or bad, and that there are many circumstances where prayer from the heart can be the most meaningful. As helpful as everybody tried to be with suggestions, it turned out that we have no prayer, no words in the way that I wanted to ask The Almighty for a peaceful death for my father.

And finally, lesson number four.

We have all kinds of snappy two-word phrases in Hebrew that we use all the time—*Shabbat Shalom*, *Mazal Tov*, *Kol Hakavod*, *Bruchim Habaiim*, *Yasher Koach*, *B'Shaa Tovah*, etc.

In the days my father's death was approaching, I would talk to different people who had a lot of options in English to reflect and support how I was feeling—essentially—"I'm so sorry to hear about this, I hope and pray that it's a peaceful end". But there was nothing in Hebrew to reflect that same sentiment. Nobody said "*Mavet B'Shalom*" or something close to that with all that it would mean. It doesn't exist in our vocabulary.

I am told The rabbis are recognizing this and there is already movement to come up with liturgy and vocabulary—I hope it happens soon, so that the next time someone goes searching for a direct plea to The Almighty for a peaceful death for a loved one, it will be in place. To quote Hillel - אָם לֹא עֲקָשׁוּ, אֵימָתִי

I'd like to think that discussing my experience with the Clergy at Beth Tzedec, and now having you read about it, will help move that needle ever so slightly. It gives me great comfort to think that in my father's memory and honour, these four lessons will "help Jews".

Shanah Tovah

Power of the Sun to Grow Again

by Lee Haas



My Somedays Are Fading

by Dot Whitehouse (31.03.24)

My someday's are fading
The hope sputtering
Like the almost remains of a sparkler

Someday I'll rest in the heart of you
Someday your heart will welcome me

Someday the strength of others
Will penetrate my bones
And hold me up
In the face of hatred

Then someday your love
And unfettered passion
Will look me square in the heart
Naked and home

And my someday's will have faded
In the presence of you

©Dot Whitehouse

“Now We Need a New Torah,”

by Elhanan Nir

Translated by Rachel Korazim (and others)

Now We Need a New Torah
Now like air to breathe
We need a new Torah.
Now, gasping for air and with choking throats
We need a new Mishnah and a new Gemara
And a new Kabbalah and new ascents of the soul¹
And inside all the brokenness and the salt and the desolation, now
A new Hasidism and a new Zionism
And a new Rav Kook² and a new Brenner³
And a new Leah Goldberg⁴ and a new Yehaveh Da'at⁵
And new art and new poetry
And new literature and new cinema
And new-old words⁶
And new-ancient souls from the storehouse,
And a new love out of the terrible weeping.
For we were all washed away in the rivers of Re'im and Be'eri
And we have no mountain within us nor other tablets
And no Moses and no strength
And now everything
Is in our hands

1. An experience described in a letter of Ba'al Shem Tov
2. R. Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Kohen Kook
3. Yosef Haim Brenner, secular Zionist poet and interlocutor of Rav Kook
4. One of the great poets of modern Hebrew literature.
5. Responsa by R. Ovadia Yosef
6. Cf. Zohar, Tetzaveh 9:81

עכשיו אנחנו צריכים תורה חדשה

עֲכָשׁוּ כְמוֹ אוֹר לְנִשְׁימָה
אֲנַחְנוּ צְרִיכִים תּוֹרָה חֲדָשָׁה.
עֲכָשׁוּ בְּתוֹךְ הָאוֹר שֶׁנִּגְמַר וְהַצְּוֹאֵר
שֶׁנִּמְחַק
אֲנַחְנוּ צְרִיכִים מִשְׁנֵה חֲדָשָׁה וּגְמָרָא
חֲדָשָׁה
וְקַבְּלָה חֲדָשָׁה וְעֲלִיּוֹת נִשְׁמָה חֲדָשׁוֹת
וּבְתוֹךְ כָּל הַשֶּׁבֶר וְהַמְּלַח וְהַחֲרָבָה, עֲכָשׁוּ
חֲסִידוֹת חֲדָשָׁה וְצִיּוֹנוֹת חֲדָשָׁה
וְהִרְבּוּ קוֹק חֲדָשׁ וּבְרִנֵּי חֲדָשׁ
וְלֹאָה גּוֹלְדֵּבֶרֶג חֲדָשָׁה וַיְחַוֶּה דַּעַת חֲדָשׁ
וְאַמְנוֹת חֲדָשָׁה וְשִׁירָה חֲדָשָׁה
וְסִפְרוֹת חֲדָשָׁה וְקוֹלְנוּעַ חֲדָשׁ
וּמְלִים חֲדָתִי-עֲתִיקִין
וְנִשְׁמוֹת חֲדָשׁוֹת-עֲתִיקוֹת מֵהָאוֹצֵר,
וְאַהֲבָה חֲדָשָׁה מִתּוֹךְ הַבְּכִיָּה הַנּוֹרָאָה.
כִּי נִשְׁטַפְּנוּ כָּלֵנוּ בְּנֵהוֹרוֹת רְעִים וּבְאָרֵי
וְאִין בָּנוּ הֵר וְאִין עוֹד לוֹחוֹת
וְאִין לָנוּ מִשָּׁה וְאִין בָּנוּ כּוֹחוֹת
וּבִידֵינוּ עֲכָשׁוּ הַכֹּל
נְתוּ

