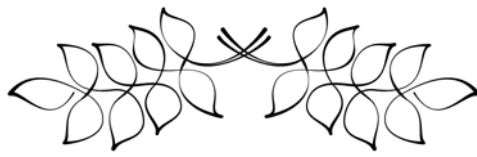


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CONGREGATION
SUKKAT SHALOM
Bulletin

Rabbi's Message

by Rabbi Sam Gordon

When natural disasters occur, we are reminded of our vulnerability to the forces of nature -- but also have an opportunity to measure the strength of the human spirit. In the final days of a divisive and bitter election campaign, a terrible event reminded us of what unites Americans.

Democrats, Republicans and Independents were equally left homeless or without power, food or fuel. Our largest city was paralyzed. Other urban areas, small towns and beachfront resort villages were nearly destroyed. Hurricane

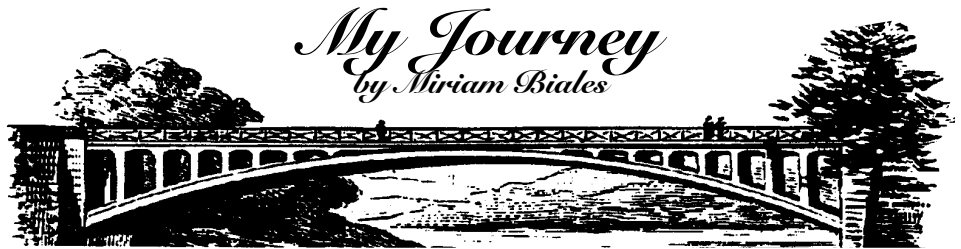
“Hurricanes, storms and floods return the earth to chaos, at least briefly.”

Sandy did not discriminate between rich and poor, faithful and secular, sophisticated and uneducated. Ethnicity and race made no difference. There was unity within the despair.

In these recent weeks following the storm, the government has acted as swiftly as possible. Federal, state and municipal leaders have worked together -- no matter their ideological differences. There has been an outpouring of communal caring and concern with people giving of themselves, their time and their substance to help those most in need. There is much still to be done, and there will surely be frustrations and disillusion. But, on the whole, people have responded selflessly and generously.

The story of creation in the Book of Genesis begins with chaos—*Tohu va Vohu*. God speaks and brings order to the world, separating the dry land and oceans, darkness and light, night and day.

please turn to page 2



My journey started anew when I decided to become an adult Bat Mitzvah. I grew up on Long Island in a family that was not observant. I did not learn much about Judaism. My brother was a Bar Mitzvah, but what I remember most was his party.

Years later, living in a suburb of Chicago with my husband Brad and young sons Joshua and Jacob, I became increasingly aware of my limitations to teach, guide or bring Judaism into our family. As neither Brad nor I grew up in Chicago, we did not know much about local congregations. We started going to Tot Shabbat services. None of them felt like a fit to us, so I asked a few friends for recommendations. We were told about Sukkat Shalom and I believe our first event was a Beach Shabbat at Gillson Park.

I was drawn to Sukkat Shalom for a lot of reasons, but a main one was its focus on education. The emphasis on educating the whole family together was very appealing to me.

Another benefit of joining Sukkat Shalom was meeting some of the wonderful people who were members. I met Amy Heller at one of the first events I attended and we have been friends ever since. Amy joined an adult B'nai Mitzvah class and became a Bat Mitzvah in 2004. I attended the service and was inspired by Amy's choice.

I continued to learn about Bar Mitzvah when my sons entered the process. They both had wonderful experiences of learning Torah, sharing what they learned and deepening their connection to Jewish faith and tradition.

During this time, I started to explore my own connection to Judaism. I researched

holidays, attended some of Rabbi Gordon's classes, joined the parent-child Hebrew class and attended women's spirituality meetings. I was searching for something more than following traditions, attending services and the basics of being Jewish.

