

MINYAN MONTHLY

Vol. 5, No. 2

Dec. 1990

Kislev 5751

STEERING COMMITTEE

NOTES

From Robert Braun

A meeting of the Library Minyan Steering Committee was held on November 11, 1990 at the home of Robert and Sandra Braun. The following is a brief summary of some of the subjects which were asked to be brought to the attention of the Minyan membership as a whole.

1. Liaison To Temple Executive Committee

Robert Braun reported that the Temple was rewriting its Bylaws and wanted input from the Library Minyan as to whether a member of the Library Minyan should be designated as a permanent member of the Executive Board of the Temple. It was noted that the Minyan had written Bylaws a number of years ago which included designating a Library Minyan member as a liaison to the Temple as a whole. After discussing the matter,

those present suggested that any member serving as a liaison should be chosen by the Minyan as a whole and should have a mandate as to her or his authority.

Input from the Minyan membership is sought on the role of a Temple liaison, with the goal of electing a person to fill that position in the spring at a Minyan General Meeting. This individual would also serve as Chair of the Steering Committee.

2. Role of Children in The Minyan

Stan Goldstein introduced the subject of children in the Minyan. Stan received several responses from an announcement he had been asked to give requesting that children not disrupt the drasha and refrain from playing on the Bimah during services.

All members present at the meeting agreed that children of any age or
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NOTES FROM YOUR TORAH GABAI'IM

Those who attend the Library Minyan regularly are familiar with the call of the gabai during the Torah reading after the third aliyah: "Is there anyone who would like to come forward at this time to 'bench gomel'?" But what really is this prayer? What does it mean? Where does the prayer originate? Under what circumstances is it appropriate to come forward and recite? Here are a few things we've found that might be helpful in understanding the Birkat Ha-Gomel.

According to Dr. Joseph H. Hertz in the Authorized Daily Prayerbook, the Birkat Ha-Gomel is laid down in the Talmud as the natural expression of gratitude to God for deliverances from mortal peril. It is founded on Psalm 107, wherein deliverance from four dangers is described:

1) travellers who, after terrible dangers, reach their destination; 2) released prisoners of war, or those wrongfully imprisoned who regain their freedom; 3) sick persons restored to health; and 4) sailors, all but wrecked in terrific storms that reach land in safety.

The Psalmist concludes each description with the words, "let them give thanks unto the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of mankind." The Birkat Ha-Gomel, was developed in this spirit, but throughout time has not been limited to the above-mentioned four dangers, and is recited after survival from any type of danger, recovery from a serious illness, or safe return from a long journey. It is also traditionally recited after childbirth.

The Birkat Ha-Gomel is followed by a community response, which includes both the feelings of sympathy and joy towards the person who recites the prayer. In this way each Jewish community is acting as one, united, all sharing the joys
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A SOUND SYSTEM FOR THE MINYAN?

Installing a sound system to connect the chapel and the childcare rooms, as was suggested at the end of Shabbat services on November 17, 1990 would necessitate using a microphone in the chapel. This is sure to be a controversial issue. I would like to start the debate by expressing my firm opinion that the Minyan should use a microphone, especially during High Holiday services, but perhaps in the chapel as well.

The congregation would benefit from the use of a microphone in at least two ways. Obviously, if a microphone were used, it would be easier for congregants to hear which melody the shaliakh tsibbur was using, to learn new melodies (this is especially important during High Holiday services), or to discern whether the Imahot were being included; during the Torah reading, people could hear the Hebrew pronounced clearly; it would be easier to hear the person delivering the drash. Using a microphone might also help to ease one of the biggest sources of tension in the Minyan right now - the question of whether small children should remain in the chapel during services. If we used a microphone, maybe it wouldn't matter so much if a child made a little noise.