Excerpt from: The Story of the Master of Prayer

by Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav

וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם, וְהָיָה רוּחַ סְעָרָה גְדוֹלָה בְּעוֹלָם וְהָרוּחַ סְעָרָה הַזֶּה בִּלְבָב אֶת כָּל הָעוֹלָם בְּלוֹ וְהַפָּךְ מֵיָמַי לִיבִשָׁה, וּמִיבִשָׁה לְגַם וּמִמְדָּבָר יָשׁוּב, וּמִיָּשׁוּב מְדָבָר וְהַפָּךְ אֶת כָּל הָעוֹלָם בְּלוֹ וּבָא הָרוּחַ סְעָרָה הַזֶּה לְתוֹךְ בֵּית הַמִּלְכָּה וְלֹא עָשָׂה שָׁם שׁוּם הַזְמַן רַק שָׁנְכַנְס הָרוּחַ סְעָרָה וְחִטְףָּה אֶת הַיָּלֵד שֶׁל הַבַּת מִלְכָּה הַזֶּה לְוַתְּוֹךְ הָרַעַשׁ תַּכְּף כְּשֶׁחִטְףָּה אֶת הַתֵּיגוֹן הַיָּקָר הַזֶּה לְרַדְפָּה הַבַּת מִלְכָּה אַחֲרָיו וְכֵן הַמִּלְכָּה וְכֵן הַמִּלְכָּה עַד שֶׁנִּתְפָּצְרוּ בָּלָם וְלֹא נִודַע מְקוֹמָם אֵינָם וְאַנְחָנוּ בְּלֵנוּ לֹא הֵינּוּ בְּכָל זֶה כִּי הֵינּוּ עוֹלָיִם כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד לְמְקוֹמוֹ לְחַדֵּשׁ כַּחוֹ כִּנְ"ל וְכִשְׁחֻזְרָנוּ וּבָאֵנוּ לֹא מְצָאֵנוּ אוֹתָם בָּלָם כִּנְ"ל וְגַם הַיָּד הַזֶּה לְנֶאֱבָדָה אִזְ

And the day came to pass: there was a very great Storm Wind upon the world. And the Storm Wind mixed up the entire world, and overturned sea to dry land and dry land to sea, and wilderness to settled area and settled area to wilderness; so, it overturned the entire world.

And the Storm Wind went into the King's chamber ... and snatched away the Child of the Queen's Daughter. And amidst the commotion, as soon as the Storm Wind snatched away the dear Child, the Queen's Daughter followed [him] immediately (in other words, the Princess immediately started running after the Child to snatch him back; she too went off someplace no one knows where). So too the Queen, and so too the King: they all went after the Child, until they all became dispersed, and no one knows where they are. But all of us were nowhere nearby during this, for we were gone away then, each to his place to renew his power, as mentioned; and when we came back, we could no longer find them all. The Hand [the mysterious map] too became missing then.