A few months after my younger son's Bar Mitzvah, my sister was diagnosed with colorectal cancer and had surgery to remove her colon. I spent a few days caring for her upon her release from the hospital. Her cancer scared me. I realized how quickly life can change. So I started to dream about what I wanted from life -- things both big and small.

One dream was to build my connection to Judaism. I thought that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process would be a great way to do so. My dream Bat Mitzvah had pieces of what I had

“I was searching for something more than following traditions, attending services and the basics of being Jewish.”

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From the Rabbi, cont'd

Hurricanes, storms and floods return the earth to chaos, at least briefly. Waters inundate city streets, homes and office towers. The chill of early winter makes even the securest of homes unlivable. Clouds and rain darken the skies.

But the Genesis story is not simply about God creating a world that made sense from out of that chaos. On the sixth day, humans were formed -- and God saw that it was very good. According to the rabbinic interpreters, the use of the phrase "very good" was intended to teach us that humans were necessary to make creation complete.

"We can and must act to protect our earth in the larger global sense."

We need to remember that our impact on creation can be positive or negative. Have we added to creation or harmed it? Were we entrusted with the earth in order to protect it or have we harmed the planet? Are we suffering from the consequences of our disregard for the fragility of the earth and its delicate balance?

If human involvement in creation was, in fact, "very good," then we must recognize the positive potential of our role. We can and must act to protect our earth in the larger global sense. In addition, we see the best aspects of human action in the ways in which we respond to the needs of others, whether family, friends, colleagues or strangers.

Following Katrina there was an outpouring of aid for the New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. Many volunteered to help rebuild homes and schools. I doubt that the volunteer work will be as needed following Sandy, but our donations will be meaningful.

We need to continue to care about and be concerned for those who are most vulnerable and who are trying to rebuild their homes and lives. This will be a difficult Thanksgiving and holiday season for so many people. Let us do what we can to help make it better. Please contribute to the Red Cross (www.redcross.org) or the URJ Disaster Relief Fund (<http://urj.org/socialaction/issues/relief/hurricanes/>).

Volunteering as a Family Enhances the Mitzvah Experience

It can be a challenge to find opportunities to volunteer as a family. Family Promise, a project of the Sukkat Shalom Social Justice Committee, is one such opportunity. We have been very impressed with the organization and its mission of providing a temporary place to live for families in our local community.

Having four boys between the ages of 10 and 14 can be difficult! But it is even more difficult to find something we can all enjoy together. Not only can we all participate in Family Promise together, but it also provides a chance for us to help those who are in a difficult place.

Our son Henry, 10, says: "It's fun because the kids are nice. It reminds me to think not just about myself, but to also help others. We brought them food and helped them have a good time when they don't have a home."

"I like eating dinner with the kids," says Henry's twin brother, Joe. "It's fun. Sometimes I'm with kids from my school and we've even had the same teachers!"

What touched me most about Family Promise occurred the last time we were volunteering. The kids were playing cards on the floor, the men were doing dishes and the moms (volunteers and guests) were packing lunches and leftovers in the kitchen. One of the guest moms commented on how this was the first time she had ever talked with other moms while packing lunches. We all felt such a warm community feeling in that kitchen!

So if you're looking for a way to volunteer as a family, look no further than Family Promise. For more information, contact the temple office.

[With our new building, Sukkat Shalom will soon host its first Family Promise family. Please watch for details and the chance to volunteer.]

Sukkat Shalom Congregant Named Volunteer of the Year by A Just Harvest

Congregant Lynn Denton has been named a "Volunteer of the Year" by A Just Harvest -- an organization whose mission is to fight poverty and hunger in the Rogers Park and greater Chicago community by providing nutritious meals daily

and promoting community and economic development.

Lynn began her relationship with A Just Harvest more than 10 years ago

when her daughters were in Girl Scouts and volunteering at the Community Kitchen, the organization's forerunner. Since then, Lynn has continued to serve the patrons of A Just Harvest through Congregation Sukkat Shalom.