Speaking as a frequent shaliakh tsibbur and Torah reader, and as a person who has led High Holiday services for the Minyan, I find it difficult to lead services without a microphone. Having to sing at the top of my lungs - especially in the Mirror Room - leads rapidly to voice strain. This in turn impairs the esthetics quality of the singing. To put it simply: an overworked voice does not sound good. This is not a trivial point. As a shaliakh, I use my voice to lead and facilitate the congregation's
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their parents should feel comfortable at the Minyan, since the inclusion of children has been an essential feature of the minyan since its inception. At the same time, it was noted that there were certain limited places and times at which both children and adults were expected to act with a certain amount of discretion. Child care and Junior Congregation are available to allow the maximum number of people to enjoy and participate in services. Parents with children should place themselves to be able to take their children from services, should that prove necessary.

The meeting reaffirmed the acceptance and importance of children and their families at services, and suggested that, on the one hand, parents be aware of those limited circumstances where children should be especially supervised, and second, that all members be reminded of the importance of allowing parents to attend and enjoy services with their families.

3. Minyan New Member/Historical Project

Those attending the meeting discussed ways to emphasize participation by new and existing members. One project adopted was the creation of a new member guide, to be coordinated by Carl Sunshine. This guide would also help preserve the history of the Minyan, which is rapidly growing faint in the memory of members. Anyone interested in helping in this important project, or who has memorabilia (fliers, old Minyan Monthlies, drashot, etc.) should contact Carl Sunshine.

4. Next Meeting

The next Steering Committee meeting will be held shortly after Channukah. Anyone with new business should contact Robert Braun.

MINYAN GUIDE PROJECT --Carl Sunshine

At the November meeting of the Executive Committee, the idea of developing a guide to minyan practices and activities was discussed. This could help new members learn how things work more quickly, and help existing members take on additional roles. A tentative table of contents is listed below. The document will be developed by a committee (what else?) and volunteers to draft any section or help advise and review the work should contact Carl Sunshine evenings after 8:30 p.m. at 934-7889.

Introduction and purpose of the Library Minyan
Short history
Structure of our service
How to accept an Aliyah
Torah reading
Haftorah reading
How to be a Gabai
Giving a drash
Ark Opening
Decorum
Announcements and greetings
Child care
Kiddush and food guidelines
Celebrating special occasions
High holiday and festival practices
Membership and Bylaws
Finances Minyan governance and committees

PLEASE SEND YOUR ARTICLES
OR STORIES TO THE
MINYAN MONTHLY

Submission Deadline
December 20, 1990
Mail to: Susan Grinel
1127 11th St. #204
Santa Monica, California
90403

MINYAN COMMITTEES/RESPONSIBILITIES

Chair, Steering Committee
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Minyan Treasurer
Norm Green 938-8110

Reading Torah or Haftorah
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Torah Honors
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Mailing List
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Minyan Guide
Carl Sunshine 934-7889

Minyan Monthly
Susan Grinel 395-2572

Ritual Committee
Stan Goldstein 813-8100

Scheduling Events-Master Calendar
Lida Baker 934-3663

**DON'T FORGET WE'RE STILL COLLECTING
CANNED AND PACKAGED FOODS FOR
SOVA
BRING YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS SOON!**

--Birkat Ha Gomel cont'd--

and sorrows of each member. It is thus very appropriate that the prayer is included during the Torah reading, when other community events, such as upcoming weddings, bar/bat mitzvahs, and baby namings are announced and responded to by the community as a whole. At certain moments in our history, it is also appropriate for the entire community to recite the prayer together for a collective deliverance from danger.

The following is a translation of the Birkah Ha-Gomel found in our Minyan Prayerbook, Sim Shalom:

"Praised are you, Lord our God, King of the universe who graciously bestows favor upon the undeserving, even as He bestowed favor upon me."

The congregation responds:

"May He who has been gracious to you continue to favor you with all that is good."

Your Torah Gabai is always available to help in the recitation of the Birkah Ha-Gomel.

--Norm Saiger

--Evan Greenspan

MI CHAMOCHA BA-ELIM HASHEM

--- Leon Rogson

For a long time after Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jews enjoyed full self government in religious and National affairs and lived secluded from the rest of the world under the domination of their own religious leaders. With the conquest of western Asia by Alexander the Great, however, the cultural life of the Jews was irresistibly drawn into the whirl of the Hellenistic synthesis of east and west.