וּמֵאִזְ נִתְפָּצְרוּ בְּלֵנוּ וּמֵאִזְ אֵין אֵנוּ יְכוֹלִים עוֹד לְעֹלּוֹת כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד לְמְקוֹמוֹ לְחַדֵּשׁ כַּחוֹ כִּי אַחַר שֶׁנִּתְפָּצְרוּ הָעוֹלָם בְּלוֹ וְנִחְלְפוּ כָּל מְקוֹמוֹת הָעוֹלָם מֵיָמַי לִיבִשָׁה וְכו', כִּנְ"ל בְּרִוּאֵי אֵי אֶפְשָׁר עֲתָה לְעֹלּוֹת בְּדַרְכֵי הָרְאשׁוֹנִים כִּי עֲתָה צְרִיכִים דְּרָכִים אַחֲרִים לְפִי חִלּוּף וְשִׁנוּי הַמְּקוֹמוֹת

So, from that time on we have all become scattered and can no longer each go to his place to renew his power, for since the entire world has been overturned, we now need different paths today; therefore, we have no longer gone up each to his place to renew his power. [For now, we would have to go up using new paths according to the rearranging of the world.]

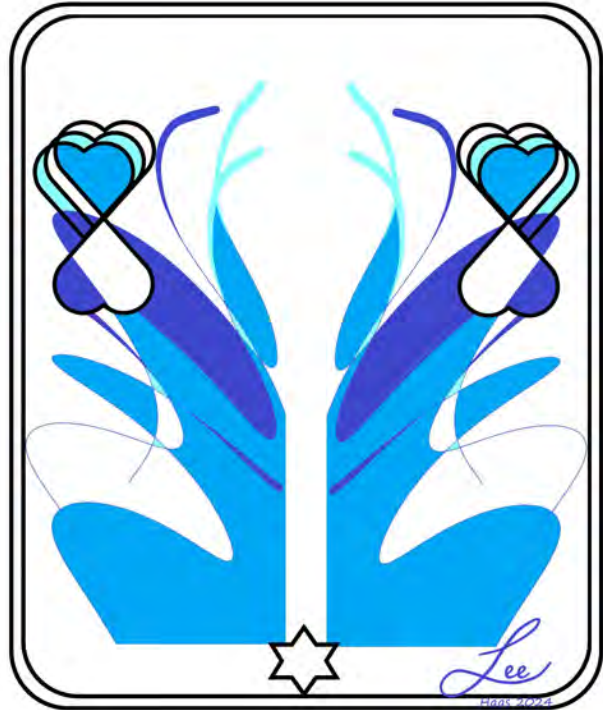
NOTE:
The story is a fable describing a need for new paths. In other words, there are moments in our lives – individually, communally, and as a people – in which we must work to create new paths of meaning, understanding, unity, and holiness.

It often seems as if this is one of those moments. Our world seems to have turned upside down, what was familiar is now foreign. Our world has been overturned; we now need new paths.

The High Holy Days are, at their essence, an opportunity to evaluate where we have been to chart out where we need to go. What are the new paths you will take this year? What are the paths you think we as a people might consider?

EZ Our Hearts to Go the Other Waze

by Lee Haas



Midrash on Psalms, 22:5

שנו רבותינו:
מתוך כעס רצון
ומתוך אפלה אורה
ומתוך רוגז רחמים
מתוך צרה רוחה
מתוך ריחוק קירוב
מתוך נפילה קימה.

(מיכה ז ח) כי אשב בחשך ה' אור לי. — ומתוך אפלה אורה

(מיכה ז ח) כִּי נִפְלֵיתִי קָמְתִי — מתוך נפילה קימה

Our Masters taught:

“From wrath – favour.

From darkness – light.

From anger – compassion.

From trouble – comfort.

From rejection – acceptance.

From falling – a rising up.”

“*From darkness – light*,” for it is said Though I sit in darkness,
YHVH is might light. (Micah 7:8)

“*From falling – a rising up*,” for it is said Though I have fallen,
I rise again. (Micah 7:8)

Jewish History on Cecil Street

by Barry Weinberg

Today a visitor to the Spadina Avenue area looking to discover some evidence of Jewish history would have to be directed to Cecil Street to see and experience the Ostrovtzer Shul. It's all due to its founding father: Israel Nachman Weinberg- my paternal grandfather.

Zaidy Weinberg, as he was called, emigrated to Canada in 1920 from the small town of Ostrowiecz, Poland, leaving behind his wife and first two of four children, my father and past President of Beth Tzedec, the late Dr. Fred Weinberg, and my aunt Helen Friedman. With successive Jewish emigrations to Canada, the area and vicinity of Kensington Market became a thriving Jewish neighborhood with many synagogues in its confines, all identified and named by the geographic district of Russian or Polish origin. Naturally, my grandfather who was a religious man needed a permanent home for himself and his family to celebrate Jewish holidays as well as daily and weekly prayer services, and to provide a focus for social and cultural activity.