Lynn is a social worker at a Skokie elementary school and also lends her services to non-profits such as Camp Kesem and Curt's Café. Lynn also worked at the soup kitchen at Beth Emet Synagogue. She is a former member of the Board of Sukkat Shalom and was the founding editor of its newsletter.

Congratulations to Lynn for this well-earned honor.



Sukkat Shalom By the Numbers:

New Building Dedication Edition

Members at Friday Shabbat Service: 307

Guests at Saturday Night Party: 103

Money Raised for Family Promise: \$2,000

Families at Sunday Morning Celebration: 70

Journey, cont'd

seen in my children's and in Amy's services, and other things that were my own. I always felt most connected to God when out-of-doors -- especially in the mountains. It was then that I remembered a Family School speaker from a few years past, Rabbi Jamie Korngold, who calls herself the Adventure Rabbi. She leads a congregation in Boulder, Colorado, where all the services are held outdoors.

I was unsure how to work with two congregations to create my dream Bat Mitzvah, but that is exactly what I did. I took Hebrew lessons with Alissa Zuchman, attended Torah study, participated in Rabbi Gordon's classes and came to many holiday services. I also did an independent study project with the Adventure Rabbi. I became very excited about exploring Judaism. I wanted to learn about the traditions, history, holidays and teachings that I could relate to my life. In the end, working with two congregations gave me richness and depth -- offering different viewpoints and things to think about and wrestle with.

“My Bat Mitzvah, on that clear, sunny day in Boulder, was not an ending to my journey, but a new beginning.”

On June 11th of this year, I read my Torah portion (*Sh'lach L'cha*) in the Flatiron Mountains of Colorado, where we hiked to a grassy spot with mountains framing my view.

I entered this process thinking that the Bat Mitzvah service would bring me closer to Judaism. What I learned is that the process leading up to the service was where most of my learning took place. I learned to question, to derive meaning from ancient text, to identify the “roots” in Hebrew words, to make a personal connection to the seasons and holidays, to find comfort and community in prayers and song, and mostly that my questions are what fuel my connection to Judaism.

My Bat Mitzvah, on that clear, sunny day in Boulder, was not an ending to my journey, but a new beginning.

My friendship with Miriam began at Sukkat Shalom. Through the years we have shared many family and lifecycle events, including annual Passover and Rosh Hashanah dinners, our children's Bar and Bat Mitzvahs and family get-togethers in between. Miriam and I have always had a good friendship, but our relationship really grew when Miriam decided to become a Bat Mitzvah.

Miriam asked me about my experience and bounced her ideas off me. I was impressed by her desire to make the experience meaningful. I looked forward to our coffee dates when Miriam related her Torah studies, meetings with the Rabbi and updates on how she was going through the process. Miriam embraced the journey of becoming a Bat Mitzvah from start to finish, and made it her own in a way that was thoughtful, spiritual and unique. I knew I had to be a part of the experience!

On a beautiful, clear morning in June, we hiked up the Colorado mountains to a spiritual experience that transported us from everyday life. As we hiked, we stopped along the way for prayers or just to enjoy the surroundings. At one stop, Miriam was given her Hebrew name -- a moment in which we honored Miriam with tears and joy.

At the service atop the mountain, I was twice honored. Miriam wore my *tallit*, a highlight not only of our friendship but something special that she and I would always share. I was also asked to pass the Torah to her family. Miriam's Bat Mitzvah deepened our friendship and allowed me to experience her journey in a very special way.

Youth Programming Is Focus as New Era Begins

By Alissa Zuchman, Director of Family Education

What a wonderful time to be a part of Sukkat Shalom. I am fortunate to be here at the start of a new era. To watch our new spiritual home become a reality is nothing short of magical. Each day during the last month I could leave at the end of my day and return the next morning to discover new furniture in the foyer, a library filled with books or new classrooms ready for students to learn.

It is the sanctuary, however, that takes my breath away. Entering into this sacred space fills me with an overwhelming sense of peace. During the hustle and bustle of moving in, High Holy Days and the start of a new year of Family School, I very often have gone into the sanctuary to rejuvenate and refresh myself.