This synthesis did not affect all Jews evenly. Those in cities, especially principal cities and ports, were closest to our hellenistic overlords. Those in small agricultural settlements (such as Modein), farmers, small landowners, were affected the least.

Around 175 BCE, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (god manifest) removed Onias III from the high priesthood and named Jason, his brother, as High Priest. Jason was permitted to build a gymnasium and establish a Greek Polis within Jerusalem. Three years later, Menelaus, head of a rival hellenistic group, bribed/bought the position of High Priest for himself, and civil war broke out among these small groups within the polis.

Thinking a wide spread rebellion had broken out, Antiochus ordered the abolition of Jewish Law. A new citadel was built within Jerusalem containing a Seleucid garrison, and an altar with a statue to Olympian Zeus was set up in the temple.

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1. Jewish People, Jewish Thought, Robert M. Seltzer, Macmillan Publishing Co. New York

--Sound System cont'd--

spirituality through prayer. If my voice is hoarse and off-pitch (it's hard to hit the right notes when one is singing too loudly), the entire tone of the community's prayers is adversely affected. As a congregant, I have sat in the Mirror Room and been totally distracted by a shaliakh screeching to overcome the dead acoustics of that room. It is hard to have a spiritual experience in such circumstances.

Thus it is clear to me that both the congregation and the people leading services would benefit from the use of a microphone, especially in the Mirror Room. The reasons I have given are based on practical and esthetic considerations. I know that there are people in the Minyan who oppose the use of a microphone on principle. Perhaps we can hear from them next month.

---Lida Baker



-- Mi Chamocha cont'd--

Rebellion broke out in Modein led by Mattathias and his sons Judah, Simon, etc. The term Macabee was applied to Judah probably meaning "Hammer" but was later interpreted to be the acronym for: Mi Chamocha baeilim Hashem - Who is like you among the gods Lord!

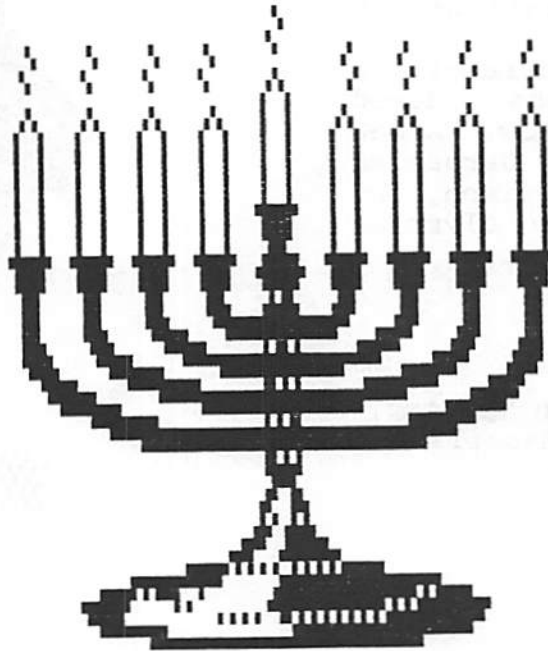
There were many differences between Jews and gentiles even in those days, and the greatest difference was religious intolerance. Pagans were by nature tolerant to other people's gods. We, by nature, are sarcastic towards gods (they are just the work of man's hands) and terribly intolerant if anyone attempts to foist their gods on us.

The real rebellion after the attempt to overthrow Menelaus was caused by that intransigence. To place an idol in our Holy of Holies was not an affront we could overlook. (This may explain why some of us, even today, find the Al Aksa Mosque difficult to accept.) To further attempt to force us to worship strange gods was not to be tolerated!

What is strange is that the forcible conversion of Jews should have been tried at all. This was clearly not the way either Romans or Seleucids dealt with Jews either before or after this period of time. We know that Jews in other parts of the Syrian empire were not affected by this and continued to be ruled by only Jewish Law and the Jewish faith. It is quite possible that Menelaus and his group, knowing our religious sensitivity to other gods, used them to cement his relationship to Antiochus and to show him how untrustworthy the rest of the Jewish Population was.