In 1921, the Congregation of the Churches of Christ in Canada decided to sell their imposing edifice at 58 Cecil Street. In 1922, Israel Weinberg, who was in the fur business at the time, and his good Ostrovtzer friend, David Sussman, who owned Toronto Slipper Company, negotiated the purchase of Cecil Street for the establishment of the new shul. The sale was finalized for \$22,000, which required a major subscription from the aspiring Ostrovtzer community in Toronto to pay the large mortgage.

Fortunately, the marble plaques commemorating these visionaries have survived in their original location. They are virtual witnesses to the many additional transformations the building has undergone in the past 102 years. It was my grandfather that stipulated back into the original deal, that in the event the building was sold, the marble wall must remain permanently, as it has.

One of my Zaidy's particular loves was chazzanim and cantorial arts. At his home on Grace Street, he hosted visiting cantors from America who performed and even launched careers at this Shul. The most renowned and legendary was Yossele Rosenblatt. Wearing a top hat and cape, his walk from Grace street to Cecil street caused college St. to be closed off due to the crowds of people waiting for a glimpse of him. It was standing room only in the Shul.

My father, Dr. Fred Weinberg, had his bar-mitzvah at the Ostrovtzer Shul in 1932 and remembers the celebration, where following his Torah reading walnuts were thrown at him with hearty mazel tovs being yelled, the custom in those days.

My late father-in-law Harry Fish, whose family name is on the marble plaque mentioned above, was a holocaust survivor. Harry was born and raised in Ostrowiecz. He was an Ostrovtzer through and through. It was a natural decision for him to join the Shul upon arrival in Toronto with his wife Toby and their daughter Dora after the Second World War. When he went there to meet the president and become a member, it was my grandfather—Israel Weinberg who welcomed him, his wife and their daughter as members. Years later, that daughter Dora became my wife.

My sister Deena married Sandy Sussman, my grandfather's business partner David's great nephew. For over three decades, the Ostrovtzer Shul was a vibrant Jewish venue. Generations of Jewish immigrant families had their bar mitzvahs, aufrufs and weddings—all at the Shul.

My grandfather took his role as president of the Ostrovtzer Shul as a privilege and responsibility. He committed himself to the Jewish community of Toronto. Today there is a plaque and marker on the building from its commemoration by the Jewish Heritage Plaque initiative by the City of Toronto. Our present-day challenge will be to reinforce this message about this building for future Jewish generations. In this way, we can maintain our connection to our history.

Traveling Through Europe—Shopping, Eating, And Praying

by Nina Wallach

I have wanderlust. I have trips booked almost year-round to both new and favourite destinations. Years ago, as a travel agent based in New York, it was not unusual for me to ask my best friend (another agent) to head out to London for the weekend to explore, shop and eat. Hello PAN AM! Leave on Friday night, back on Sunday. Jet Lag, when you only have two days was something I wasn't familiar with. The one thing we DIDN'T do was go to shul.

Fast forward about 20 years. I'm married and constantly coming up with something new. My husband Larry lets me do the trip planning, while he finds interesting restaurants and possible synagogues to explore in Europe.

On a river cruise down the Danube we had a stop on a Friday in Regensburg Germany. What to do? Let's go to shul and see what it's like. While we certainly couldn't understand any of the German, we definitely could understand the Hebrew and knew where we were in the service. Familiarity. Being with our fellow Jews in Germany. There was something comforting about that. Wishing strangers a GUT SHABBOS—and hearing it in return.

On a trip to London with Sharon Yale, I wanted to say kaddish for my mom - it was Friday night. We found a shul near Marble Arch and went. We sat separately from the men, did our thing and were getting ready to leave when the Rabbi approached us. Did we have plans for dinner? We had no idea. Would we like to have dinner with the Rabbi and his wife and other travelers in their home? OK, sure. That might be "different"—and it was. Familiar roast chicken and soup with about six other people from foreign places. We learned that the shul had been the home of the late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. We got to meet people, share stories, and have a totally unexpected and lovely Shabbat.