Sukkat Shalom from the very start understood that including the whole family in learning builds bridges to full partnership in the community and congregation. By engaging families at their earliest stages and connecting them to their synagogue community at each milestone, we are going beyond the usual series of programs and creating a community that is invested, connected and involved.

Lately, I have been working on the Union of Reform Judaism's Youth Engagement campaign. This initiative is looking for the best ways to keep our teenagers and young adults involved in their faith community after their Bar and Bat Mitzvah.

We as a staff are constantly looking for ways to connect with your family. We are in the process of building our informal youth programming and involving our high school students with NFTY, the national youth organization of the Reform movement. With your continued guidance, our sacred space will be filled with families into the next generation.

If you are interested in serving on the steering committee for Youth Engagement, please let me know by emailing me at: Alissaz0921@gmail.com.

Let God In (Working out with...God: Part 2)

by Cantor Jason Kaufman

The first time I ever ran was in June. This October, I completed the Chicago Marathon in 4 hours and 48 minutes.

I started running as part of my journey to live a healthier life. For me, that largely meant losing significant weight. As I have shared my journey with others, I worry that I haven't adequately expressed how difficult the journey truly is. Every day, every meal, is about choice. Do I choose to be the healthiest version of myself today, or do I choose otherwise? Sometimes I accept the struggle; sometimes I am angered by it. Always, I'm forced to engage with it.

The name "Israel" literally means "struggling with God." In the Torah, Jacob's name is changed to Israel after he wrestles with a divine presence. This struggle transformed his identity and ultimately led to the creation of the Jewish people. Struggling is part of our DNA.

How do we respond to struggle in our lives? Do we run from it -- or to it?

As I began to lose significant weight, I hit frustrating plateaus and weight-loss lost its excitement. I looked to the scale to see if I achieved what I incorrectly perceived as success or failure.

One morning, at a Weight Watchers meeting, a friend was talking about her running regimen. During that same time, congregants started talking about an upcoming community race. Though I had never run before, I felt as if the universe was telling me that I should give it a try. I hoped that running would enable me to approach my physical health more holistically, not focused solely on weight loss.

I devoted many hours a week to running and talking with congregants who had the same desire as I did -- to live their healthiest life. I joined local running groups and participated in weekly competitive races throughout Chicago. Never an athlete, I loved the excitement of it all.

I started to think about running the Chicago Half-Marathon -- a challenging, yet reasonable, goal. Because of scheduling conflicts, however, I was forced to think about the next long race on the calendar,



the actual Chicago Marathon. With the support of some, and the understandable headshaking of many, I took a leap of faith and signed up for the Marathon - all 26.2 miles of it.

For three months I devoured every piece of information I could find about running a marathon. The fact that I only started running in June didn't discourage me, but, in fact, inspired me to push myself as far as I possibly could. I ran approximately 30 miles a week. I started eating and sleeping like an athlete, even waking up at 4 a.m. so that I'd be adjusted to the early morning of the Marathon. Though it started as a physical activity, running became more of a spiritual discipline than I ever could have imagined.

The day before the Marathon, I joined the 3:55 pace group and attached a 3:55 bib to my back, meaning that if I ran 9-minute miles throughout the race, I'd finish in a whopping 3 hours and 55 minutes. I naively thought that this was the perfect group to join since I recently completed an 11.5-mile race at a similar pace. I loved running fast, not understanding that true technique comes with the ability to pace oneself.

The Marathon began and for 13.1 miles I couldn't believe how easy it felt. Joy

changed to heartbreak, however, when at the halfway point my leg muscles painfully tightened. For the rest of the race, I struggled with each slow step. Once it became impossible for me to achieve a 3:55 finish, I felt defeated. Though running had built up my ego, mile 14 destroyed it.

At mile 25, I realized that the 3:55 bib was still pinned to the back of my shirt. I refused to finish the race wearing this "sign of failure," so I asked my friend to rip it off.