Throughout our history, we have been intransigent when it came to Hashem. Our pride, our stubbornness, have not made us easy to live with. But our pride and stubbornness, even in the time of the Macabees, kept us a free people, worshiping Hashem, and preserving Judaism for all posterity.

HAG SAMEACH



YOM KIPPUR DRASH

© September 29, 1990
ALAN F. BROIDY
Abridged

When I first began investigating the topic for my drash on this Yom Kippur, I had thought that I would be talking about the holiness of time, particularly since this year, Yom Kippur falls on Shabbat. However, when approximately three weeks ago, David Wilkoff advised me that the drash on Yom Kippur immediately precedes Yizkor, a fact which I had forgotten (no pun intended), I felt that I needed to find a topic more directly aligned with the theme of Yizkor. Accordingly, what I would like to delve into today is the relationship among the process of mourning, the concept of Tshuvah, of repentance, and memory.

There are certain physical similarities between the laws of mourning and Tshuvah. In both cases, there is no concern for the external body. Traditionally, neither the mourner nor we on Yom Kippur shave, eat or wear leather on the soles of our feet. Additionally, it is traditional on Yom Kippur to wear a white kittel as a sign of purity and humility; the same kittel is also a burial shroud for the deceased.

To me, however, there is another, much more significant similarity between the laws of mourning and Tshuvah, and that similarity is best understood in viewing the various stages in the mourning process. There are very severe restrictions when one is Oneyn, prior to the burial of the deceased, when the mourner is feeling the greatest sense of loss. After the burial, one sits Shivah for seven days and, among other things, refrains from work. The Shivan period is followed by the Shloshim, a period of thirty days after burial where certain lesser restrictions apply. Finally,

there are the remainder of the eleven months during which the mourner recites Kaddish daily. After this eleven-month period, when one has gone through each step of the process of mourning, one is truly ready to deal with the memory of the deceased. Prior to that eleven-month period, the mourner is still dealing with the separation, the sense of loss, of losing a beloved. Through the process of mourning, one acknowledges over time the sense of loss and gradually readies oneself to become re-involved with the world.

This theme of separation upon death and re-connection through the process of mourning parallels the Jewish view of Chet and Tshuvah, of sin and repentance. When we sin, we separate ourselves from God and from the community. We reconnect through the process of Tshuvah, which in one sense means return. It is this theme of separation and re-connection that unites both the mourner and the sinner, and it is this theme that I believe has profound significance for all of us during this Yom Kippur. We are all fragile beings. We have all sinned. The beginning of Tshuvah, of returning to the path, of reconnecting to God, is similar for both the sinner and the mourner, namely memory.

Last week, Kathy Konigsberg told us that it is Rav Nachman of Brazlov who said "Memory is the first step to Tshuvah." The Jewish People is a people of memory. To remember is to connect the present to the past, and from that past, move toward the future. It is not surprising then, that references to the importance of memory are replete in the Mahzor.

This is particularly true for Rosh Hashana, which is known as the

Day of Remembering. On Rosh Hashana, one of the three sections of the service where the Shofar is blown is entitled Zichronot, remembrances. Both the Torah reading and the Haftorah for the first day of Rosh Hashana deal with God remembering childless women: God remembered Sarah, and Isaac was born; and God remembered her (Hannah) and Samuel was born. Even the Torah reading for the second day of Rosh Hashanah, the Akedat Yitzhak, the binding of Isaac becomes the paradigmatic model for Z'chut Avot, the merit of our ancestors, where we implore God to remember the merit of Abraham and to have mercy upon us.

The importance of memory is manifest in the Yom Kippur liturgy as well. One of the essential acts of remembering is the al het and the viddui, where we as a community list and recount all of our sins. We say viddui ten times, to correspond to the ten commandments, or alternatively, to correspond to the ten words of creation of the world. By recounting our sins, by doing Tshuvah, we recreate and transform ourselves.