Our daughter Rachel graduated veterinary school in Glasgow, Scotland. To celebrate, we hosted a kiddush on Shabbat at the only remaining (but famous) Garnethill shul in Glasgow. Again, I had to sit in the upstairs women's section—and even though they weren't there, I was not allowed to sit in Mrs. Goldberg's seat, or Mrs. Schwartz's seat or Mrs. Klein's seat... Very protective of their seats! The congregants said it was the best kiddush

they had in months. Food and Jews—always get great reviews.

On another trip to London, it's Friday night and we're stopped outside the shul. What did we want? We want to go to services! We were inspected and questioned, but we got in. It was the Saatchi Shul and Mr. Saatchi's wife was the guest speaker that night—Nigella Lawson, celebrity chef. Security was in abundance. There was dancing and singing and lots of fun. You never know who you'll meet or see.

So – we know that whenever we're in a strange place, we can always go to shul. We meet new people, share experiences and leave feeling we connected yet again, with our people.



Garnethill Synagogue, Glasgow, Scotland

Going back to the Old Country

by Sharon Yale



My mother's family on both sides came from Poland, but for most of my life, I had no desire to go there. Of all the countries in Europe I had never been to, Poland was at the bottom of the list. I completely bought into the argument that Poland was one big Jewish graveyard; my grandmother's nine siblings, multiple nieces and nephews and elderly parents all perished in the Holocaust. But then in 2010, Beth

Tzedec organized a Jewish heritage trip to Eastern Europe. My newly widowed mother-in-law asked my husband and me to go with her. We agreed, albeit grudgingly. I felt compelled to read up on Polish Jewish history in advance.

I knew that Poland had a large Jewish population before the war—but I learned that it was actually 3.3 million. As I continued reading, I started to realize that the horrific events of 1939 to 1945 were just the finale to Poland's long Jewish history. There had been over 6,000 shtetlach and 1,200 Jewish cemeteries in Poland—evidence of hundreds of years of Jewish co-existence with their Polish countrymen.

As our group left Warsaw for Krakow, my mother-in-law, my husband and I hired a driver and guide to take us to Yvansk (Iwaniska)—my father-in-law's ancestral village. On the way, our guide, who identified as Roman Catholic, told us that she had recently discovered that her great-grandfather had been a rabbi. She had been unaware of her Jewish ancestry until recently. Stories of deathbed confessions of elderly Poles that their parents had been Jewish were not uncommon.

When we arrived in Yvansk we saw wooden houses that must have been standing there for 100 years. The cemetery is the size of a football field, and bears witness to





hundreds of years of Jewish life in the shtetl. We said Kaddish for my husband's many ancestors still lying peacefully under the ground there (just as we said Kaddish in Auschwitz three days later for the ones who were brutally murdered). It was incredibly meaningful to honour our great-great grandparents and other family members in that way.

Krakow hosts a Jewish Culture Festival every year and our trip coincided with that year's event. Every year, thousands of visitors flock to Krakow to attend concerts of klezmer, cantorial, Israeli and Yiddish music. Kazimierz, the old Jewish quarter of Krakow, rocks. Most of the participants are not Jewish, though. It's lively and entertaining and is a great boost to Krakow's economy. But it gives me the same vibe as a re-enactment of a jousting tournament by medieval historians—a celebration of a vanished civilization. There are, at most, 20,000 Jews living in Poland today.

That trip, however, was life-altering in so many aspects. I value the opportunity I had to experience that journey with my husband, mother-in-law, and members of the Beth Tzedec community—but most of all, the lasting friendships I made with my fellow travellers.

Embracing Connection

by Shirley Brazer

How can I connect with my people, the Jewish people when we have different values, political preferences, ways of practising Judaism and being from different cultures, etc.? Am I able to appreciate our differences while being able to rise above the distinctions and differences that divide us, and accept our commonality?

Antisemites accomplish this easily. If they can identify us as Jewish by birth or conversion, they recognize us as one people whatever the individual differences.

With regard to Israel, I first visited there in 1967 a few months after the war, and immediately felt a strong visceral connection with the land and people which has never wavered in my many visits. Since October 7, I have been inspired by the way Israelis and diaspora Jews have rallied to connect and support one another. We all pray for better times ahead.

Beyond my individual preferences in connecting with others, the only certain way I know to truly connect with all Jews and non-Jews is to stay awake to the Divine within where I experience the unity of all life. Then, to do my best in daily life to act from this perspective, to connect with all human beings as God's beloved children.