I was full of emotion crossing the finish line. Yes, I was proud, but I was also disappointed that I failed to reach what I now realize was a thoroughly unrealistic goal. Though in less than a year I had dramatically transformed myself into living a sustainable, healthy lifestyle, I was upset with myself. Unlike Jacob, I wasn't transformed or strengthened by my struggle; I felt defeated by it.

I couldn't see how much I accomplished by even entering the Marathon, let alone completing it in less than five hours. I wish I had recognized in that moment that what I perceived as a failure was actually a resounding success.

I now understand that I couldn't allow myself to be proud because I hadn't yet forgiven myself for becoming as unhealthy as I had been. Because of regret, guilt, and even shame, I couldn't move on and appreciate my achievement.

I wonder if I'm alone. I wonder how many of us are holding onto past experiences at the expense of future opportunities.

Everyone struggles. Struggling doesn't make us weak; it gives us our humanity. It unifies us and gives us opportunities to create holiness in our lives.

What's your struggle?

Run to it.

Release the shame.

Let God in.

Contractor Calls New Building “A Project We Will Always Remember”

By Brian Goldberg, LG Construction and Development

This Sukkat Shalom temple renovation project was a new opportunity for us because we work mostly on residential and commercial projects and developments. Now, our company was working on a religious project that directly affected an entire community of people -- not just a business owner or homeowner. From the very beginning, we felt as if we were a part of this community.

Past experience shows when our company works with an owner on their dream home, it's a rewarding experience. This time, we worked with dedicated professionals with varying occupations and levels of experience. Our common bond was a dedication to produce a space that serves as an inspiration and comfort for the nearly 300-family synagogue.

This project was very rewarding to everyone in our company who was involved. Working within the architectural elements created by the firm of Wheeler Kearns to keep the same tones and feeling of the original 1955 facility, our company had three key objectives. It was important to have a completely satisfied architect, rabbi and congregation, as well as to stay within budget and complete the synagogue renovations on time.



Our LG Project Manager Derek Parker met weekly with a small group that volunteered their time to oversee the project.

“It became quite obvious how close the people were, and how important creating a synagogue they could be proud of was to them, their families and the religious community,” Derek says.

“This was a complete interior project that included adding an elevator to all levels of the building, moving stairs, installing large mechanical units, and removing concrete platforms. One of the most emotional structural changes for the members of the synagogue was redesigning the north wall of the sanctuary where the *bimah* and Ark are now located.”

“This project was very rewarding to everyone in our company who was involved.”

Without the help and support of the subcontractors and tradesmen who provided their hard work, ingenuity and craftsmanship, this dream project would not have been realized.

It was a rewarding journey from first seeing the architects' hand-sketches of the design to watching the congregation move into its new home. We are extremely proud of the finished product and thrilled to have worked with such a great team of owners and designers. More than anything, we want this congregation to be delighted with its new facility now and for years to come.

Everyone at LG wants to thank the dedicated people who worked with us: Fred Wilson, Michael Shively, Andrea Backman, Judy Buckman, Eric Stein, Kerry Leonard, Janette Scott and Dan Wheeler. We also want to acknowledge that being a part of this team was truly rewarding. Besides what our company accomplished professionally, it was an emotional and spiritual experience that will always remain with us.

How a Simple Solo Changed My Life

I cannot begin to put into words how much it meant to me to be able to sing “*Shalom Rav*” on the night of Sukkat Shalom's new building dedication. I am a very sentimental person and, after our first rehearsal in the new space, I started thinking about the simple origins of our Sukkat Shalom music ministry and how this very special congregation (and the choir) has grown because of its inclusivity and its sensitivity, its mission and its vision.

I always feel it an honor and a privilege to sing those few lines of the “*Shalom Rav*.” But that night, especially, I was singing on behalf of all the founding couples who came to Rabbi Gordon to start the congregation; for all of those who have joined in the last 18 years; and for all those who will find inspiration, comfort, faith and friendship in

the years to come.