The logical question presents itself: Why do the Jewish people place so much emphasis on memory? While there are numerous responses, for this drash I want to focus on one insight I learned from an essay entitled "Memory and Values," by David Hartman, who wrote as follows:

"It is crucial in Jewish tradition to create a recollection of former slavery and helplessness. Integrating memories of past suffering and humiliation and not repressing them secures one's identity. One cannot successfully stonewall history. Since the man who negates his past must control and manipulate in order to feel his own worth, there is a profound connection between diabolical evil and loss of memory."

When I read the words "diabolical evil," I immediately thought of the symbol of evil in Biblical history, namely Haman, who tradition describes as being a descendant of the Amalakites. We are admonished to remember all that Amalek did and to L'hashmid, Laharog U'Labed, to utterly annihilate, the memory of Haman from the face of the Earth.

The context of thinking of Haman on Yom Kippurim appears on one level to be somewhat far-fetched. After all, Purim is associated as a day of drunken revelry. And yet, on a deeper level, I believe there is a profound relationship between the two holidays. In fact, the rabbis have long associated the holidays and have described Yom Kippurim as Yom Ki Purim, a day like Purim.

The parallels extend much further than simply a mere word play. In Megillat Esther, we read of King Ahasverosh who records everything down in his book, and consequently he remembers the good deed that Mordecai has done for him. This same imagery applies to the Heavenly King, who remembers all, even our hidden thoughts, and writes and inscribes us in the Book of Life. Then, too, both holidays involve introspection and prayerful meditation. We cannot forget that the Jewish people were about to be destroyed in Shushan, and they fasted and, notwithstanding that the name of God does not appear, prayed and petitioned for deliverance. Similarly, on Yom Kippur, we fast and petition God to have mercy upon us and save us. Finally, just as we are to blot out Amalek and its descendants, we entreat God on Yom Kippur to blot out our sins and remember us for good.

Thus far, I have been focusing on memory as part of the community of Israel, as part of a consciousness of peoplehood. And yet, memory is intensely personal, and nowhere is that more prevalent than now, before we say Yizkor. All

of us remember a relative or friend who had a profound impact on our lives and is no longer with us. To return to the initial topic of mourning, we as individuals make a transition from grief, to lesser grief to memory. We move from being separate and apart from the person we have lost, to be able to remember in tovah, remember in goodness, and reconnect in memory with the positive attributes of those whom we love and miss.

To return to the topic of sin, the Rabbis also recognize that memory plays an important role for the individual in Tshuvah and in avoiding sin. In what for me is a particularly poignant Midrash, in Sota 36b, the Rabbis refer to the story of Joseph and Potiphor's wife, who tried to seduce Joseph. According to the Midrash, at one point, Joseph was about to succumb to the enticements of Potiphor's wife. At the moment of truth, Joseph did not hear the prohibition against adultery, but rather, he saw the image of his father, Jacob. Upon seeing that image, he fled from Potiphor's wife's presence. Joseph's decision to avoid sin was compelled because of the memory of his father.

On a very personal level, I have had a very difficult time dealing with memory, with Yizkor on Yom Kippur. While I am required to say Yizkor for my father who died when I was 4 1/2, I have no actual memories of my father except for one. When I was about 4 years old, my father was at home, remaining in bed with an illness which ultimately took his life. He called me into his bedroom and asked me to climb up on the bed where he was. He then put me on his lap and he spanked me for no apparent reason. I was crying, and I remember asking my father, "Why did you spank me?" And my father answered that he wanted to make sure that I remembered him.

One might think that my lack of memory concerning my father could be rectified by my family sharing stories of my father's good deeds, or good time that were shared with the family. My mother, whom I love very much, did not share any such stories. Her view was that her husband was dead, and that was the end of it. When I was growing up, there was not even a picture of my father in the house. It was as if he never existed, or, to reprise a theme, it was as if he were Amalek, someone to be utterly annihilated and blotted out from memory.