My Grandpa Sulim

by Mariana Grinblat

For holidays I would go and visit my grandparents and I felt I was entering a very special world and privilege. My grandpa would make a strong coffee for my grandma, who was reading the Jewish bible at 6:00 AM and would say in Yiddish, “Here is your coffee, can I go now?”

Once she said yes, he would call me, put on his hat and take his cane and we would walk to the farmers’ market to make sure to get fresh things for Shabbos.

He was tall and would hold me in his arms and would tell all the boys who came courting to go away as they were not good enough for me! He would give me all his chocolates, and tell me what I good kid I was, versus my older cousin who was a spoiled brat. He would pray in the morning, putting the leather bracelet on his hands and head and finish all his prayers with “next year in Jerusalem”. He immigrated with my grandma to Israel in 1950 but had to return to Romania, as one his kids developed cancer.

Whenever he came to visit us in the countryside where we lived, my mother tried to make everything kosher. He inspired me to believe strongly in myself, to take no nonsense from anyone, to be proud of my Jewishness and speak the truth.

My grandparents lived in Paris/France until their deaths, in the mid-1980s. My grandpa never got used to the subways or seeing a train come out of a hole!

I was so sad when they died, that I kept one of their thick sweaters that they wore to protect me against difficulties in my life and to feel my grandpa’s love.

Prayer

by Melina Hellber-Eshed

אל אלהי הרוחות לכל בשר
הנה אנו לפניך רוחות קרועות וסועות מצער
חמל נא עלינו, בני האדם, הברואים בצלמך,
בפקוד אותנו עת שבר וצרה,
אימה, מות ובהלה

Divine One – Source of the spirits for all [mortal] flesh
We are before you as spirits rent and weary from sorrow
Pity us, humanity, created in your image
Guide us in this time of fracture and tragedy,
fear, death and panic

יגולו נא, אָנָּא, אָנָּא רַחֲמֵנוּ וְהִאֲהָבָה שְׂבָנוּ
עַל מַדּוֹת הַדִּין, הַנִּקְמָה וְהָרַע שְׂבָנוּ.
שְׁהֵנָּה בָּא הַכָּאב הַעוֹ וְהַבוֹעֵר הַצּוֹעֵק וּמִבְקֵשׁ נִקְמָה וְלֹא נִחָמָה.

Please, please, we beg that you turn our own mercy and love
over the judgement, vengeance, and evil that lies within us.
For the pain is so severe, searing, screaming, that it only seeks inconsolable
retribution

שְׁמְרֵי עֲלֵינוּ שְׂכִינַת עֲזָנוּ,
עַל רוּחוֹתֵינוּ הַצָּרוּבוֹת,
נִשְׁמוֹתֵינוּ הַמְבֹהֲלוֹת,
עַל בְּשָׂרֵנוּ שֶׁנִּעְשֶׂה כְּלוֹ חַדוּדִין

Keep watch, Shekhinah, over our strength,
over our scorched spirits,
our frightened souls,
our furious flesh

לְמַעַן יַעֲלֶה פְּשַׁח וַיִּזְרַח צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים מִלְּבָנוּ הַמְרֻסָּק.
וְנִאֲמִין שְׁעוֹד נִזְכָּה וְנִרְאָה בְּטוֹב ה'
וְטוֹב הָאָדָם בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים.
אָמֵן

May the Image of Divinity within our crushed hearts rise and shine like the
dawn,
That we way yet still believe we deserve to see Hashem’s goodness,
and the goodness of humanity, in the land of the living.
Amen



No letdowns or letup in this love story

Excerpted from the Dora Ennis story, by Sholom Wargon
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If you're over 30, chances are you've read a hard-copy book that was so engrossing you couldn't put it down. If you're under 30, perhaps that book resides on your Kindle or Kobo.

If Tola Piekarczyk and Harry Fisch were the readers, their daughter Dora was the book.

From the day she was born until well into her toddler stage, her mother and father insisted on carrying her—everywhere—holding her aloft like she was the last child on earth.

To them, she was.

How they developed that mindset is a story in itself.

Konin, Poland, 1941. Some 60% of the town's approximately 2,700 Jews are ordered by the occupying Nazis to leave their homes (*Konin: A Quest*, by Theo Richmond). They are deported by train to Ostrowiec, Poland.