The fact that I, a Catholic woman, was initially assigned that music so many years ago, and that there is a kind of tradition associated with it now, just reinforces what this congregation is all about. While it was simply three or four lines of solo text combined with a beautiful melody, it gave me the chance, through song, to express MY prayers and MY hopes, MY gratitude and MY love for every current and future member of the congregation. It is a singular, representative plea for personal and worldwide peace, yet intertwined with the ENTIRE choir and everyone inside and outside the embrace of the synagogue's walls.

Being part of the Sukkat Shalom family has, from day one, contributed to my personal spirituality and happiness. I treasure our connection and what I have gained as a person of faith. I truly consider our relationship a gift and I celebrate that gift by trying to put into daily practice what I have learned during not only the High Holy Days, but also the Bar and Bat Mitzvahs and the Shabbat Shirahs that I have sung at Sukkat Shalom over these past 16 years.

Truly, the power of the words and actions of the members of Sukkat Shalom has left an indelible mark on me. Indeed, the sense of history enveloped me on the night of the dedication and I was overjoyed to be able to celebrate the longed-for day with all of you. Music brought me to you and (*mirabile dictu*) I am changed forever.

Congregants “Travel Through the Temple” on Family Dedication Day

More than 60 families (approximately 200 children and adults) celebrated the dedication of the temple in a fun and festive way on Sunday, October 14. The theme for the family event was “Travel Through the Temple” and every child received a “passport” to the building upon entering. After a warm and welcoming service by Rabbi Gordon, and a beautiful rendition of *Lechi Lach* by Cantor Kaufman and the Children’s Choir, the kids

made their way around the temple, stopping at eight different stations to take part in activities and receive their passport “stamps.”



Applying mosaic pieces to a table.

Despite the rain, families planted bulbs in the east garden, wrote down Torah quotes in the sanctuary, counted Stars of David in the Rabbi’s office and found their initials in Hebrew in the Cantor’s office. In addition, they placed gems on a beautiful mosaic table that will be on display in the temple, created family scrapbook pages that will be bound into a book commemorating the dedication, and met new friends while noshing on treats near the kitchen. Finally, the kids busily tied knots to create fleece blankets, which will be given as gifts to the children of Family Promise participants that stay with us throughout the year.

Despite the rain, families planted bulbs in the east garden, wrote down Torah quotes in the sanctuary, counted Stars of David in the Rabbi’s office and found their initials in Hebrew in the Cantor’s office. In addition, they placed gems on a beautiful mosaic table that will be on display



Enjoying the garden before the thunderstorm.

Upwards of 50 volunteers helped with the event, 30 of whom were Family School *madrichim* and 7th and 8th graders. Anna Caffarelli, who took photos throughout the morning, said: “What I loved best was seeing all the kids and adults having fun and enjoying all the activities. It was great how everyone got a chance to make their mark by contributing to the mosaic table or planting flowers for our new synagogue.”

Another photographer, Molly French, added: “As I was walking around, everyone was smiling and laughing. I saw whole families spending time together and saw gangs of little kids running around. People especially seemed to enjoy the hands-on projects like the mosaic and blankets and, of course, the coat hangers!”

Evan Finamore said about her family’s experience: “I know my family had a great time traveling through the temple and helping out. It’s definitely a success when everyone from the 7 year-old filling his passport to the 16 year-old digging holes in the garden said they had a blast!”



Digging holes for planting bulbs in our new garden.

The goal of the day was to ensure that children and adults alike felt comfortable in the new space by receiving a chance to explore the classrooms, offices, gardens and sanctuary. Carole Levin summed it up this way: “After this weekend’s programs I am genuinely excited about all the possibilities the new building brings. It seems to me that with so much enthusiasm and creativity in our congregation we could plan all kinds of different programs.”

Discovering the “nooks and crannies” of our new home was truly a fun adventure for all!



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SUKKAT SHALOM**

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