It has only been within the last ten years that I have heard stories about my father, the primary source of which come from my father's brother, Steve, who is now 84 years old. My Uncle Steve has become a role model for me, and not just because he loves the Dodgers as much or more than I do. My Uncle Steve believes in Tzedakah, of doing the right thing, and has been very involved in the Los Angeles Jewish community. It was he who in 1959 coordinated the merger of the Jewish Community Council and the Federation of Jewish Welfare Organizations, and became the first President of the combined Jewish Federation Council. It was my Uncle Steve who coordinated the merger of Mount Sinai Hospital and Cedars of Lebanon Hospital, and spearheaded the construction of Cedars-Sinai Hospital.

For me, though, it is my Uncle Steve who gave me memories of my father, ranging from boyhood stories to their joint involvement in the motion picture and television industry where my father produced the TV series "Wild Bill Hickock," a William F. Broidy production. In the past few years, my relationship with my uncle has become much closer than it ever was when I was growing up. One by-product of this is that I have come to know my father, and more importantly, myself.

David Hartman wrote that the man who negates his past must control and manipulate in order to feel his own worth, that there is a profound connection between diabolical evil and loss of memory. While I was not "diabolically evil," I have had to resolve certain issues of control, manipulation and honesty in my relations with others and myself. I had no memory of my father, no memory of Jacob to restrain me from being seduced by Potiphor's wife. I had not been able to respect my father, for I could not respect a legacy of spanking, which was my only memory. By reconnecting with my father through the memories of his brother, by having a tremendous respect for my Uncle, I have gained an acceptance and respect for my own father and am now at peace saying Yizkor.

In a few moments, we will begin the Yizkor service. We will remember those whom we have loved and are no longer here. Individually and as a community we will seek to reconnect with those who are no longer with us. But is memory enough? What are we obligated to do?

Again, the Rabbis provide the answer in what Gayle Dorph so aptly called "the three T's: Tshuvah, Tefilah, and Tzedakah." All three deal with separation and reconnection. Tshuvah, repentance, is the internal process where we remember our past deeds and do the inner work that all of us need to free ourselves from being enmeshed in our wrongful actions; we reconnect with our truer and higher selves. Tefilah, prayer, enables us to reconnect with God. And Tzedakah, righteousness, enables us to reconnect with the Jewish community. All three elements are interconnected, and all three elements are necessary for us.

It is no accident that in the Yizkor service, when we remember those whom we love, when we are

involved with prayer with God, we, in reciting the Yizkor prayer, pledge to give money in memory of those whom we love. Again, for us as Jews, simply remembering is not enough; we are compelled, we are commanded, to give back to the community, to reconnect to the community during the time of our loss, the time of our memory. We cannot be complete as Jews without the memory that our biographies begin with Abraham and Sara.

Tshuvah, Tefilah, Utzdakah mavirim et roa hagezara, that repentance, prayer and righteousness avert the severity of the decree. We must understand that the decree is there, and our actions can only affect how we respond to that decree. But for all of us who feel a sense of separation, whether from ourselves, from God, or from the community, the day of Yom Kippur affords us the opportunity to become whole and reconnect with the world. In Agnon's Days of Awe, Agnon cites a Midrash from Shemi Shmuel, who stated that the ten days of Tshuvah, of repentance, are a process of drawing upward from Earth to Heaven. On Yom Kippur, however, the Holy One comes down from heaven and draws near to Israel. We feel God's presence on Yom Kippur, and this closeness makes it all the more meaningful when we implore "Do not cast us away from your presence and take not from us your holy spirit."

On this Yom Kippurim, may all of us draw strength from the presence of God and the memory of our loved ones. May all of us seek a stronger and deeper connection with ourselves, with God, and with our community. May all of us be empowered from Z'chut Avot, from the merit of our ancestors, whether they be Avraham Avinu and Sara Imenu or our own respective parents or grandparents or uncle. And may God remember us, inscribe and seal us for a life of health, sustenance and peace.