Apprised of the situation, members of Ostrowiec's Jewish

community converge on the train station to offer shelter and accommodation to their dispossessed brethren. Standing on the platform, Herschel (Harry) Fisch spots an extremely attractive Tola Piekarczyk disembarking with her sister Irka. His wheels turn quickly: to shelter is human, to shelter *this* woman, divine. He whisks them off to the Fisch family residence.

November, 1943. Returning home after foraging for food, Harry Fisch finds the house empty. His family has been deported in a Nazi sweep of the town. He and two Jewish friends still at large go into hiding.

January, 1945. Auschwitz—where Tola and Irka were taken—is liberated. Too sick to travel, Tola is nursed back to health by a sympathetic Polish woman. With the aid of her sister Irka, Tola initiates a frantic search for Harry. As word of mouth travels from



Dora, Barletta, Italy, 1947

town to town, news of Harry's whereabouts eventually surfaces. Irka finds him. Tola and Harry are reunited in Ostrowiec.

November, 1945. After the liberation of the Ostrowiec ghetto, under the direction of the UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration), most of Ostrowiec's Jewish residents begin an agonizingly slow trek, much of it on foot, to the Salento area of Italy (*province Lecce, regione Puglia*) at the southernmost tip of the boot's heel. There, four communities have agreed to receive and accommodate the refugees, some in summer villas graciously made available by their northern Italian owners.

December 18, 1946. Tola and Harry are blessed with the birth of a child, Dora...

...whose feet don't touch the ground for a long, long time.

The parents' insistence on keeping their daughter airborne on

dry land was neither coddling nor controlling. It was the compulsion to protect and preserve the life that had emerged, against all odds, from her mother's womb. It was the sense that this "miracle baby"—a baby that the anti-fertility drugs they'd been injected with and other abuses they'd been subjected to by the Nazis—was a gift from God, to be held onto for dear life.

Nor were they Dora's only "uplifters". This was a baby everyone wanted to hold.

How did it feel to be so preciously and persistently supported?

"Incredibly secure!" smiles Dora. "As a child I felt I was raised under an umbrella of security—that's a visual I formed very early—and I never went through a phase of feeling embarrassed by having immigrant parents with an accent. I know now consciously what I felt then intuitively and emotively—unconditional love."

The love affair with no "letdowns"—as exemplified by a child whose feet are kept above ground—has continued unabated





Santa Maria di Leuca's location made it a natural crossroads for passenger vessel traffic. The locals' warm reception of Jewish refugees allowed Dora and some 200 other "miracle babies" to be born there between 1945 and 1948. The lighthouse, built in 1864, overlooks two seas: the Ionian and the Adriatic. Its powerful beam has become a metaphor for the life-affirming story that unfolded under its gaze.

to this day. The bonds forged between locals and refugees in those four seaside towns have remained fast over seven decades. On many occasions, Dora has been tearfully hugged by other GTA-based former refugees who remembered holding her as a baby in Santa Maria di Leuca. Those "uplifters" included the late Cantor Joseph Cooper. Officiating at Dora's wedding to Barry Weinberg (Beth Tzedec Synagogue, December 15, 1991), he burst into tears when Dora's uncle Max informed him that the Dora he was about to marry was the same Dora he'd held in his arms many years earlier in Santa Maria di Leuca, where Cantor Cooper, like members of the Fisch family, had been a refugee.

These bonds are commemorated in the Museo della Memoria e dell'Accoglienza (Museum of Memory and Hospitality) in Santa Maria al Bagno. The museum contains original murals by Jewish refugee Zvi Miller and other artifacts.

The manifestations of this ongoing love story are by no means confined to the museum. The very villa where Dora spent her earliest days is adorned by a wedding gown in a glass case. This dress was donated by an already-married local woman to a refugee bride, who in turn passed it on to the next bride, and so on, in the communal spirit of sharing and caring.



*Harry and Tola
at Dora and Barry's wedding,
Toronto, December 15, 1991*



*Read the complete story at
immigrantstory.ca*

Grass Detail

by Jacqueline Benyes



© Jacqueline Benyes

By Chance
by Terri Humphries



Rise Again One People, One Heart

A CONCERT TO COMMEMORATE THE TRAGIC
EVENTS OF OCTOBER 7 AND ITS IMPACT

Wednesday, October 9 AT 7:30 PM

Join us for a very special musical evening of commemoration and healing, led by Maestro Meir Briskman and Cantor Moshe Fishel, along with our very own Lishmoa El Harina Choir.

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